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JD Vance's India visit:

Meeting with PM, trip to Jaipur, Agra on the cards



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Gensol Loan Fraud

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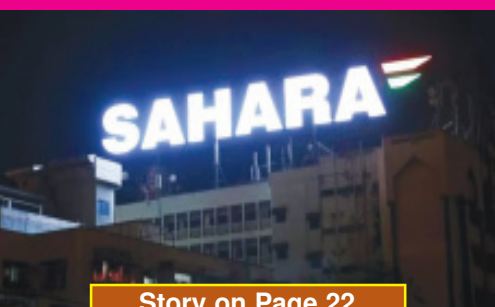
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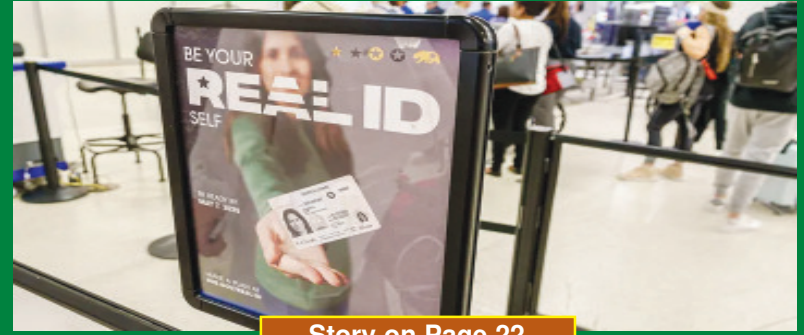


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ICE and DOGE
seek sensitive data
in crackdown on
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'Expect Delays'
TSA Advisory Warns



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Visa revoked, Chinmay Deore, an Indian student sues Trump administration over deportation threat

By our staff reporter

Chinmay Deore, an Indian National who studies at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan and two other students from China and one from Nepal have filed the lawsuit against Homeland Security and immigration officials. "At most, what seems to connect the students is that they had some encounter with some American law enforcement official at some point in the past, no matter how innocuous -- including receiving a speeding or parking ticket (or even a warning) or lawfully withdrawing an



application to enter the US," student immigration status in (SEVIS) was "illegally terminated" without any notice or explanation. The SEVIS

database contains information about non-immigrant students in the US. The development means the students no longer have legal status in the US, and would have to leave the country immediately. The lawsuit, filed in the US District Court Eastern District of Michigan, was filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) on behalf of the students. Asking the court to reinstate their legal status, the students said neither were they charged with any crime, nor did they violate any immigration law. The students said they were also not active in on-campus protests regarding any political issue.

Tesla eyes entry into India's EV market



(By our staff reporter) Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Businessman Elon Musk yesterday on phone yesterday. PM later shared details of conversation on X that he and Musk talked about collaboration in different sectors, including tech. Conversation comes as Tesla eyes entry into India's EV market Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday held a telephonic conversation with Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, reaffirming mutual interest in strengthening

collaboration between India and the United States in the areas of technology and innovation. The conversation comes at a time when Tesla is reportedly exploring opportunities to enter the Indian electric vehicle market. The two discussed a wide range of topics, building upon their earlier meeting in Washington DC this year. The conversation highlighted the growing synergy between India's rapidly evolving tech ecosystem and Musk's ventures in cutting-edge innovation.

Krish Lal Isserdasani, University of Wisconsin-Madison student's deportation halted by a Federal Judge



(By our staff reporter) Krish Lal Isserdasani, University of Wisconsin-Madison student's deportation halted by a Federal Judge:- (By our staff reporter) Lal was arrested on November 22, 2024, on suspicion of misdemeanor disorderly conduct after he and his friends got into an argument with another group of people after leaving a bar. Isserdasani's student visa was terminated after the incident. A US federal judge on Tuesday

temporarily halted the removal of a University of Wisconsin-Madison student from India whose visa was terminated from the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVIS) database. Judge William Conley ruled to block the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) from immediately deporting 21-year-old Krish Lal Isserdasani, who claimed his F-1 student visa was wrongfully terminated. Krish, who is an engineering student, is set to graduate in May.

Who is Indian American Vaniya Agrawal who 'shamed' Microsoft CEOs at the company's 50th anniversary celebrations and sent company-wide email announcing resignation

(By our staff reporter) Microsoft's 50th anniversary celebrations were disrupted twice by Pro-Palestine supporters at the company's Redmond, Washington, headquarters last week. In both cases the employees who disrupted the event were women employees. Another common thing was that

the duo sent company-wide emails regarding their protest at the event. In the first incident, a software engineer named Ibtihal Aboussad in the company's artificial intelligence division yelled at Microsoft AI CEO Mustafa Suleyman when he was delivering a speech. "Mustafa, shame on you," the employee,

Ibtihal Aboussad, said as she walked towards the stage.

The second incident involved Indian-American Vaniya Agrawal. As Microsoft current CEO Satya Nadella; and former CEOs Steve Ballmer and Bill Gates sat on stage talking about the company, Vaniya Agrawal stood up and started shouting.

"Shame on you all. You're all hypocrites," she said. "50,000 Palestinians in Gaza have been murdered with Microsoft technology. How dare you. Shame on all of you for celebrating in their blood. Cut ties with Israel." Vaniya was escorted out by the security. As per videos online, some Microsoft employees also booed her.

Donald Trump Vs Harvard University:- Trump is striking at the very idea of Harvard, its international students



By our staff reporter

US President Donald Trump is out with a sledgehammer and striking at the very core of Harvard University, an institution older than the USA. Harvard has been synonymous with American education, politics and society. The reason why Harvard is world-class is that it attracts the world's best brains. That's what Trump is seeking to pull the plug on. While Harvard University, with a massive endow-

ment of USD 53 billion, might be able to survive a funding freeze and a revocation of its tax-free status, any move to cut its international student intake could sound the death knell. Fully aware of that, Trump is threatening to strike at Harvard's core with his sledgehammer. There are 321 Indians among the 10,158 international students enrolled at Harvard University this year. The cohorts are from 150 countries this year, and bring a wealth of unmatched experience to the campus.

Harpreet Singh, alias Happy Passia, an alleged gangster-turned-terrorist has been arrested by the FBI in California.



By our staff reporter

FBI said in press release that Happy may have ties to Pakistan's ISI. He was wanted for multiple terror attacks across Punjab. He was arrested by the FBI and Enforcement Removal Operations (ERO) in Sacramento, California, US. According to a statement by the FBI, he has been linked

to two international terrorist groups and entered the US illegally. "Singh is suspected to have collaborated with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Khalistani terrorist group Babbar Khalsa International (BKI). He had been evading capture by using untraceable burner phones and encrypted applications," the FBI said in a statement on X.

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Woman cuts off 'boyfriend's' genitals in UP, his family alleges 'love trap'



A young man in Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur was left critically injured after allegedly being assaulted and having his genitals mutilated by his girlfriend and her four brothers.

(By our staff reporter) - A 22-year-old man in Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur was allegedly assaulted and had his genitals mutilated by his alleged girlfriend and her four brothers. The victim's family claimed he was lured into a "love trap" by the woman, as their families

were already embroiled in a longstanding dispute. However, the woman alleged that the man broke into her house at night and attempted to assault her, prompting her to retaliate by mutilating his genitals.

The incident occurred when the victim, Mithun Kumar,

went to meet the woman, who is eight years older than him. According to the complaint filed by his father, Basant Lal, Mithun was returning home from the farm when the woman, who lives two houses away and has been in contact with him over the phone for nearly two years, called him to meet her.

Unbeknownst to Mithun, the woman's four brothers were allegedly lying in wait. As per the complaint, they caught him, abused and beat him severely.

The brothers allegedly restrained Mithun by holding his hands and legs, and then forced the woman to mutilate him with a blade. The assault

resulted in profuse bleeding, after which the accused reportedly threw Mithun out of the house.

A villager who spotted the injured man informed his father. Basant Lal rushed his son to a hospital, where Mithun is currently undergoing treatment. His condition remains critical. Despite receiving medical attention and stitches, he continues to drift in and out of consciousness due to excessive blood loss.

The father claimed there had been prior animosity between the two families, which had once required police intervention and led to a cessation of communication.

He further alleged that the woman deliberately lured his son to her house under the pretext of meeting and orchestrated the assault.

In a contrasting version of events, the woman also filed a police complaint, alleging that Mithun forcibly entered her home around 1 am and attempted to behave inappropriately. She claimed that she acted in self-defence by injuring him.

Superintendent of Police (City), Gorakhpur, Abhinav Tyagi confirmed that complaints have been received from both parties and that further investigation is underway.

National Herald money laundering case

Charge Sheet filed by Enforcement Directorate (ED) against Congress MPs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi



(By our staff reporter) India's Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday filed a charge sheet against Congress MPs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in connection with the alleged National Herald money laundering case. ED chargesheet names Sam Pitroda, Suman Dubey and others

in case. The Congress reacted to the development, with senior party leader Jairam Ramesh claiming "vendetta politics" and accusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah of using government agencies to "intimidate" the Opposition leaders.

Mehul Choksi arrested in Belgium



(By our staff reporter) Mehul Choksi, an infamous Diamond merchant who had fled India, has been arrested in Belgium, at the request of the Indian government:- He had purchased citizenship in Antigua and Barbuda. The Belgian Federal Public Service of Justice on Monday confirmed that fugitive Indian businessman Mehul Choksi was arrested on

April 12. Now India agencies the ED and CBI will have to send an immediate request for his extradition to India, as there already is an extradition treaty with Belgium in existence, said a senior home ministry official, requesting anonymity. It's worth noting that Gangster Abu Salem was the last person extradited from the European Union 20 years ago.

US Federal Judge blocks Trump Administration's move to end humanitarian parole



(By our staff reporter) Indira Talwani, A US Federal Judge, has blocked the Trump Administration's move to end humanitarian parole for people from four Latin American countries. The ruling has dealt a blow to US President Trump's administration as

it was looking to end the Biden-era Humanitarian Parole Program for people from four Latin American countries that allowed them to live in the US, generally for two years with work authorization. n a major setback for the Trump

administration, Indian-origin judge Indira Talwani has blocked its move to scrap a key Biden-era immigration programme. The ending of the Humanitarian Parole Program would have helped fast-track deportations to Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.

Mahadev app case: ED's multi-state searches at EaseMyTrip office, other firms

The ED raids were in connection with a money laundering case involving hawala operator Hari Shankar Tibrewal, who is accused of routing illegal betting proceeds through foreign investments and stock market layering.

(News Agency) -The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday conducted multi-state searches, including at the premises of EaseMyTrip founder Nishant Pitti, in connection with the Mahadev online betting app-linked money laundering case.

Apart from EaseMyTrip, the searches were conducted at the offices of Industrialist Investment Trust Ltd, JTL, Vikas Ecotec and a few other listed companies since morning. The searches were held in Delhi, Mumbai, Chandigarh, Ahmedabad, Indore, Jaipur, Chennai and Sambalpur in Odisha.

In a statement, an EaseMyTrip spokesperson said the company

had no direct or indirect association with the Mahadev betting app case or any other betting platform, and stressed it would cooperate with authorities in the investigation.

"As per information available in the public domain, the ED conducted searches at over 50 locations of various persons/corporates. Amongst them one was EaseMyTrip premises. While EaseMyTrip has no direct or indirect association with the Mahadev betting app or any other betting platform, we remain fully committed to cooperating with the authorities throughout the course of the investigation," the spokesperson said.

Sources said the searches were

linked to investments made by Hari Shankar Tibrewal, an accused in the Mahadev betting app money laundering case. His investments in the stocks of various companies were under scrutiny, some of which were covered during the raids.

In the course of the investigation, the ED successfully identified other major players involved with the promoters of Mahadev Online Book. It was found that Tibrewal, who belongs to Kolkata but currently resides in Dubai, is a huge hawala operator and has partnered with the promoters of the betting app, according to the officers. The ED had conducted searches at the premises of



Tibrewal and his associates, revealing that he owned and operated one of the illegal betting websites, Skyexchange. Through his Dubai-based entities, he was investing the betting proceeds in the Indian stock market via the Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) route.

Tibrewal had also employed many of his associates as a director in various companies that were involved in the layering of the betting proceeds by investing them in the stock market, the probe has found.

Security holdings worth Rs 580.78 crore in the name of the entities beneficially owned by Tibrewal were frozen by the ED under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002. In March last year, the ED conducted searches in Kolkata, Mumbai, Indore, Delhi and Raipur and made huge seizures of cash and froze demat accounts and other benami accounts with hundreds of crores worth of investments. These accounts were linked to a third promoter of the Mahadev Online Book, Tibrewal.

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Kunal Kamra row: Court reserves order on comedian's plea seeking no coercive action

The Bombay High Court reserved its order on a plea filed by stand-up comic Kunal Kamra seeking the pausing of the FIR registered against him over his parody of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday reserved its judgement on a plea filed by stand-up comic Kunal Kamra seeking the pausing of the FIR registered against him. The FIR was filed by a Shiv Sena MLA for the comedian's 'gaddar' (traitor) remark on Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde during a performance last month.

In the plea, Kamra had sought a pause in the investigation and that no coercive action be taken against him. The High Court further directed that Kamra should not be arrested in the meantime. The comedian had been granted interim relief till Thursday from arrest by Madras High Court. While reserving judgment, a bench of Justices Sarang V Kotwal and SM Modak noted that the summons issued to Kamra were under Section 35(3) of BNSS, which is applicable when the police officer doesn't deem arrest necessary, but there's a reasonable



complaint, credible information or reasonable suspicion that a cognisable offence has been committed. The bench said the Khar police officials can go to Tamil Nadu, where Kamra has been living for the past five years and record his statement there. The bench noted that the basic concern of the comedian was that of security, as he had been facing threats

of being assaulted, and his face blackened by Shinde's supporters. The bench opined that Khar police can take the assistance of Tamil Nadu Police and record Kamra's statement in Tamil Nadu. During the hearing, advocates Navroz Seervai and Ashwin Thool, appearing for Kamra, argued that what Kamra had said was only a political

satire. "The comments and personal sentiments expressed by Kamra, and in particular, the use of the word traitor are identical to those expressed by various prominent individuals in public life, including by the present Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and by the former Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray," said Seervai. He added that no one vandalised the halls where the politicians said or no FIR was registered against those leaders and it was only a stand-up comic being made a scapegoat. Seervai stressed that the police were supposed to do a preliminary enquiry and then register an FIR, but in this case, the FIR was registered in 70 minutes. Public prosecutor Hiten Venegaonkar, appearing for the state government, submitted that a preliminary enquiry was conducted when the police officer saw the video and confirmed that it had been uploaded on Kamra's social media pages.

Mamata Banerjee a threat to Bengali Hindus: Mithun Chakraborty's fresh attack

West Bengal BJP leader Mithun Chakraborty on Thursday launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over the violence linked to the Waqf protest, calling her a threat to Hindus in the state. He accused the Trinamool



Congress chief of inciting communal tensions and alleged that Hindus are being mistreated in Bengal.

"Not the BJP, it is Mamata Banerjee who is fomenting communal tension. She is creating unrest among communities. Mamata Banerjee is a threat to the Bengali Hindu community," the actor-turned-politician told India Today TV in an exclusive

conversation. The comments came after Banerjee alleged that the communal violence in Murshidabad was "pre-planned" and orchestrated by the BSF, central agencies, and the BJP, claiming that they facilitated the entry of outsiders and enabled cross-border influx from Bangladesh.

Chakraborty alleged that "Bengali Hindus are homeless, forced to eat khichdi in relief camps," and asked, "What is their fault?"

Responding to Mamata Banerjee's recent statement that the Waqf Amendment Act will not be implemented in the state, Chakraborty said the Chief Minister is "trying to mislead the Muslim community."

"Who is she to not allow a law that has been passed by India's Parliament? She is just a Chief Minister," the BJP leader said. He further asserted that elections in the state must be conducted under the President's Rule. He also claimed that "Hindus have started uniting" in Bengal and added, "Nothing can save Mamata Banerjee".

"Nothing can save her; Hindus have understood her game," he said, responding to Banerjee's plan to inaugurate a Jagannath temple later this month.

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Mandap to lock-up: Thieves visiting home for weddings arrested in Madhya Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh Police turned the tables on the elusive Kadiya gang—infamous for looting marriage functions and violently resisting arrest—by nabbing four key members at their own weddings in Rajgarh district, amid an intense, military-style operation.

They are notorious for stealing valuables at marriage functions in various states and resisting arrest through violence, but Madhya Pradesh Police turned the tables on the infamous Kadiya gang by apprehending four members at their weddings in Rajgarh district.

The arrests were made amid heightened security during the ongoing marriage season in Kadiya village, a locality notorious for producing criminals, police said on Wednesday.

Superintendent of Police Aditya Mishra said extensive arrangements had been made to apprehend wanted criminals who returned to their native Kadiya village during the wedding season.

"A total of 153 jawans from 17 different police stations have been deployed in and around Kadiya village," Mishra said.

Officials have also set up a fully equipped police camp with tents, mobile toilets, and water tankers to support the deployed force.

Armed police force was deployed in the



camp. Some personnel were stationed in plain clothes to ensure the swift arrest of offenders attempting to blend into the crowd, Mishra added.

To increase public awareness and aid identification, the police put up banners across the village on Tuesday displaying photographs of wanted criminals, many of whom have cases registered across several states, he said.

On Tuesday night, the police successfully arrested four criminals immediately after their wedding rituals concluded.

Among those apprehended was Kabir Sansi (24), who has 16 criminal cases registered against him in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, the police officer said.

Rishi Sansi (19), with 13 cases lodged in districts including Harsud, Khandwa,

Rewa, Neemuch, and Rajgarh (Madhya Pradesh), as well as Jhalawar (Rajasthan), was also taken into custody. Another accused, Mohanish Sansi, has 32 cases across Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, while Rohan Sansi faces charges in four criminal cases.

The search for the remaining accused is underway, he said.

Boda police station in-charge Dharmendra Sharma said more than 50 absconding warrants linked to thefts during wedding functions are currently pending in Kadiya village alone.

"We are conducting a dedicated campaign, which includes arrangements for tents, mobile toilets and water tankers for the police force, to apprehend all absconding criminals," Sharma said. The Kadiya gang has been under the police radar for its alleged widespread involvement in theft and robbery across the country.

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Stalin meets state vice-chancellors after top court limits Governor's powers

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin met university heads after the Supreme Court in its ruling limited the Governor's role and passed pending bills that gave the state government a meatier role in university appointments.



(News Agency)- Following the Supreme Court's verdict limiting the Governor's role and clearing 10 pending Bills related to university appointments, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin met Vice-Chancellors and Registrars of the state's universities.

The meeting included representatives from 21 universities under the Department of Higher Education, as well as universities under the departments of

Youth Welfare and Sports Development, Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, Law, Tamil Development, Health and Family Welfare, and Art and Culture.

At the meeting, Stalin highlighted Tamil Nadu's leadership in higher education and stated that Tamil Nadu was home to over 500 engineering colleges and 31 premier institutions of higher learning. He highlighted that 22 institutions from the

state secured positions among the top 100 in the National Institutional Ranking Framework.

"While quality education is leading the nation forward, we must not become complacent. We are gathered here to dream bigger, innovate boldly, and prepare our students for global changes," he said.

"Tamil Nadu is emerging as a beacon of educational progress in India. The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education in the state stands at 51.3 per cent, nearly double the national average. Despite not adopting the National Education Policy (NEP), the state has already surpassed the GER target of 50 per cent set for 2030, through its Dravidian Model," he added.

Urging the universities to aim higher, the Chief Minister said, "We are gathered here to dream bigger, innovate boldly, and prepare our students for global changes."

He called for the inclusion of future-ready courses such as Data Science,

Renewable Energy, and Advanced Manufacturing in academic programmes. "Foundational knowledge must be matched with modern, market-relevant skills to turn graduates into solution providers," he said, while stressing interdisciplinary learning and active industry collaboration as key pillars of reform.

He described the meeting as a crucial step in shaping the future of Tamil Nadu's youth and a starting point for creating a comprehensive roadmap for university development. With rapid global advances in science and technology, he said universities must evolve by adopting world-class education models and innovative practices. He also noted that future meetings will involve leading national education experts and advisors and requested that the gathered heads also give their suggestions.

Emphasising the impact of emerging fields, Stalin said: "The world is changing rapidly due to AI, green energy, and Industry 4.0. Our universities must prepare students accordingly."

BluSmart stops booking, but this is what happens to money in your Blu Cab wallet

BluSmart, India's first cab service with an all-EV fleet, has discontinued bookings. Customers of BluSmart, which is appreciated for its clean cars and courteous drivers, have been worried about what happens to the unused money in their wallets.

A Delhi-based BluSmart customer, Jasdeep, tried booking the cab but didn't find a slot. "All booking slots were disabled," Jasdeep told India Today Digital. "But what happens to the unused money in my BluSmart wallet," she asked.

When asked to refund the money, BluSmart support responded.

"I would like to inform you that the amount has lifetime validity and will remain in your account. You can use this amount to book a ride for someone else, as it has been added to your wallet for a long time".

On being asked informed that there were no future slots, this is how BluSmart support responded.

"I would like to inform you that I am



raising your request to refund in the source amount with the relevant team and stay assured your amount will be refunded within 5-7 working days. I request you to wait for the given time frame and then check for the same."

There were several BluSmart users, like the Delhi-based woman, who had Rs 746 in her wallet, who had the same question.

"Okay, so BluSmart is off, but what about

the money in the BluSmart wallet? How do we get that refunded?" asked marketing professional, Ritambhara Agarwal.

"BluSmart is not letting any existing booking change and not allowing any further booking. 5k in wallet and over 2k as Elite Subscription lost without any update from the team. Shameful," posted another person on X on

Thursday.

The Economic Times had on April 14 reported that BluSmart was planning to suspend its services gradually and become a fleet partner to cab aggregator Uber.

The Economic Times reported that BluSmart's shareholders had agreed to a plan that would allow the company to slowly shift its electric vehicle (EV) fleet to Uber.

The transition is expected to begin with around 700-800 cars over the coming weeks and will be carried out in phases. Once the entire fleet is moved, BluSmart will stop running its own app-based ride service.

BluSmart has been burning over Rs 20 crore each month to keep its operations running.

It was reported that its founders, Anmol Singh Jaggi and Puneet Singh Jaggi, who together hold over 25% of the company, have been investing their own money along with funds raised from outside investors.

US and China are 2 clashing elephants. India can't be the grass under their feet

Donald Trump brought clarity on his trade war with a 90-day hiatus for the rest of the world while he upped tariffs to 145 percent on China, which retaliated with 125 percent. This is, and sorry China for borrowing your favourite metaphor for India, a duel between two mighty elephants.

We know what happens when two elephants fight. The grass gets crushed. Three questions arise.

- Is India grass?
- Can India afford to be grass?
- What can India do to avoid getting mauled in the melee like grass, and also turn it to its own advantage?

This superpower trade war has opened possibilities for all swing states, of which India is the biggest and the most consequential. At the very least, there might be things India can make for the US markets that the Chinese can't compete with, given these tariffs. Apple phones are the first example, but if you simply run your eye over the list of Chinese exports to America, and add even 30-40 percent duty (145 percent will be moderated ultimately), there will be tens of billions worth of export prospects on offer. Similarly, there are items on the American export list to China which India could substitute, given the tariff differential. Cheap thing, it would usually be, to take advantage of a friend and ally's predicament. Not in these times, made unusual by Trump, who's been particularly arrogant and disrespectful with allies. He said they all keep calling and saying 'sir, please give me this deal, I will do anything ... they are all kissing my ass'. This wasn't said about China. It was said about 75 others, most of the prominent ones among them, Europe, Australia, and India, being allies and friends. While we keep saying never waste a crisis, India hasn't quite consummated such opportunities lately. Much of what was promised in the wake of Covid, notably, has lost steam. The reformist farm laws and labour codes (both welcomed and celebrated by this columnist) lost their way. The Prime Minister said unqualifiedly in 2021 that the government will vacate all areas of business for the private sector, except strategic ones. Barring the Air India sale, which had been ongoing since 2017, there's been zero mention of any privatisation. The privatisation of IDBI Bank, 'nearly done' forever, is still circling in orbit. This year's budget saw Rs five trillion earmarked for fresh investments in PSUs. Modi government did a creditable job of managing the fiscal situation during the pandemic by holding its nerve and not print and distribute money, unlike many western democracies. But, regrettably, the long-

awaited, substantive reform, missed that crisis bus. The government proposed a new economic agenda around two ideas: atmanirbharta (self-reliance) and Make in India. Large amounts were allocated towards Production-Linked Incentives (PLIs) and Ease of Doing Business (EODB) was promised. The first has moved only partly. Manufacturing has stagnated. Some PLI has been picked up, most prominently for iPhones. And see the strength just that one element has given India as the elephants fight. Apple can now start shifting its manufacturing from China to India. This is at least one good example of China-plus-one. The second, EODB? India's rankings moved up, but at a slow, crawling pace. More on this, you can hear or read from entrepreneur and serial investor Mohandas Pai, by no means a critic of the government. If a veteran like him is so frustrated, you can imagine the plight of the new entrepreneurs. GST is a great, epochal reform in the Modi decade. But ask the MSMEs, how cluttered its processes are, how litigious and rent-seeking. If it's the same militia with the same mindset, every new system gifted to them is a new model of the same old machine gun. In order to not be crushed like grass, India has to rededicate itself to that Covid-era reform idea. The trade issue will almost entirely be confined to manufactured and farm goods. Services, which account for about 40 percent of our exports to the US, don't count. These are not tariffed as no goods cross any borders. How soon can India create new manufacturing to take advantage of the flight from China? Conversely, if tariff protections are greatly reduced—and they surely will be, and should be—is our manufacture robust enough to survive? What must the government do to ensure that? Subsidies are lazy, retrograde, expensive, and Trump would most certainly reject these as unfair. The US, by and large, has been a tariff-free economy. This gives India its \$45-billion merchandise surplus. It's also a fact that the US manufactures very little it could export to India, even if duties were waived. Its basket of exports has mineral oils and precious stones as the top two items. This is the moment for some hard calls. Dropping customs duties on non-farm merchandise is the easy part. But, given the traditional Indian insecurities and the twin Swadeshi/RSS and Left intelligentsia pressures, can India open up for dairy and meat imports? A quick and inconvenient question: do we produce enough milk and milk products or meat for our rising needs? This will be the toughest part, and Trump will play hardball.

By SHEKHAR GUPTA

Why the US can devastate everyone and still emerge stronger

You don't have to be a Donald Trump fan to grudgingly note that his moves may not always be driven by pure stupidity, lunacy, or his need to be constantly in the limelight. Unlike what his critics think, things are not going as badly for the United States as imagined, though the economic damage is already visible in the markets. When somebody holds a gun to your head and also his own, you cannot ignore his demands. If one can divine a method in the US madness, not only under Trump but even under earlier administrations, US strategy is based on a simple reality: you win if others lose more. A foolish tariff policy may hurt the US all right, but if it hurts others more, the US emerges stronger after a while. So it is pointless telling the world's superpower that no one gains from a trade war; the US does gain more at the end of the madness. Right from the start, China was probably Trump's main target, and in leaving the country out of a 90-day reprieve from tariffs, he has managed to, at least temporarily, drive a wedge between China and the rest of the world. He has calculated, possibly correctly, that if left to choose between a wayward American and a potentially dangerous Chinese hegemony, most countries will choose the former. The US is the devil they know. Trump's claim that many world leaders were "kissing my a**" to get trade deals done may be an exaggeration, but it is no secret that Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, and India are in the queue for trade deals, with the former three more vulnerable to a closure of the American market to their exports than India. Despite Trump's temperamental ways, there is evidence to suggest that what he has done is not too different from what his predecessors would have done, perhaps with less brashness and more panache.

US gains from the madness

Trump's tariff shock is indicative of three things about Uncle Sam and his attitude to the world. One, despite being the predominant superpower, its actions are largely driven by local politics and concerns, without taking into account the interests of even friends or partners. Two, the US belief in its own economic and political power is partly delusional. And three, despite the devastation caused by unilateral, and often ill-considered actions, the result is often that the US ends up being more powerful, as the resultant devastation ruins the prospects of the rest of the world more than the damage done to itself. We will know in a few months whether this holds true for Trump's moves on tariffs, which have led to uncertainties all around and lowered confidence in Uncle Sam. But as the markets, both stocks and bonds, have already reacted massively negatively to the prospects of a tariff war, politicians, including many in his own Republican party, have begun worrying whether Trump will lead them to political and economic disaster. This means that sooner rather than later, both Congress and the courts may step in to rein him in. So, one can hope that Trump will ultimately fail to achieve his stated aims – though not before doing damage to the rest of the world – including, especially, the interests of his allies and economic partners. The fact is, Trump's actions are not decided by economic advice, but by the expectations of his angry political base – often White males who have lost out from globalisation, and who may want to see political and economic damage inflicted on their real or imagined enemies. This includes the woke elite who view them as "the deplorables" – the last being Hillary Clinton's description of the Trump support base, which then turned up in droves to defeat her in 2016.

By R JAGANNATHAN



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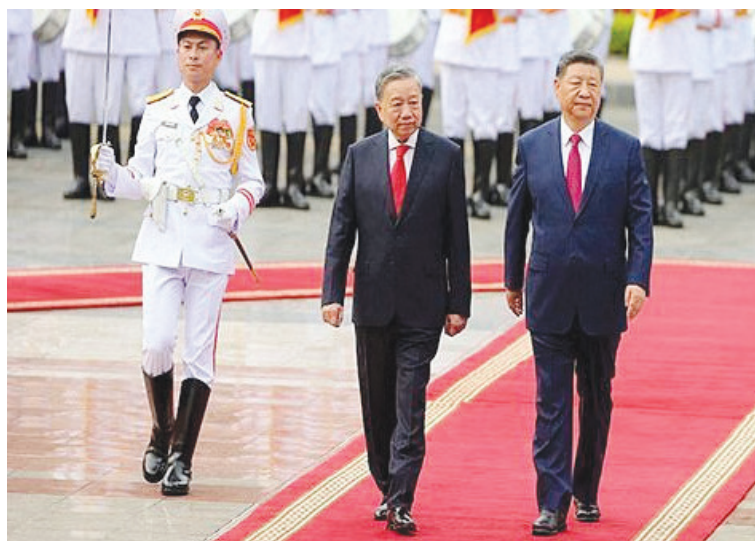
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China is seeking closer ties with Southeast Asia. It's not just a response to Trump

By Arun K. Singh

On April 2, US President Donald Trump threw a gauntlet to the world and the post-1945 US-constructed global order with across-the-board and significant country-specific tariffs. The tariff rates were higher than what was anticipated even by Trump's key business supporters in the US. Markets reacted negatively worldwide, falling 10% in America. The US Federal Reserve is now expected to hold back on any interest rate cuts, anticipating an inflationary impact. Analytical comments are comparing the disruption to, potentially, the Great Depression of the 1930s. While there is global anger and anxiety, most countries have so far refrained from retaliatory action, though they have asserted their right to do so. China, however, is among the few that have already declared matching reciprocal tariffs of 34% on imports from the US. Only, it exports far more than it imports. Beijing's aim is more to impose political pain on Trump by cutting back supplies from his supporters, particularly in the US agriculture belt.



A Divided World

Voices in the European Union are divided, with the European Commission articulating the need for retaliation, though many leading countries, including Germany and France, are currently undergoing their own political instability and transition. They have thus preferred a cautious approach and negotiations to bring down the rates rather than getting into competitive escalation. Canada and Mexico, already targets of specific tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, were spared

the April 2 across-the-board 10% tariffs. No doubt, these were on account of enforcement difficulties that would arise given the deep supply chain integration under the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) finalised in Trump's first term.

The Prime Minister of Singapore, meanwhile, in an address to his country, declared the current global order dead and warned of the need to prepare for adjustments. He said smaller countries would be left with little bargaining power if, in the next phase, trade agreements are

negotiated bilaterally rather than through multilaterally agreed rules and norms.

Growing Republican Control There are many lessons that other countries will need to draw as the US veers away from globalisation of trade and production, precipitated by imbalances flowing from China's misuse of WTO (World Trade Organization) provisions, which has concentrated as much as 32% of global manufacturing in the country through subsidies and forced technology transfers. We should expect continued policy unpredictability from the US as the impact of its measures is assessed for domestic political and economic gain. There are divisions among parties and businesses about the right approach, and deep polarisation in US society. Already, protests against government policies have begun.

Nonetheless, Trump's core base remains with him, due to which Republicans have not yet come out in any effective or large-scale opposition. Also, with Republicans in control of both

houses of the US Congress, the system of checks and balances envisaged in the US Constitution is not entirely in place at present. Courts and their decisions are being politically challenged through non-cooperation or threats of impeachment. Persons with radical right-wing views are seen as having outsized influence on personnel and policy decisions, with one such figure, Laura Loomer, seen as being responsible for the recent firing of several National Security Council officials, as well as of Timothy Hugh, the Director-General of the US National Security Agency.

The February Meeting India, no doubt, has to weigh its own response carefully. The US is its largest trading partner at \$200 billion, with a \$45 billion surplus being in India's favor. In the past, several countries, including China, the Republic of Korea, Japan, and many in Europe, grew due to substantial access to the US market. The same opportunity will not be available for some time now, given the current political climate in the US around trade and distribution of production.

Trump's 90-day tariff pause a test for India. Use it to set interim guidelines, not big reforms



By Meenakashi Lekhi

In the ever-evolving landscape of global trade, few bilateral relationships are as strategically significant—and as periodically strained—as that between India and the United States. Though they ought to be natural partners in technology, defence, climate action, and global relations, the two democracies have often found themselves at cross-purposes over their trade policies. On 2 April, the Trump administration slapped India with 26 per cent additional

trade tariffs, but announced a 90-day moratorium a week later. India is expected to utilise this period to address longstanding trade imbalances and shape a more equitable framework for future cooperation. The negotiations will delve into complex issues ranging from agricultural exports and digital trade to pharmaceutical pricing and e-commerce regulation. India will be keen to push through the terms negotiated during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

visit to the US this year. In this context, the 90-day pause in tariffs is a strategic test. It will determine whether both nations can translate geopolitical goodwill into concrete, mutually beneficial trade outcomes.

India-US tariff tension

Over the past decade, India-US bilateral trade has expanded significantly. In 2023-24, the US was India's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade crossing \$119 billion. However, this growth has not been without friction. The US has consistently voiced concerns over India's tariff regime, which it considers among the highest for a major economy. "The Prime Minister [Modi] just left. He's a great friend of mine, but I said, 'You're a friend of mine, but you're not treating us right.' They charge us 52 per cent. You have to understand, we charge them almost nothing, for years and years and decades," President

Trump said after Modi's visit in February. India, in turn, expressed frustration over what it sees as America's reluctance to accommodate the developmental needs of emerging economies. Tensions escalated in 2019 when the US imposed tariffs of 25 per cent on Indian steel and 10 per cent on aluminium, citing national security concerns. India responded with retaliatory tariffs, which was followed by the Trump administration's revocation of India's benefits under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). This affected nearly \$6 billion in Indian exports. The fact that India and the US don't have a comprehensive bilateral trade agreement further complicates matters. With Trump escalating trade tensions, especially with China, the 90-day moratorium presents a rare opportunity to strike while the iron is hot. For India, the temporary

suspension of additional tariffs—effective until 9 July—brings both short-term relief and strategic uncertainty. The pause protects Indian exports in key sectors like steel, auto parts, and electronics from immediate tariff shocks. However, it also sets the stage for high-stakes negotiations within a limited timeframe. Washington expects quick movement on long-standing trade issues. The challenge for Indian negotiators is to safeguard domestic priorities while also securing stable and long-term access to the US market.

Current tariff negotiations

Negotiators from India and the US are re-engaging on a wide range of tariff and non-tariff barriers hindering bilateral trade. The talks address asymmetries in tariff structures, market access concerns, and diverging regulatory approaches.

Trump Tariffs Topple Markets, But India Can Prevent Trade War

Written By : Adarsh Kuniyillam

The government, which was designed for the people, has gotten into the hands of the bosses and their employers, the special interests. An invisible empire has been set up above the forms of democracy," said former US President Woodrow Wilson, who was the architect of multilateralism through the League of Nations. His presidency coincided with the progressive era in American history, a time marked by significant socio-political reforms. He guided the U.S. economy through World War I, during which the Congress enacted a series of laws designed to grant the President emergency powers, with the Trading With the Enemy Act of 1917 (TWEA) being the most notable. The demands of wartime prompted the President to implement sanctions and economic restrictions, leading to the enactment of TWEA. This legislation empowers the President to manage or limit all trade between the United States and its adversaries during wartime. Throughout the 20th century, the Congress increasingly conferred emergency powers to the President through various statutes, including TWEA. Enacted in 1917, TWEA was intended to regulate international dealings with enemy nations following the U.S. entry into World War I. In the 1930s, the Congress broadened the act to enable the President to declare a national emergency even in peacetime, thereby granting extensive authority over both domestic and international transactions. From 1945 to the early 1970s, TWEA became a primary tool for imposing sanctions as part of the US Cold War strategy. Presidents utilised TWEA to obstruct international financial transactions, seize assets held by foreign nationals within the U.S., restrict exports, adjust regulations to prevent gold hoarding, limit foreign direct investment in American companies, and impose tariffs on all imports into the United States. The International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) further extends the President's authority to regulate economic transactions.

TRUMP AND IEEPA

In his initial term, Trump threatened to implement tariffs on Mexico, utilising his powers under the IEEPA. In May 2019, he announced plans to impose a 5 per cent tariff on all goods imported from Mexico, with the intention of gradually increasing this tariff to 25 per cent unless Mexico took substantial measures to address the "illegal migration crisis." By



June 2019, Trump retreated from this threat after the United States and Mexico reached an agreement aimed at reducing the influx of migrants at the southwestern border. However, he did exercise this authority to impose sanctions on other nations. Trump utilised IEEPA to target Venezuela's state-owned oil company, aiming to weaken President Nicolás Maduro's government by cutting off its primary source of revenue. Additionally, he applied the law to sanction Iran in response to what his administration described as aggressive actions by Tehran. In June 2020, Trump invoked the law again to authorise sanctions against senior officials at the International Criminal Court following the court's investigation into potential war crimes committed by American forces in Afghanistan. During his second term, in February 2025, he once more employed this Act. A presidential statement indicated that, in response to the emergency posed by the extraordinary threat of illegal immigration and drug trafficking, President Donald J Trump would implement a 25% additional tariff on imports from Canada and Mexico, along with a 10% additional tariff on imports from China. Notably, energy resources from Canada would be subject to a reduced 10% tariff. This decisive action was taken to hold Mexico, Canada, and China accountable for their commitments to curb illegal immigration and prevent the influx of harmful substances such as fentanyl into U.S. territory.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY AND TRUMP TARIFF

On April 2, 2025, President Trump declared a National Emergency under the IEEPA. He stated that foreign trade and economic practices have led to a national emergency, prompting him to implement tariffs aimed at bolstering the United States' international economic



standing and safeguarding American workers. In accordance with the Act, the President established a 10 per cent tariff applicable to all countries. The European Union will face a 20% tariff from the US, while Vietnam will incur a 46% tariff, Japan a 24% tariff, South Korea a 25% tariff, India a 26% tariff, Taiwan a 32% tariff, and Thailand a 36% tariff. China, which recorded the largest trade surplus with the US in 2024 at \$295 billion, will

MARKETS HIT

be subject to a 34% reciprocal tariff. The rationale behind these tariff measures is supported by a 2024 economic analysis, which indicated that a global tariff of 10% could potentially boost the economy by \$728 billion, generate 2.8 million jobs, and raise real household incomes by 5.7%. The Nikkei experienced a significant decline of 7.83%, while the Hang Seng plummeted by 13.22%. The BSE decreased by 2.95%, and the Sensex dropped by 3.24%. The Stoxx 600 index fell by 4.5%, and Germany's DAX declined by 4.13%. In the UK, the FTSE 100 saw a decrease of 4.38%, and France's CAC fell by 4.78%. Meanwhile, Spain's IBEX index dropped by 5.12%. In a troubling development for Indian markets, investors lost Rs 14.3 lakh crore, marking the most significant decline in 10 months. Since the introduction of the tariffs, the total market capitalisation of companies listed on the NSE has decreased by 24.29 lakh crore rupees over the course of three trading sessions.

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Blog: A Rant On SEO, Growth And Google, By A Digital Media Survivor

By Amit Chaturvedi

Imagine a boss who never speaks to you, changes KPIs overnight and penalises you for reasons you don't understand. That's Google. In the decades since it launched, bringing in a fresh perspective to the search business in World Wide Web (www), Google has changed its algorithms many times. It has always been the dominant player in the internet search business, and these changes are meant to ensure it continues to stay number 1. But for those of us in the news business, trying to please the world's most powerful algorithm is like attempting to win Employee of the Month without knowing the rules. Yet we try. Oh, how we try. I still remember the glory days, when SEO was simple. Naive, even. All you had to do was toss a few keywords into a headline - example 'Salman Khan Diet Plan', 'Smartphones Under 10,000' - and traffic rained like (sudden) Delhi dust storm in June. In 2010s, SEO in newsrooms was like horoscopes in newspapers - nobody really understood it, but it brought in the eyeballs. All you had to do was cram keywords into headlines like overstuffed vada paos, and Google

would reward us with page views. Back then, digital media professionals weren't optimising for algorithms. All of us were gaming them. And the system? Well, it didn't mind. It was said that "Content is king", but really, content with the right keywords was emperor.

Google's Tantrums

The world's largest search engine wasn't unaware of what was happening. It started releasing updates every year, to focus on what mattered. These, which have now become even faster, show how seriously the company takes its core business. Panda, Penguin, Hummingbird - all these adorable names were assigned to Google updates. But they brutally changed the game. Suddenly, keyword stuffing was frowned upon. User experience mattered. Headlines had to be meaningful. One day your evergreen article on "budget smartphones" is driving 100k daily pageviews. The next day, it disappeared. No memo. No explanation. Just a "core update". These updates now feel like a passive-aggressive Slack message from a boss who won't say what's wrong. They just expect you to know. One day your article is trending. Next day it's

missing. Welcome to Search Result Purgatory.

Growth: The Blessing And The Burnout

We all want growth. But when did growth stop being exciting and start feeling like a treadmill on fire? CTRs, impressions, time-on-site, scroll depth - welcome to the modern newsroom's daily crisis. In editorial meetings these days, SEO experts sound like astrologers ("Mars is in retrograde, and your bounce rate is high"). These meetings revolve around what will rank, not what matters. Growth becomes this sugar rush - addictive, unsustainable, and occasionally nauseating. And still, you chase it. Because traffic = ad revenue = job security (ish).

The Contortion Act AKA Headlines Let's take a moment to mourn editorial dignity.

Nothing breaks a journalist's soul quite like having to turn a well-reported, nuanced investigation into a headline that sounds like clickbait wrapped in keyword soup. "New Govt Guidelines Introduced" becomes "Big Government Rule Change Will Affect Your Life". (Bonus points if it's "shocking".)

This is the real struggle: balancing

journalistic integrity with the SEO gods' thirst for CTR.

AI, E-E-A-T And The New World Order Are you fatigued by the algorithm change? Wait, there's more - Google's last major "core update" E-E-A-T. It's not a restaurant chain, but short form for Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trust.

Suddenly, your bylines need bios. Your news site needs schema markup. And your reporters need to be experts, not just fast typers. Meanwhile, AI-generated content lurks in the shadows, waiting to replace us all with polite but soulless summaries.

Dear Google...

We're not asking for special treatment. Just a break from the whiplash. A moment to breathe. A chance to be journalists and digital citizens. We get it. The Web is messy. And you're trying to clean it up. But could we please have a little stability? A heads-up before a traffic nosedive?

Because the truth is:

We're not trying to game the system anymore.

We're trying to work with it.

We want to write stories that matter AND stories that rank.

If SEO is the new editor-in-chief, can we at least get the style guide?

Bangladesh And The Art Of Instigation



By Syed Ata Hasnain

An Indian response to the provocation by Bangladesh's Chief Adviser, Mohammed Yunus, was inevitable. While on a visit to China, Yunus had called India's Northeast 'landlocked'. The remark by Yunus alluded to the perception of Bangladesh being the guardian of access to the Indian Northeast through the sea routes as the land route ran through a constricted corridor. Yunus suggested that this geographical positioning presents significant opportunities for China, proposing that Bangladesh could serve as an extension of the Chinese economy by facilitating production and trade activities aimed at both China and global markets.

No Let-Up In Tensions

The Indian response and the actual interpretation of what Yunus said and meant are important issues in the emerging standoff between India and Bangladesh. Despite the one-on-one meeting at the BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok, between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Adviser Mohammad Yunus, there appears no let-up in the rising tensions between the two countries. The Indian response has been to put an end to the June 2020 initiative, under which India allowed Bangladeshi export cargo to transit through Indian land customs stations enroute to third countries, via Indian ports and airports. The New Delhi airport is one such important outlet for Bangladesh. This arrangement facilitated smoother trade flows for Bangladesh's exports to nations such as Bhutan, Nepal, and Myanmar - in particular, to nations where goods moved by land routes.

On April 8, post the provocation by Yunus, India rescinded this facility, citing significant congestion at its airports and ports. This led to logistical delays and increased costs for Indian exporters. Internationally, this is being interpreted as a response to what Yunus said and meant. The negative effect on Bangladesh exports, especially after the 37%

tariff also imposed by the US, will indeed be mind-boggling, thanks to the uncalled-for and unnecessary buccaneering by Yunus under Jamaat pressure. Yunus and the Jamaat leadership may be unaware of the fact that India has a major contribution to the growth of the garment industry in Bangladesh - as much as \$1.20 billion worth of cotton yarn and raw cotton worth \$556.84 million were exported by India to Bangladesh in 2023.

The Possible Chinese Airfield

India is also studying reports of a Chinese plan to build an airfield in Bangladesh's Lalmonirhat district, which is sure to be a challenge for New Delhi's security interests along the eastern border, including the Chicken's Neck area, that is, the Siliguri Corridor. The area, considered a strategic vulnerability for India, is a sliver of territory that provides access to all transportation and energy arteries to Northeast India, as well as a petroleum pipeline to Nepal. Several power grids crisscross the narrow territory. About 45-50 kilometres to the north is the strategic Chumbi Valley, separating the Indian state of Sikkim and Bhutan, where the famous (though some call it infamous) 'Trijunction' exists. Adjacent to it is Doklam, which every Indian by now probably knows about, thanks to the 72-day long standoff between Indian and Chinese forces in 2017.

So, is this to be an airfield to be occupied by the Bangladesh air force? Or, will the Chinese air force place its assets here under a strategic partnership agreement? If assets are deployed here for the dual purpose of maintaining an eye over the Bay of Bengal (much less likely) and posing a threat to India's interests, this will surpass arrangements that China has with even Pakistan, in PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan areas. So, at best, this must be seen as good psychological warfare to hem India in. Lalmonirhat is just 15 kilometres from the India-Bangladesh border. It won't be wrong

to expect the Chinese air force to display an unprofessional approach towards defence and strategic cooperation with Bangladesh were it to place assets at such an airfield.

A Slew Of Pakistani Visits

Since the end of 2024, the Pakistan army has been making a beeline for Bangladesh. In January 2025, a high-level ISI delegation

led by Major General Shahid Amir Afsar had visited Dhaka, marking one of the first significant engagements between the ISI and Bangladeshi officials in decades. The agenda probably focused on military and intelligence cooperation, including discussions on establishing an intelligence-sharing network between the two countries. The objective of that step does not need a second analysis. For the first time since 1971, the Pakistan army is set to train Bangladeshi military personnel. Starting February 2025, training sessions were to be conducted in multiple cantonments across Bangladesh, beginning with the one in Mymensingh, all supervised by senior officers of the Pakistan Army. The Bangladesh army views itself as professional, and second to none. Its leadership seeks to showcase itself in various UN missions and, often, overreaches itself in projection. Why such a force needs to bring in Pakistani training advisers is questionable. Can they be attempts at establishing intelligence bases? As I have always said, India left Bangladesh after defeating and evicting the Pakistan Army way back in January 1972, but Pakistan never left Bangladesh. It always maintained a shadowy presence there.

On it.

Ending racial injustice requires all of us to work together and take real action.

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Educate yourself about the history of American racism, privilege and what it means to be anti-racist.



Commit to actions that challenge injustice and make everyone feel like they belong, such as challenging biased or racist language when you hear it.



Vote in national and local elections to ensure your elected officials share your vision of public safety.



Donate to organizations, campaigns and initiatives who are committed to racial justice.



Let's come together to take action against racism and fight for racial justice for the Black community. Visit lovehasnolabels.com/fightforfreedom



Bezos' all-woman spaceflight is pure farce. How does a male midlife crisis empower women?



By Meera Innes

If the ruling class' proximity to female empowerment could be quantified in distance from the Earth, Jeff Bezos' farcical Blue Origin stunt covered it. There and back in around 10 minutes, the first all-female spaceflight in over 60 years took as much time—and made as much of a statement—as the average trip to the bathroom. Unironically marketed as a female empowerment initiative, the irony of a team of women in full “glam” and skintight Oscar de la Renta suits being

blasted off into the stratosphere by a chief executive of the broligarchy was not lost on the dismayed plebs watching from below. Earthlings were quick to slam the women for participating in the stunt—among them Oprah's bestie and formerly-credible journalist Gayle King; activist, bioastronautics scientist, and astrophysicist Amanda Nguyen; and (checks notes) Bezos' fiancé Lauren Sánchez. But we should remind ourselves that, had all of them refused, Bezos would have found others to fill the NASA-approved dildo.

Nothing stands between a tech billionaire and his boyhood dreams—least of all, a woman who says “no”. In the words of every Instagram-famous dating coach: If he wanted to, he would. Sánchez is a lucky lady. As for the rest of us down here who haven't forgotten that women on Earth are being stripped of rights on a daily basis, we're wondering how, exactly, this male midlife crisis empowers womankind. We're living in a world that is being abandoned for space by the very people doing the most to destroy it. At this point, regular people who can't make ends meet, let alone afford joyrides on rockets, are merely bystanders in our own destruction. The performative representation is a hard pill to swallow for an Earth-bound audience, many of whom are doing their best to simply survive as costs get increasingly more astronomical than opportunities.

Spokesmodels for a vanity mission

Of all the passengers, the only

one who gets to call herself an astronaut is the one who has done the most to actually empower women—and she did it all by herself. Amanda Nguyen's dream of being an astronaut was deferred by a decade, and she dedicated her career to civil rights for sexual assault survivors (following her own at her alma mater, Harvard). Her work has earned her a Nobel Peace Prize nomination, and she is behind landmark legislation passed by both the US Congress and the United Nations. Nguyen is a reminder of the resilience and perseverance of women, the ones who do it against all odds—the odds being systemic barriers created by tax-evading, corruption-funding supervillains like Jeff Bezos. Only Nguyen and former NASA rocket scientist Aisha Bowe were actually qualified to be up there, and it's a pity that they ended up being relegated to spokesmodels for a billionaire's vanity mission. Following the crew's

bumpy, scream-filled descent to reality, Gayle King has whined about feeling disrespected. “I don't like that people are calling it a ride. You never see a male astronaut who's going up in space, and they said, ‘Oh, he took a ride,’” she said. When an experienced journalist such as King conflates civilians who got their hair and makeup done for a high-altitude photo op with scientists who have spent years in gruelling training, you have to wonder if the ultra-rich are exempt from gravity altogether. Just how thin is the air down here, let alone up in space?

What would Butler say?

As I watch this bizarre farce unfold, I wonder what Octavia Butler—the Black feminist sci-fi writer famous for making societal predictions decades before they came to pass—would have made of it. Then I realise, prescient as she was, Butler already said it 30 years ago in *Parable of the Sower*: “That's all anybody can do right now.

Maharashtra: Is The 'Marathi Manooos' Still Listening To Raj Thackeray?

By Sunil Gatade, Venkatesh Kesari

It was the late Bal Thackeray's Marathi card that had once propelled Shiv Sena to the top in Mumbai, India's financial capital. Now, with a string of electoral defeats behind him, Raj Thackeray, the flamboyant nephew of the Shiv Sena founder, is seeking to take a leaf out of his uncle's book. The Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief is trying to re-establish relevance in Mumbai and other urban centres ahead of the upcoming municipal elections by reviving the 'Marathi manooos' plank through the Marathi card. A few days ago, a combative Thackeray stirred controversy by warning that his party would not hesitate to “slap” those who refuse to speak Marathi in the state. His aim is clear: to encroach upon the 'son of the soil' space traditionally held by the Shiv Sena. The Uddhav Thackeray-led faction is still reeling from its assembly election setback, while the



Eknath Shinde-led Sena is struggling to assert itself amid the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) growing dominance.

A Now-Or-Never Battle

Simultaneously, Raj Thackeray is signalling a willingness to align with the BJP, which has consolidated its position in Maharashtra a decade after emerging as the state's largest party. For Raj, the municipal polls represent a now-or-never opportunity to revive his political fortunes. His party failed to win a single assembly seat, and even his son Amit lost in their family stronghold. Though known for his oratory and style

reminiscent of his uncle, Raj Thackeray has never contested an election himself. His current campaign seems aimed not just at voters, but at the BJP—to remind it that he still holds sway in Mumbai. For the BJP, these elections are a chance to further marginalise Uddhav's party while preventing Shinde from gaining too much ground. Balancing these interests requires deft political management. Interestingly, Shinde's Sena has not championed the 'Marathi Manooos' cause, and is often seen as the BJP's 'B team'. Ajit Pawar's Nationalist Congress

Party (NCP), often dubbed the 'C team', prioritises power under the guise of development, largely ignoring regional identity issues. The language issue has regained emotional traction in a Mumbai that is increasingly cosmopolitan but still home to a significant Marathi-speaking population. No political party in Maharashtra can afford to ignore the Marathi language debate - it can either stir passions or be used to discredit opponents. Shiv Sena once led vigorous campaigns, even tearing down non-Marathi signboards. Those were the days when Bal Thackeray ruled Mumbai with an iron grip. He famously claimed he could shut down the city with just two phone calls - to PTI and UNI. He openly espoused “thokshahi”, that is, rule by force, with his followers even backing him with action - which included vandalising a cricket pitch ahead of a match with Pakistan.

Can The Uncle Save The Nephew?

While Raj Thackeray didn't split

the Sena like Shinde did, he's now attempting to hijack Bal Thackeray's legacy through the Marathi plank. This comes as Uddhav's party faces defections in Mumbai and the Konkan region, its traditional strongholds. Thackeray and the BJP may have a shared goal of limiting Shinde's influence, but that's easier said than done. Thackeray's biggest challenge has been his inconsistency. He has often been accused of abandoning causes midway, which has hurt his credibility. Whether Thackeray has changed after his latest electoral setback remains to be seen. He remains a powerful Marathi orator, reminiscent of Bal Thackeray at his peak. His success in reviving his political magic will be determined by how far the Marathi card takes him. Just yesterday, Thackeray issued a stern warning to the Indian Banks Association, urging immediate compliance with the RBI directive to include Marathi in banking services.

Modi's Waqf Reforms: A True Act Of Empowerment For Indian Muslims



By : Sanju Verma

In Bhopal, a Waqf complex was illegally constructed on government land, and out of 125 registered graveyards, 101 have mysteriously disappeared, with private individuals occupying the land. Additionally, a 24,450 sq. ft. Waqf property at Sarai Sikandari has seen 1,800 sq. ft. encroached upon by a local politician. In Hyderabad, 765 notices were issued to encroachers in 2021 alone, while Telangana's Waqf Board, one of India's richest, owns assets worth Rs 5 lakh crore, yet 75 per cent of its land is encroached upon. Akbaruddin Owaisi has also stated that 82 per cent of Waqf land in Hyderabad has been grabbed by private individuals. In Mumbai, over 60 per cent of Maharashtra's Waqf land has been illegally occupied, with the Lal Shah Baba Dargah in Parel, originally spanning 72 acres, now surrounded by residential towers built on Waqf land. In Lucknow, the Uttar Pradesh government has reported that 78 per cent of the land claimed by the Waqf Board is actually government-owned, with no legal Waqf rights, and a 1989 government order that illegally registered uncultivable land as Waqf property has been revoked. In Patna, the Bihar Sunni Waqf Board issued a notice claiming ownership of land in the Hindu-majority village of Govindpur, affecting seven Hindu households. In Ernakulam, Kerala, in September 2024, around 600 Christian families, particularly from the Cherai and Munambam areas, opposed the Waqf Board's claim over their land, which they argue has been in their possession for generations. All the aforesaid examples are a grim reminder of why the opaque and illegal Waqf Act of 1995, which bred corruption and disempowered poor Muslims, needed a thorough overhaul. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has empowered the marginalised Muslims of India with his bold reforms in this regard. President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent to the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, days after Parliament passed the legislation. The

new Act aligns with UMEED — Unified Waqf Management Empowerment, Efficiency and Development. The Rajya Sabha cleared the Bill with 128 votes in favour and 95 against, following nearly 17 hours of discussion. The Lok Sabha had passed the legislation after a 13-hour marathon debate, with 288 votes in favour and 232 against. Let the truth be told — the new Act (UMEED) is Prime Minister Modi's generous saugat — that is, gift — to India's deprived and vulnerable Muslims, long used as vote banks by successive Congress regimes. Waqf is a permanent dedication of movable or immovable property for religious, pious, or charitable purposes recognised under Muslim law. The management of Waqf properties has been governed by the Waqf Act, 1995, under the supervision of State Waqf Boards and the Central Waqf Council. The Charity Commissioner of Public Trusts regulates and supervises the functioning of Public Trusts established by any religion. Public Trusts are legal arrangements whereby property or assets are set aside by individuals or organisations for public benefit in religious, charitable, educational, or social welfare domains. They are regulated under various State Public Trust Acts, such as, for instance, the Maharashtra Public Trusts Act, 2012 (earlier the Bombay Public Trusts Act, 1950), and are administered by Charity Commissioners. However, the regulating body of Waqf, i.e., the Waqf Board, is not a legal or religious body; it is merely a statutory body responsible for the supervision and management of land affairs.

Under the garb of secularism, for the longest time, successive Congress-led governments in India allowed the Waqf Boards to be treated as a law unto themselves.

In states where the Charity Act is in force, the Charity Commissioner of Public Trusts can belong to any religion. Accordingly, under the new Act, members of state Waqf Boards can also be non-Muslims, as the role of both Waqf Boards and

Charity Commissioners is entirely administrative, not religious. Therefore, for effective governance and better functioning of Waqf Boards, domain experts can be appointed from among Muslims or non-Muslims.

Also, the new Act is strictly meant to improve the functioning of Waqf Boards and does not intervene in the day-to-day functioning of the Waqf or the Waqf mansha (intention of the Waqf). So why the hue and cry by vested lobbies such as, say, the AIMPLB? Does the AIMPLB not want greater transparency and accountability? Why is it so frightened of reforms that will ensure better governance of Waqfs?

More importantly, there are some significant case laws that clearly establish that state Waqf Boards are statutory bodies, not religious ones:

Syed Fazal Pookoya Thangal vs Union of India (Kerala High Court, 1993) — clarified that the Waqf Board is a government-regulated body, not a religious representative.

Hafiz Mohammad Zafar Ahmad vs UP Central Sunni Board of Waqf (Allahabad High Court, 1965) — ruled that a

Mutawalli (Waqf caretaker) does not own Waqf property but merely manages it.

Tilkayat Shri Govindlalji Maharaj vs State of Rajasthan (Supreme Court, 1964) — declared that managing temple properties is a secular duty, a principle that also applies to Waqf properties.

Further, Section 96 of the Waqf Act, 1995, clearly empowers the Central government to regulate the secular activities of Auqaf, which include social, economic, and educational welfare. Therefore, those protesting against the new Act, claiming it has encroached upon the religious freedom of minorities under Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution, are completely wrong yet again. Waqf Boards are not religious bodies, so religious freedom does not come into play at all. Land grabbing by vested interests, using various loopholes in the draconian Waqf Act of 1995, was used to usurp the properties of poor Muslims and non-Muslims. Now, those same vested interests are crying foul and giving the entire Waqf debate a religious colour simply to polarise the narrative and deflect attention from the rampant land grabbing by various Sunni-dominant, wealthy Waqf Boards over the last many decades.



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It's time to move on from Kalapani and Ayodhya. India-Nepal need a real reset

(News Agency)- In the shadow of resurgent royalist fervour sweeping through Nepal since 8 March 2025—the day the former king made a public appearance and the streets of Kathmandu echoed with 'bring back the monarchy'—a familiar script is playing out. That India has a role in such demonstrations. Now, with ultra-nationalist sentiment at a fever pitch and the monarchy re-emerging as a symbol of defiance, India-Nepal relations stand at an extreme crossroads. The much-talked-about Modi-Oli handshake on the sidelines of the BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok was billed as a diplomatic reset, but it now looks like a fleeting photo-op lost in the noise of domestic chaos and regional distrust. So, where do we go from here—toward reconciliation or rupture?

A quick and easy answer would be that the two countries maintain a status quo: engage when required, and let business, trade, and people-to-people ties continue to hold the ground between the two next-door neighbours.

But tensions on the political turf often overshadow the entire spectrum of relationships, and that may be happening between Kathmandu and Delhi—a familiar pattern in the past seven decades of diplomatic ties. However, an understanding of what contributed to this thaw may have the answer to what can



be done.

Kalapani, Ram, and India's Lakshman Rekhas

KP Sharma Oli, the chairman of the Nepal Communist Party-UML (CPN-UML)—the largest party in Nepal's Parliament—was appointed Prime Minister in July 2024. By established tradition, his first state visit should have been to India. However, it seems that Oli did not receive an invitation from Delhi, possibly because Prime Minister Modi had a busy year in the latter half.

With no reported invitation from India, Oli chose to visit Beijing last December. After all, he needed to establish his foreign policy priorities with either of his two neighbours. And for a landlocked country

flanked by two Asian giants, what is wrong with choosing China this time?

In answering the core question, if anything has truly strained Kathmandu's ties in the past decade with New Delhi, it has been KP Sharma Oli's combative posture. This has been defined by a series of unilateral policy decisions that have repeatedly irked India.

Foremost among them was his move to thrust the Kalapani territorial dispute into the centre of national politics. He redrew Nepal's political map to include the contested region and enshrined this claim in the constitution. This was not just a symbolic move—it was a permanent assertion over a territory that Nepal had previously recognised as disputed and still

under diplomatic negotiation.

Nepal's decision to unilaterally change its political map was particularly ill-timed. It came at a moment when India was entangled in a high-stakes border standoff with China. This made Nepal's assertiveness appear not only opportunistic but also strategically insensitive in New Delhi's eyes.

The Modi administration, which has been highly attuned to issues of sovereignty and territorial integrity, viewed Oli's manoeuvre as a provocation that crossed a red line. It derailed trust and complicated an already fragile bilateral relationship.

What has further strained ties in recent years is Oli's subtle and seemingly deliberate targeting of shared cultural sensitivities. One of the most controversial examples was his attempt to reinterpret the birthplace of the Hindu god Ram. He claimed that the "real" Ayodhya was located in Nepal, not in India. The reasoning given was that it was implausible for Ram to have travelled from India to Janakpur to marry Sita. He suggested, instead, that Ram was born closer to Janakpur itself. Such revisionist claims not only troubled religious sentiment, but were also seen in India as a calculated 'cultural encroachment'—one that sought to question deeply rooted cultural and historical narratives shared between the two nations.

Amid Trump's tariff war, China issues over 85,000 visas to 'Indian friends'

(News Agency)- The Chinese Embassy in India has issued more than 85,000 visas to Indian citizens between January 1 and April 9, 2025, highlighting a major effort to enhance people-to-people connections between the two countries. Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feihong invited more Indians to visit China and experience its "open, safe, and friendly environment". "As of April 9, 2025, the Chinese Embassy and Consulates in India have issued more than 85,000 visas to Indian citizens traveling to China this year. Welcome more Indian friends to visit China, experience an open, safe, vibrant, sincere and friendly China," Xu said in a post on X. Visa numbers are showing a marked increase, with 85,000 issued in just the first four months of 2025, compared to 180,000 throughout 2023. Last year, the Chinese embassy updated its visa application requirements, introducing several key relaxations.

Indian applicants no longer need to book an online appointment before submitting their visa applications. Instead they can



directly submit them at visa centres during working days. Additionally, individuals applying for short-term, single or double-entry visas for stays under 180 days are

exempt from providing biometric data, such as fingerprints. Along with these changes, the Chinese Embassy has also reduced visa application fees, introducing new, lower

charges for applicants.

TRUMP'S TARIFF WAR

China announced the updated figures at a time when US President Donald Trump rammed up warnings of potential trade tariffs on almost every country, zeroing in on China, which is Washington's prime trading partner and economic adversary. Trump has raised US tariffs on Chinese imports to 145 per cent while halting new tariffs on goods from other countries. In retaliation, China has imposed a 125 per cent tariff on American products. China has also urged India and other countries to stand with it in opposing what it called the "US tariff abuse". Yu Jing, spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in India, last week, said India and China, as the two largest developing countries, should unite against the US tariff actions. "China-India economic and trade relationship is based on complementarity and mutual benefit. Facing the US abuse of tariffs... the two largest developing countries should stand together to overcome the difficulties," Jing said in a post on X.

Fatwa against actor Vijay for controversial iftar party: He invited alcoholics

A fatwa was issued against Tamil Nadu actor-politician Thalapathy Vijay by a Sunni Muslim body in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh.

Maulana Shahabuddin Razvi Bareilly, National President of the All India Muslim Jamaat and Chief Mufti of Chashme Darul Ifta, issued the fatwa against the actor. The fatwa, issued in response to a question, states that the actor-politician is anti-Muslim, and cites his background and previous actions as "examples shown against Islam".

It also declares that inviting "alcoholics and gamblers to Iftar" is illegal and sinful, and advises Muslims in Tamil Nadu not to trust or include such persons in their religious programmes.

"Vijay Thalapathy is using Muslim sentiments to make his way into politics from the film world when his history is full of anti-Muslim sentiment," Maulana Razvi said. "In his film



'The Beast', he has linked Muslims and the entire Muslim community with terrorism and militancy. In the film, Thalapathy tries to show Muslims as 'monsters' and 'devils'. And now since he is entering politics and he wants votes, he is doing Muslim appeasement."

He also accused Vijay of violating the sanctity of Ramadan by inviting "drunkards and troublemakers" to an Iftar

event. "These people were neither fasting nor following Islamic practices," he said, adding that Sunni Muslims in Tamil Nadu had filed a police complaint over the matter.

Maulana Razvi urged Muslims to "distance themselves from Vijay Thalapathy, not attend his programmes and not invite him to their religious programmes."

The Tamil Nadu Sunnat Jamath, on March 11, filed a

complaint with the Chennai Police Commissioner, alleging Vijay's Iftar party was poorly managed and featured "drunkards" with "nothing to do with Iftar", thereby "insulting Muslims".

The TVK founder and chief hosted an Iftar party on March 8 at Chennai's YMCA grounds. He wore a skull cap, joined the evening namaz, and broke his fast with attendees at the event

organised by his party.

Sunnat Jamath's treasurer Syed Kous told the media: "Muslims were insulted at the Iftar programme organised by Vijay. We believe the participation of drunkards and rowdies who had nothing to do with fasting or Iftar has insulted Muslims.

Asserting that the group didn't file the "complaint for publicity", Kous said, "Legal action should be taken against Vijay to ensure that this does not happen again."

Former Tamil Nadu BJP state unit chief K Annamalai, too, had earlier came down heavily on Vijay for the Iftar party. Annamalai questioned Vijay: "You will smoke and drink in movies, and then who gave you the right to speak about Tasmac? What was your character in the movie 'Master'? Nothing will change just by wearing a skullcap for a day, holding an Iftar event, and claiming to stand with minorities," he said.

India sends 20 temporary offices for Myanmar ministries in post-quake support



Indian Air Force aircraft airlifted approximately 50 tonnes of components of 20 pre-fabricated offices to earthquake-hit Myanmar, as India's humanitarian mission 'Operation Brahma' continues. These structures are intended to serve as temporary offices for various ministries in Naypyidaw. In a related development, two Air Force aircraft were also deployed to repatriate the doctors and personnel of the 60-Para Field Hospital following its de-induction. The 200-bed field hospital, established as part of India's immediate response to the recent earthquake, successfully

provided medical treatment to 2,519 patients over the past two weeks.

Under 'Operation Brahma', India was the first to respond to the earthquake that struck Myanmar on March 28, which killed over 3,000 people.

To date, India has provided approximately 750 metric tonnes of relief supplies, including essential medicines, foodgrains, ready-to-eat meals, tents, blankets, generators, rapidly deployable surgical and medical shelters, water sanitation and hygiene services, drinking water, essential clothing, and the aforementioned 20 prefabricated office/residential structures.

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Trump administration refers NY AG Letitia James for possible prosecution over allegations of mortgage fraud

(News Agency)-New York Attorney General Letitia James has been hit with shocking allegations by the Trump administration, accusing her of mortgage fraud.

In documents obtained by Fox News Channel's "The Ingraham Angle," the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) sent a criminal referral to the Department of Justice on Tuesday, accusing James of mortgage fraud.

FHFA Director William Pulte said in a letter to Attorney General Pam Bondi that James appears to have falsified records to meet certain lending requirements and receive favorable loan terms.

Pulte cited a property in Virginia that James allegedly claimed as her principal residence and a property in New York she claimed as a four-unit structure instead of five, which he said could mean she was able to get a different and more favorable loan.

In response, a spokesperson for James' office said Wednesday morning that she has been



"focused every single day on protecting New Yorkers, especially as this administration weaponizes the federal government against the rule of law and the Constitution. She will not be intimidated by bullies — no matter who they are."

Fox News contributor and George Washington University law professor Jonathan Turley told Fox News host Laura Ingraham the irony of James getting accused of falsifying records is "perfectly crushing."

"This is a person who prosecuted

Trump for everything short of ripping a label off a mattress, and among the charges that were brought in New York, in not just the civil but the criminal case, was making false or misleading statements to financial institutions," Turley said. "As for James, if we apply the Letitia James standard that she created, there'd be little question here. This seems pretty straightforward."

He explained the Trump administration is saying this was not her principal residence

because, as a New York elected official, she has to say her principal residence is in New York.

James is also accused of saying her father was her husband to file as a married couple, Turley added.

"The Supreme Court just stated earlier in March, in a case called Thompson, that they want to see knowing false statements under sections, like 10-14, not just misleading statements," Turley said. "These are misleading statements. Either it's your principal residence or it's not. Either you're married to your father or he's your father."

The DOJ did not respond to Fox News on the matter. The issue has been prosecuted in the past, but as Turley said on "The Ingraham Angle," the "documents themselves are quite damning." Retired NYPD inspector and Fox News contributor Paul Mauro told Fox News Digital he first reported the allegations against James on his Substack almost 10 weeks ago. "The documents presented

by Sam Antar, and the research he has done, appear entirely authentic," Mauro said. "In which case, AG James appears to have engaged in the very sort of fraud which she alleged in her ludicrous case against Donald Trump. Let's see now, if indeed, as AG James has stated herself, nobody is above the law."

The New York Post reported that the documents show that the property James purchased with her father had both parties listed as "husband and wife" in 1983 and 2000. "While this was a long time ago, it raises serious concerns about the validity of Ms. James' representations on mortgage applications," Pulte reportedly wrote. James brought forth a civil fraud suit against President Donald Trump, the Trump Organization and its senior leadership in 2022, frequently sitting in the courtroom throughout the proceedings and celebrating the prosecution of Trump in the Manhattan criminal trial over the 34 counts of falsifying business records.

Trump asks revenue agency to cancel defiant Harvard's tax-exempt status: Report



(News Agency)- The Trump administration has asked the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) attorney to cancel Harvard University's tax-exempt status amid ongoing efforts to change certain hiring and academic policies, reported The Washington Post. President Donald Trump was vocal in his disappointment with the

institution's method of dealing with antisemitism and diversity practices.

No announcement has been made on the decision, but reports claimed that it could be announced soon. Meanwhile, the administration has already halted over \$2 billion in federal funding to the university. Harvard has pushed back, saying it has the right to run

The Trump administration has urged the IRS to revoke Harvard's tax-exempt status due to concerns over its handling of antisemitism and diversity policies. No decision has been made yet, but Harvard has already lost over \$2 billion in federal funding.

its own programs and make its own decisions.

US President Donald Trump hinted at a punishment for the university. On Truth Social, he posted, "Perhaps Harvard should lose its Tax Exempt Status and be Taxed as a Political Entity if it keeps pushing political, ideological, and terrorist inspired/supporting 'Sickness?' Remember, Tax Exempt Status is totally contingent on acting in the PUBLIC INTEREST!"

However, Harvard has not responded to the claims.

COULD THIS SET A NEW PRECEDENT?

If the IRS removes Harvard's tax-exempt status, it would be

a highly unusual move. Gary Shapley, who was recently chosen by Trump to be the acting IRS commissioner, does have the legal authority to do this. But such actions are rare. In fact, the last time something similar happened was in the 1980s, when the IRS revoked a Christian college's tax exemption over a racially discriminatory admissions policy.

Tax exemptions are normally given to non-profit institutions like schools and charities. But if they are found to be engaging in too much political activity, they can lose that privilege.

If the IRS takes away Harvard's tax-exempt status, it

would be a rare action. One of Trump's recent appointees, Gary Shapley, who is now the acting IRS commissioner, does have the power to do this legally. The last time something like this occurred was during the 1980s when the IRS withdrew a Christian college's tax exemption over a racially discriminatory admissions policy. Harvard is amongst the first top institutions to openly defy the demands of the Trump administration. The president had warned other schools, threatening to cut their funding if they didn't comply. On Wednesday, Trump called Harvard a "joke" and declared that it should no longer get federal funding.

How Italy's Meloni May Save Europe From Trump Tariffs As All Others Fail

(News Agency)- Italy's PM Giorgia Meloni will fly to Washington to speak with US President Donald Trump regarding tariffs on Europe. The tariffs will potentially be a lethal blow to Italian exporters.

However, her counterparts from Europe feel she may be the only European leader Trump might be willing to listen to, since Trump had said that she is "a fantastic leader and person", when he invited her to this inauguration ceremony in January. Other European leaders have tried to change the US President's mind through various means - flattery, threats or promises to buy more American gas, but the talks reached nowhere.

Currently the European Union has three months to convince Trump not to slap 20 per cent duties on all its exports to the United States, apart from the baseline 10 per cent tariff with another 25 per cent on steel,



aluminium and autos.

As Meloni speaks to Trump on Thursday, it is Europe's opportunity to show that they can still do business with the US. Moreover she herself thinks that Trump can be reasoned with and that his trade threats are just a negotiating tactic, per two Italian officials familiar with the government's political stance.

"Having Trump's ear is an asset for the entire European Union," an Italian official told Politico, underlining Meloni's "ideological affinities with the world of American conservative right-wing politics."

It's worthwhile to note that Italy has the third-largest trade surplus with the US as compared

to other EU countries, standing at 40 billion euros. Its top exports are machinery, pharmaceuticals, vehicles, fashion, and food and beverages.

Nevertheless, there is a separate fear brewing in Europe. French President Emmanuel Macron warned that Trump's ultimate goal is to divide EU countries and force them to make bilateral

deals with the US. French Industry Minister Marc Ferracci reacted to Meloni travelling to Washington saying Europe needed to stay united.

German politicians are also hopeful. "Meloni's trip to Washington right now is an important signal," said Johann Wadephul, from the likely next chancellor, Friedrich Merz's Christian Democrats. "The Italian prime minister has a good connection to U.S. President Trump, which she can now put to the service of Europe."

"Politics, like life, is built on personal relationships," said Marco Scurria, an Italian senator from Meloni's Brothers of Italy party. "It's better when such a complex negotiation is handled by two people who respect each other and can more easily reach a positive outcome - unlike with von der Leyen (the head of the European Commission)."

Blue state senator flies to El Salvador to visit deported migrant in prison, only to be denied



Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., was denied a visit with a Salvadoran migrant and accused MS-13 member who was deported to El Salvador, after flying to the country on Wednesday morning.

Van Hollen intended to visit Kilmar Abrego Garcia, 29, who was deported to the El Salvadoran mega prison "Terrorism Confinement Center" (CECOT) for being an alleged MS-13 gang member, though his attorneys maintain he does not have any gang ties. Van Hollen spoke to reporters from El Salvador on Wednesday afternoon, when he vowed to continue pressing for access to Abrego Garcia. He met with Vice President Félix Augusto Antonio

Ulloa Garay because President Nayib Armando Bukele Ortiz was out of the country, though Van Hollen said he was grateful to speak about the case of Abrego Garcia. "I asked the vice president if I could meet with Mr. Abrego Garcia, and he said, 'well, you need to make earlier provisions to go visit CECOT,'" Van Hollen said.

He told Ulloa that he was not interested in taking a tour of CECOT and that he just wanted to meet with Abrego Garcia. "He said he was not able to make that happen," Van Hollen said of Ulloa.

When Van Hollen asked if he could come back next week to see Abrego Garcia, Ulloa told him he could not promise that, either.



JD Vance's India visit: Meeting with PM, trip to Jaipur, Agra on the cards

During the India visit, JD Vance will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and will also make trips to key cultural sites such as Jaipur and Agra.

US Vice President JD Vance will visit India next week. The visit, which comes amid the two nations trying to negotiate a trade deal, will include a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and trips to key cultural sites such as Jaipur and Agra.

A statement by the Vice President's Office mentioned that JD Vance and his family will

be travelling to Italy and India from April 18 to April 24. He is expected to be accompanied by his wife Usha and their three children- Ewan, Vivek and Mirabel.

"The Vice President will discuss shared economic and geopolitical priorities with leaders in each country," the statement said.

In Italy, JD Vance, Trump's second-in-command, will hold meetings with Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, as well as Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

He will then travel to India and visit New Delhi, Jaipur, and Agra. He will hold a one-on-one meeting with PM Modi.

PM Modi had previously met the Vance family in France in February. He had presented gifts to JD Vance's two sons and daughter, which Vance said they "really enjoyed".

PM Modi gifted a wooden railway toy set to Vivek Vance and a jigsaw puzzle featuring Indian folk paintings to Ewan Blaine Vance. For Mirabel Rose Vance, PM Modi gifted an eco-friendly

wooden alphabet set.

The US Vice President called PM Modi "gracious and kind", adding that "the kids really enjoyed the gifts". "I'm grateful to him for the wonderful conversation," Vance said.

VANCE'S VISIT AND INDIA-US TRADE DEAL- VD Vance's visit to India comes at a crucial time, as New Delhi and Washington are actively engaged in talks to reach a trade agreement. Back in February, India and the US had agreed to pursue the first leg of a broader trade pact, aiming

for its completion by the end of the year. The long-term goal is to boost bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030.

But with the Trump administration's tough stance on tariffs, negotiations are still underway. Last week, a Reuters report mentioned that both countries have finalised the terms of reference for discussions on the initial phase of the deal, with an Indian official expressing optimism that a "win-win" outcome could be achieved within the next 90 days.

Powerful House leadership chair, Stefanik poised to take on Hochul for NY governor

Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., is considering a 2026 bid for governor in her home state, multiple sources close to her confirmed to Fox News Digital.

Stefanik was withdrawn from consideration as President Donald Trump's United Nations Ambassador to shore up numbers of the House Republicans' narrow majority. She is now the chairwoman of House Republican Leadership. Sources tell Fox News Digital that she is being encouraged to run by allies of Trump and longtime friends. Stefanik outperformed the president in her congressional district in 2016, 2020 and 2024, which one source says could be an indicator that she could do well with New York's swing voters. The Republican won with 62% of the vote in her strongly conservative district in November.

On Wednesday, Stefanik made the case for a GOP win in New York next year when she commented on a new poll by Marist, which is the latest to indicate that Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul's approval ratings are underwater with New York State voters.

"This latest bombshell polling proves what every New Yorker already knows: that we must FIRE Kathy Hochul in 2026 to SAVE NEW YORK. Hochul is the Worst Governor in America and it's not even close," Stefanik argued in a statement. Stefanik is a top Trump ally in the House, and the president posted on social

media Wednesday morning that "Congresswoman Elise Stefanik is GREAT!!!"

The six-term lawmaker has \$10 million cash-on-hand through her fundraising entities, and is considered popular among Republican voters in the state. Stefanik was the keynote speaker at a New York GOP event on Tuesday night.

At the time of her nomination's withdrawal, Hochul said it was a matter of holding the line in Congress.

"I have been proud to be a team player. The president knows that. He and I had multiple conversations today, and we are committed to delivering results on behalf of the American people. And as always, I'm committed to delivering results on behalf of my constituents," Stefanik said on Fox News' "Hannity" last month. Trump said he would work on finding a replacement pick, which has not been announced yet.

"As we advance our America First Agenda, it is essential that we maintain EVERY Republican Seat in Congress. We must be unified to accomplish our Mission, and Elise Stefanik has been a vital part of our efforts from the very beginning," the president posted to Truth Social at the time.

"I have asked Elise, as one of my biggest Allies, to remain in Congress to help me deliver His-

toric Tax Cuts, GREAT Jobs, Record Economic Growth, a Secure Border, Energy Dominance, Peace Through Strength, and much more, so we can MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN. With a very tight Majority, I don't want to take a chance on anyone else running for Elise's seat. The people love Elise and, with her, we have nothing to worry about come Election Day. There are others that can do a good job at the United Nations. Stefanik is far from the only well-known Republican in New York State considering a 2026 run for governor. Rep. Mike Lawler, who is in his second term representing the state's 17th Congressional District, which covers a large swath of New York City's northern suburbs, is mulling a bid.

"I'll make a decision at some point — middle of the year. Obviously, you know if we're going to do it, you got to get out there, and you got to campaign hard," Lawler said last week in an interview with Fox News Digital.

He added, "I haven't made a decision yet. I think, obviously, there's a number of factors in play, but you know, we're working through that right now."

Among the other Republicans weighing a gubernatorial run are Nassau County executive Bruce Blakeman, who, like Stefanik, is a major Trump supporter and ally. Longtime Bethany town supervisor Carl Hyde Jr. is also

considering a run.

Democrats are salivating over a potential GOP gubernatorial primary in the Empire State.

CAN REPUBLICANS BRING AN END TO THEIR 23-YEAR LOSING STREAK IN THIS BLUE STATE?

"New York's Republican primary is set to be a nasty and vicious race to see who can be the Trumpiest — and most out of touch with New Yorkers," Democratic Governors Association spokesperson Kevin Donohoe argued in a statement. "All three potential candidates in this race are running to bring Donald Trump's extreme agenda of raising costs and taking away fundamental freedoms to Albany — and could not be more out of step with New York." It's been 23 years since a Republican won a gubernatorial election in heavily blue New York State. You have to go all the way back to former Gov. George Pataki's second re-election victory in 2002.

But with Hochul's approval ratings and favorable ratings remaining in negative territory, Republicans are optimistic their losing streak will come to an end next year. The governor also faces potential long-shot Democratic primary challenges from her lieutenant governor, Antonio Delgado, as well as Rep. Ritchie Torres.

Hochul, who at the time was the state's lieutenant governor, was

sworn in as New York's first female governor in August 2021 after three-term Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo resigned in disgrace amid multiple scandals. But she narrowly won a full four-year term in the 2022 gubernatorial election, defeating then-Rep. Lee Zeldin, who now steers the Environmental Protection Agency in the Trump administration.

Zeldin — who lost to Hochul by less than six and a half points — had the best performance by a GOP gubernatorial candidate in New York since Pataki's 2002 victory. Trump lost the state to then-Vice President Kamala Harris by 13 points in last November's presidential election, but that was a 10-point improvement from his loss margin to former President Joe Biden in the 2020 election.

"What is really telling is that you have three, at least, very qualified Republican candidates looking at it," a veteran Republican strategist who works on New York State races told Fox News. "I think it shows her [Hochul's] vulnerability."

Stefanik's departure could still have an impact on House Republicans' razor-thin three-seat majority, but GOP leaders hope to be done with their plans for a massive conservative policy overhaul via the budget reconciliation process by the end of this year.

US giant Fannie Mae fires 200, mostly Telugus, over salary fraud: Report

American mortgage giant, Fannie Mae, has reportedly fired around 200 employees, a majority of them Telugus, on "ethical grounds". In January, Apple fired around 50 employees, including some Indians, at its headquarters in Cupertino over charges that they indulged in monetary fraud to boost their compensation. An Indian-American Congressman has launched a probe into the mass firings and sought an explanation from Fannie Mae.

The 200 Indian-American staffers were employees of the Federal National Mortgage Association, commonly known as Fannie Mae, the biggest American company in terms of assets. Fannie Mae laid off 700 staffers, including those for fraud, as part of its restructuring efforts. It is a US government-run enterprise.

A majority of the 200 staffers fired by Fannie Mae on "ethical grounds" are Telugus, according to a report by The Times of India.

The alleged ethical violations are linked to irregularities and misuse of Fannie Mae's matching grants programme.

This payment is an extension of the salaries of the employees. It is a com-

pensation to what the employees donate under the matching gift programme.

The now-sacked employees allegedly collaborated with nonprofit organisations — some linked to the Telugu community in the US — and falsified donations to exploit the programme and access company funds.

INDIAN-AMERICAN CONGRESSMAN SEEKS FANNIE MAE RESPONSE

Several employees are accused of colluding with the Telugu Association of North America (TANA) to deceive companies and misuse funds, according to The Times of India report. One of the employees laid off on Thursday reportedly held the position of regional vice president at TANA, while another is the spouse of a former president of the American Telugu Association (ATA).

Sources said TANA is not the only organisation involved and other associations were also under investigation.

Some people working with Fannie Mae told TOI that the lay-offs were made on April 9 and 10, and were on "ethical grounds".

Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are the two states with the most Telugu-speaking people.

Indian-American Congressman Suhas Subramanyam from Virginia said on April 9 that he had sought a response from Fannie Mae.

"It has been brought to my attention that Fannie Mae has accused hundreds of my constituents in the Indian-American community of fraudulent behaviour and fired them without conducting a full investigation or providing evidence," said Subramanyam.

"I have spoken with many of these employees in our community, and they deserve due process. Fannie Mae owes them, Congress, and the American people an explanation immediately," the Congressman added. **TELUGU ASSOCIATION FACED SIMILAR CHARGES IN APPLE CASE**

In December 2024, the Northern District of California court issued a subpoena to TANA, requiring the group to testify before a grand jury. The subpoena demanded records of donations received, amounts spent, and details of organisational representatives from 2019 to 2024. Similar alle-

gations surfaced against employees at tech-company Apple earlier this year. The company reportedly terminated over 100 employees, including around 50 at its Cupertino headquarters, after uncovering a monetary fraud scheme designed to inflate employee compensation.

Authorities in the Bay Area had issued warrants against six of the fired Apple employees — none of whom were Indian.

However, reports indicated that several Indian employees were involved in misusing Telugu charity organisations in the US for fraudulent activities.

The scheme reportedly involved employees pretending to make donations, which were later returned to them. Apple's matching contributions were retained, and the fictitious donations were written-off on the defendants' tax returns, defrauding the state of California in the process. After Apple, the sacking of 200 employees, mostly Telugus, over the scam indicates that the manipulation isn't restricted to a single American company and might be more widespread than believed. A fair probe will reveal the origins and the extent of it.

Inside Gensol's loan fraud: The fake documents used to hide debt

+ The promoters of Gensol Engineering, Anmol Singh Jaggi and Puneet Singh Jaggi, have been found by Sebi (Securities and Exchange Board of India) to have submitted fake documents to the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) and Power Finance Corporation (PFC) to hide loan defaults.

These findings were shared in a recent interim order by Sebi after a detailed investigation.

Sebi began looking into Gensol's affairs after receiving a complaint in June 2024. The complaint raised concerns about possible manipulation of the company's share price and the diversion of funds. Sebi soon found that there were deeper problems related to the company's loan records and financial dealings.

CREDIT RATINGS DROPPED TO 'D' Two major credit rating agencies, CARE Ratings and ICRA, downgraded Gensol's credit ratings to "D" in March 2025. This rating is used when a com-

pany has delays in paying back loans. According to ICRA, the downgrade was due to feedback from Gensol's lenders that the company was delaying its loan payments. At the time, Gensol claimed in its public disclosures that it had enough money to meet its loan obligations.

Gensol shared an investor update via the stock exchange platform, on March 5, 2024. The release, signed by CEO Anmol Singh Jaggi, clearly stated that the company had no role in the "falsification claims" raised by the rating agency.

FAKE LETTERS FROM LENDERS Sebi found that when the credit rating agencies asked Gensol to share term loan statements from all its lenders, the company shared documents for most lenders, except for IREDA and PFC.

Instead of proper statements from these two lenders, Gensol submitted what it called "Conduct Letters". These letters claimed that the company had

been paying its loans on time. The company also submitted "No Objection Certificates" (NOCs), which are usually required to withdraw credit ratings. ICRA, in its statement, as per the Sebi order, said, "Certain documents shared by GEL with ICRA, on its debt servicing track record, were apparently falsified, which raises concerns on its corporate governance practices, including its liquidity position." However, when the rating agencies reached out to IREDA and PFC to confirm the documents, both lenders clearly said they had not issued any such letters. This confirmed that the documents shared by Gensol were not genuine.

After learning that the documents were fake, Sebi asked IREDA and PFC for full details about Gensol's loans. Both lenders shared the loan sanction letters and account statements. On going through these records, Sebi found several cases where Gensol had failed to pay back loans on time.

FUNDS MISSING FROM EV PURCHASE

Sebi's interim order also pointed to problems with how Gensol used the loan money. The company had taken term loans worth Rs 977.75 crore from IREDA and PFC. Out of this, Rs 663.89 crore was meant for buying 6,400 electric vehicles (EVs), which Gensol said would be leased to BluSmart, a related party.

But in a letter dated February 14, 2025, Gensol admitted that it had only bought 4,704 EVs so far. This was also confirmed by Go-Auto Private Limited, the company's stated supplier, which said it had sold 4,704 EVs to Gensol for Rs 567.73 crore.

Based on the funding received, Gensol was supposed to add a 20% margin amount from its own side, making the total expected spending Rs 829.86 crore. However, with only Rs 567.73 crore used for buying the EVs, there is a gap of Rs 262.13 crore which remains unaccounted for.

Visa revoked, Indian student sues Trump administration over deportation threat

An Indian student and three others have sued the Donald Trump administration over possible deportation from the US after their student immigration status was terminated this month. Through the lawsuit, the students have sought to regain their legal status in the US, PTI reported.

The development comes at a time when the Trump administration has started revoking visas of international students over alleged campus activism. Hundreds of students, including Indians, have received emails asking them to self-deport. Students accused of minor criminal

offences like shoplifting or traffic violations are also being targeted.

WHAT IS THE CASE?

India's Chinmay Deore, who studies at Wayne State University, two students from China and one from Nepal filed the lawsuit against Homeland Security and immigration officials. They have alleged that their student immigration status in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) was "illegally terminated" without any notice or explanation. The SEVIS database contains information about non-immigrant students in the US.

The development means the students no longer have legal status in the US, and would have to leave the country immediately. The lawsuit, filed in the US District Court Eastern District of Michigan, was filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) on behalf of the students.

Asking the court to reinstate their legal status, the students said neither were they charged with any crime, nor did they violate any immigration law. The students said they were also not active in on-campus protests regarding any political issue.

"At most, what seems to connect

the students is that they had some encounter with some American law enforcement official at some point in the past, no matter how innocuous -- including receiving a speeding or parking ticket (or even a warning) or lawfully withdrawing an application to enter the US," the complaint said.

'AIM IS TO SOW CHAOS AND FEAR'

Oren Khogali, executive director of the ACLU of Michigan, said the Trump administration was acting as if basic constitutional requirements don't apply to them, according to a report in the Detroit Free Press.

"The aim of this administration is to sow chaos and fear by attacking some people to terrorise us all... They are now coming for international students who provide critical perspectives and contributions to our academic communities and, through their spending, make a major contribution to our economy," Khogali said.

The development comes days after a US judge temporarily blocked the Trump administration from deporting a 21-year-old Indian undergraduate, Krish Lal Isserdasani, whose student visa was cancelled. Krish is set to graduate in May.

ED attaches land worth Rs 1,460-crore in Aamby Valley linked to Sahara Group

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached 707 acres of land in and around Aamby Valley City in Maharashtra's Lonavala, with an estimated market value of Rs 1,460 crore. The action was taken under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, in connection with an ongoing investigation against Sahara India and its group entities.

According to the ED, the land was bought using money diverted from Sahara group companies and registered under benami names.

The probe was launched based on three FIRs registered by police in Odisha, Bihar and Rajasthan against Humara India Credit Co-operative Society Ltd (HICCSL) and others under IPC sections 420 (cheating) and 120B (criminal conspiracy). Over 500 FIRs have reportedly been filed against Sahara Group entities across different states, more than 300 of which relate to offences listed under the PMLA.

The FIRs allege that the group collected deposits from people by making false promises, forced them to re-

invest without consent and refused to pay back the maturity amounts even after repeated requests.

The ED's investigation found that Sahara Group was running a large Ponzi scheme through various companies, including HICCSL, Sahara Credit Cooperative Society Ltd, Saharain Universal Multipurpose Cooperative Society, Stars Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd, Sahara India Commercial Corporation Ltd, Sahara India Real Estate Corporation Ltd and Sahara Housing Investment Corporation Ltd.

The group is accused of luring depositors with the promise of high returns and agents with attractive commissions. However, the funds were misused without informing investors and without any regulatory oversight. When deposits matured, instead of repaying, the group allegedly persuaded or forced depositors to reinvest in other schemes, while showing manipulated records to make it appear as though repayments were made.

ED officials said Sahara Group continued to collect fresh deposits even though it was unable to repay existing

investors. The investigation also found that part of the money was used to create benami properties, fund personal expenses, and maintain a lavish lifestyle. In some cases, group assets were sold, with payments taken partly in unaccounted cash, further depriving depositors of their rightful dues.

During the probe, the ED recorded statements of depositors, agents, Sahara employees and others under Section 50 of the PMLA. Raids were also conducted during which unexplained cash worth Rs 2.98 crore was seized.

REAL ID looming deadline prompts TSA travel warning: 'Expect delays'

The fast-approaching deadline for REAL IDs has many Americans rushing to obtain the important new identification even as travel issues may lie ahead.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) issued a press release reminding Americans of the May 7 deadline while also warning of delays. "Passengers who present a state-issued identification that is not REAL ID compliant and who do not have another acceptable alternative (e.g., passport) can expect to face delays, additional screening and the possibility of not being permitted into the security checkpoint," the release said. Air travelers at domestic airports will be required to present a REAL ID in order to fly.

TSA spokesperson Lorie Dankers told Fox News Digital the agency estimates that "81% of the public is ready for REAL ID enforcement." "That potentially leaves 19% who are unprepared," Dankers said.

When asked if the implementation of REAL IDs will impact travel times, Dankers said, "If you do the math, the reasonable response would be to arrive early." "The length of the delay travelers experience will be determined by the number of other travelers who do not have a REAL ID-compliant credential, or another form of identification accepted by TSA," the spokesperson added.

Gary Leff, a Texas-based travel industry expert and author of the blog "View From the Wing," told Fox News Digital he doesn't expect there will be

"meaningful delays," but it will impact travel times. Leff says, "If there are additional identity verifications to go through, even calling over another TSA staff

member to handle that takes time." "Take even an extra 10 seconds per passenger without REAL ID (or 10 seconds per passenger while the document

checker verifies what kind of ID it is) and multiply that out across thousands of passengers per checkpoint per day at larger airports," said Leff.

ICE and DOGE seek sensitive data in crackdown on illegal immigration, waste: report

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials and the U.S. DOGE Service are reportedly looking to add a Medicare database to their arsenal of tools to use in their crackdown on illegal immigrants. The Washington Post published its report on the agencies' alleged plan on Wednesday, citing a person familiar with the matter and internal documents.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) allegedly manages the database, which contains personal information — including addresses — sought by ICE, according to the Post. The database is known as the Integrated Data Repository (IDR), which acts as an archive for beneficiary information,

Medicare claims and more. The outlet said ICE is asking CMS to compare the Social Security numbers of individuals believed to be in the country illegally to Medicare claims to help determine their addresses.

On Tuesday, President Donald Trump issued a memorandum aimed at preventing illegal immigrants from obtaining benefits through the Social Security Act, including Medicare. The memorandum establishes a Medicare and Medicaid fraud prosecution program and expands the Social Security Administration's existing enforcement initiatives. Elon Musk, who leads DOGE, has spoken about the "waste and fraud" in federal entitlement programs, including Medicare.

Tycoons in turmoil: Indian billionaires caught in Trump's tariff storm



India's wealthiest are having a rough 2025. In the first few months alone, the combined fortunes of the country's richest business leaders have plunged by \$30.5 billion, or Rs 2.63 lakh crore, according to the latest data on the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. The net worth of Mukesh Ambani, Gautam Adani, Shiv Nadar, and others has taken a massive hit amid a sharp correction in equity markets, fuelled by foreign investor exits

and escalating global trade friction. All thanks to US President Donald Trump's tariff shock.

Asia's richest man, Mukesh Ambani, has lost \$3.42 billion this year. He now sits at 17th on the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, with an estimated net worth of \$87.2 billion. While Reliance Industries has held steady, Jio Financial Services has slumped 24%.

Gautam Adani, who is India's second-richest person and closely behind Ambani, has faced a \$6.05 billion drop in net worth this year. It may be noted that the flagship Adani Enterprises has dropped 9% in 2025, as investor caution over leverage and market volatility weighs on the group.

However, tech billionaire Shiv Nadar has taken the hardest hit so far. The HCL founder's net worth has cratered by \$10.5 billion, making him the hardest-hit Indian billionaire in 2025.

Among other Indian billionaires, Savitri Jindal, matriarch of the Jindal Group, has seen her fortune shrink by \$2.4 billion, while Sun Pharma's Dilip Shanghvi is down \$3.34 billion. Shares of Sun Pharma are down nearly 11% this year, dragged by regulatory pressures and weak earnings in the pharma sector. Trump's tariffs have also battered retail investors, with the Sensex and Nifty down about 4.5% year-to-date, while midcap and smallcap indices have plunged over 14% and 17%, respectively.

Mark Zuckerberg reportedly offered \$450 million, then \$1 billion to settle ongoing FTC case



As Meta faces another courtroom battle against the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in a landmark antitrust case, a Wall Street Journal report reveals that in March Mark Zuckerberg had reached out to the head of FTC to settle the case by offering to pay \$450 million. As the trial neared, Zuckerberg reportedly upped that offer to \$1 billion. However, this was far from the \$30 billion that FTC had reportedly demanded. FTC Chairman Andrew Ferguson dismissed the offer. Reportedly, Ferguson was unwilling to consider any settlement below \$18 billion and a formal consent decree. The report suggests that "Zuckerberg led a frenzied lobbying effort to avoid the FTC trial". As per the report, Zuckerberg was hoping that he would be backed by US President Donald Trump. Apparently, weeks ahead of the current trial, he had requested Trump to step in and help block the monopoly lawsuit. The report

further suggests that Zuckerberg has been steadily trying to build a closer relationship with Donald Trump – Meta contributed \$1 million to Trump's inauguration and also resolved a \$25 million lawsuit.

But it fell short. The trial officially began on Monday, with the FTC calling Zuckerberg – who was reportedly hesitant to testify – to the witness stand. The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has accused Meta of harming competition by acquiring Instagram and WhatsApp, two major rivals in the social media space. The ongoing antitrust trial could result in the \$1.4 trillion company being forced to break up. According to the FTC, Meta strategically bought both platforms to avoid having to compete with them and now holds a dominant position in what it calls the "personal social networking" market—apps that help users connect with close friends and family.

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In first news conference as HHS secretary, Kennedy says autism is an epidemic in the US

In his first news conference as secretary of the US Department of Health and Human Services, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said Wednesday that rising rates of autism prevalence in the US reflect a “preventable” crisis-level epidemic that has been caused by an environmental toxin.

Advocates for people with autism have criticized this position as harmful and misleading. Existing research has explained autism as a multifactorial condition that is influenced heavily by genetics.

Experts have largely attributed the steady rise in autism prevalence to better understanding of and screening for the condition, including a US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report this week that indicated a rising rate of autism along with “increased access to identification among previously underserved groups.”

But Kennedy amped up his message on Wednesday, saying that people who



accept this explanation are “epidemic deniers” who are playing into an “industry canard.”

“One of the things that I think that we need to move away from today is this ideology that the autism prevalence increases – the relentless increases – are simply artifacts of better diagnoses, better recognition or changing diagnostic

criteria,” he said.

He also called for “real-time data” on autism prevalence, likening autism to a measles epidemic.

“We don’t wait two years to react to a measles epidemic ... or any kind of infectious disease. We shouldn’t have to do that for diabetes or autism,” he said.

Dr. Walter Zahorodny, an associate

professor at the Rutgers New Jersey Medical School and a co-author of the new CDC report, joined Kennedy at Wednesday’s news conference and echoed his claim that the rise in autism prevalence is an “urgent public health crisis” that could not solely be attributed to better awareness.

“I would urge everyone to consider the likelihood that autism – whether we call it an epidemic, a tsunami or a surge of autism – is a real thing that we don’t understand, and it must be triggered or caused by environmental or risk factors,” he said. “We need to address this question seriously because, in my opinion, for the last 20 years, we’ve collected data but not made real progress in understanding what causes autism or how to effectively prevent it or treat it effectively.” Kennedy said that autism research will fall under the new Administration for Healthy America, in a new chronic disease division.

As depression becomes more common in the US, treatment rates vary, CDC reports show



Depression is becoming more common among adults and adolescents in the United States, but most are not getting therapy to help, according to a new report from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

More than 1 in 8 people ages 12 and up in the US have been depressed in recent years, according to data published Wednesday by the CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics. Depression prevalence has nearly doubled, from 7.3% in 2015-16 to more than 13% in 2021-23. The findings are based on results from a federal survey – most recently conducted between August 2021 and August 2023 – in which participants reported whether they had had certain symptoms associated with

depression in the previous two weeks. Responses to these validated screening questions were scored to determine whether the individuals had depression.

The Covid-19 pandemic interrupted the administration of the survey, and modifications that were made once it resumed – including changes to the way it was administered – may have affected the ability to most accurately track changes over time.

People are less likely to report conditions that could potentially be considered socially undesirable in face-to-face interviews than they are in phone or online interviews, and changes in that method could account for increases, Dr. Renee Goodwin, a psychiatric epidemiologist and clinical psychologist

with Columbia University, told CNN.

Still, experts have long said that the pandemic exacerbated mental health challenges for many in the US – 90% of adults have said that the country is facing a mental health crisis, according to a 2022 survey from CNN in partnership with KFF – but experts have also said that awareness around mental health has grown.

Dr. Matt Mishkind, deputy director of the Johnson Depression Center at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, says that researchers have been trying to figure out why depression rates have been growing for the past decade or so – and at least part of it has to do with decreasing stigma around talking about mental health in some groups. “The question then is, has that truly increased, or have we just been able to identify it more? I definitely think it has increased, and I think that’s because I think the world is a difficult place right now,” he said. “I think there’s been stressor after stressor after stressor for a long time now, and I think that is starting to truly affect people.”

According to the new CDC data, women are more likely than men to have depression, and prevalence tends to decrease with age and greater wealth.

Overall, about 16% of women and 10% of men had depression during the

2021-23 survey period. But more than 1 in 4 adolescent girls between ages 12 and 19 had depression, the data shows, higher than any other demographic group.

Data from the CDC’s latest Youth Risk Behavior Survey showed that more than half of high school girls (53%) said they felt persistently sad or hopeless – nearly twice the rate of share of boys (28%) who said the same and 14 percentage points higher than a decade earlier.

“Girls are more verbal and vocal about some of their challenges, traditionally; boys are not as much, although I think that is changing,” Dr. Jill Emanuele, vice president of clinical training at the Child Mind Institute in New York City, told CNN in August. She was not involved in any of the CDC reports.

Treatment disparities

The vast majority of adults and adolescents with depression in the latest survey – nearly 88% – said that symptoms had created difficulties for them in work, at home or with social activities, and about a third of those said it was “very to extremely difficult.”

But only about 40% of adults and adolescents with depression received counseling or therapy, the new CDC report shows. Women were more likely than men to have received therapy: about 43%, compared with 33%.

This is what happens to the body if you always wear clothes that are too tight

Fashion often dictates our clothing choices, but when those choices include incredibly tight clothes, we may be doing more harm to our bodies than we realise.

Dr Narendra Singhla, Lead Consultant in Internal Medicine at the CK Birla Hospital, Delhi, explains the various ways tight clothing can affect our bodies, both in the short and long term.



Immediate effects on the body When we wear extremely tight clothes, our body responds in several ways, Dr Singhla said: Skin Irritation: Tight clothing can cause friction on the skin, leading to irritation, redness, and even rashes. These skin issues may be more prevalent where the fabric repeatedly rubs against the skin.

Nerve Compression: Compression of nerves is a common side effect. This can lead to sensations of numbness, tingling, or even pain. Over time, this nerve

compression may worsen, especially if the clothes are worn repeatedly.

Restricted Breathing: Tight clothes, especially around the chest or abdomen, can make it difficult for the diaphragm to move freely, which results in shallow breathing. This can lead to shortness of breath, fatigue, and reduced oxygen intake.

Impaired Blood Circulation: Extremely tight clothes, especially around the legs or waist, can restrict blood flow. Reduced circulation may result

in swelling or more severe complications like varicose veins or, in extreme cases, blood clots.

Long-term damage from tight clothing

While the short-term effects of wearing tight clothes might seem manageable, long-term use can have far more severe consequences. Dr Singhla points out several health risks that develop over time:

Gastrointestinal Issues: Continuous pressure around the stomach can aggravate or even trigger conditions like acid

reflux, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), and gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). Tight clothing increases abdominal pressure, pushing stomach acids upward and causing discomfort.

Increased Risk of Infections: For women, tight clothing that traps moisture, particularly in areas like the groin, can create the perfect environment for yeast infections. This is particularly true for tight undergarments or synthetic fabrics that prevent proper ventilation. Chronic Nerve Pain: Constant nerve compression from tight clothes can lead to lasting numbness, tingling, or even chronic pain. These conditions may become difficult to reverse, even after ceasing to wear tight clothing.

Circulatory Problems: Prolonged blood flow restriction due to tight clothing can lead to the development of varicose veins. In severe cases, chronic

restricted circulation can result in blood clots, which pose serious health risks, such as deep vein thrombosis.

Musculoskeletal Strain: Over time, wearing tight clothes can alter your posture. For instance, tight belts or waistbands can put undue stress on your lower back, leading to musculoskeletal pain. Over the long term, poor posture can result in chronic neck, back, and joints pain.

Respiratory Issues: Shallow breathing caused by tight clothing can affect the respiratory system over time. People who frequently wear tight clothes may develop chronic breathing problems, especially if they already have conditions like asthma.

Skin Conditions: Prolonged skin irritation from tight clothing can lead to chronic conditions such as eczema or dermatitis. If the irritation persists, it may even cause skin infections.

‘Made at my home all the time’: Malaika Arora shares her fiery paneer thecha recipe



Malaika Arora has ventured into the business world after the launch of her restaurant Scarlett House in Mumbai. In a recent episode of Sunday Brunch with Curly Tales, the actor shared her favourite paneer thecha recipe, and it's as fiery as it is flavourful.

Known for her love of "teekha (spicy) food", Malaika's version of the dish packs a punch with

roasted garlic, green chillies, and plenty of coriander. "Paneer thecha is made at my home all the time." The quick and easy recipe involves taking any type of paneer or tofu one prefers and cutting it into cubes, then dry roasting garlic, green chillies, coarse salt (mota namak), peanuts (sing daana), and coriander with its stems. Once crushed, this flavourful mix is

used to coat the paneer or tofu pieces, which is then lightly fried on a tawa with minimal oil.

But, what is thecha?

Ashlesha Joshi, senior nutritionist at Tone30 Pilates, tells indianexpress.com, "Thecha is a traditional condiment from Maharashtra, made by pounding green chillies, garlic, salt, and sometimes peanuts or sesame seeds." Historically, thecha

originated in rural Maharashtra, where it complemented simple meals like bhakri (millet flatbread) and buttermilk, adding bold flavours to basic dishes. It was also a quick, nutritious energy boost for farmers and aligned with the hot climate, as capsaicin in chillies induces sweating, helping to cool the body.

"Today, thecha has evolved into a versatile condiment, enjoyed with modern dishes like paneer, rice, or parathas," Joshi mentions. But can a spicy dish like this have specific health perks or downsides?

Joshi says, "Malaika Arora's paneer thecha combines nutrient-rich ingredients that not only enhance flavour but also deliver significant health benefits." Paneer is a powerhouse of high-quality protein, particularly rich in casein, and an excellent source of calcium (200 mg per 100 g), crucial for bone health and muscle function. It also contains phosphorus and magnesium, which support energy production.

Green chillies are rich in capsaicin, a compound that boosts metabolism and has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. They are also packed with vitamin C and beta-carotene, which support immunity and skin health.

Garlic is known for its cardioprotective effects, helping reduce cholesterol, improve blood flow, and lower blood pressure. It also has antimicrobial and prebiotic properties that support gut health. Peanuts and sesame seeds, found in the thecha, provide healthy fats and protein, notes Joshi. Peanuts contain arginine, which aids vascular function, while sesame seeds offer anti-inflammatory omega-6 fatty acids and lignans. "Mustard oil and ghee used to make thecha contribute to a healthy diet. Mustard oil contains erucic acid and omega-3s, known for their anti-inflammatory effects. Ghee, rich in butyrate, improves gut health and offers additional anti-inflammatory benefits," says Joshi.

Ask NAPCA



In this column, we will aim to raise awareness about osteoporosis, highlighting the importance of early screening and timely diagnosis, with a special focus on older women in the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities.

<Q1> What is osteoporosis? I heard that Asian American women are facing high risk of osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis is a condition

that weakens bones, making them more likely to break. It affects about 54 million adults, increasing the risk of fractures, disability, and loss of independence. 1 in 2 women over 50 will experience a fracture in her lifetime. 2 out of 3 women with osteoporosis and a high risk of fracture will break a bone. Asian American women are at particularly high risk due to naturally lower bone den-

sity and dietary factors. Many Asians are lactose intolerant, leading to lower calcium intake as dairy products, a main source of calcium, are often avoided. Without adequate calcium and vitamin D, bones become weaker, increasing the likelihood of fractures. Despite having one of the highest rates of osteoporosis, Asian American women are less likely to be screened or treated for the condition compared to other populations.

Q2> What are the hidden dangers of fractures from osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is more common than people realize. Many times, breaking a bone is the

first sign of the condition, so it is often called a “silent disease”. For older Asian American women, who are often caregivers in their families, a fracture can be life changing. 60% of people with osteoporosis never fully regain their independence after a fracture. Many face longer hospital stays, higher surgical risks, and prolonged rehabilitation. Chronic pain and reduced mobility can lead to isolation, depression, and an increased risk of death. Studies show that 32% of people die within a year of a hip fracture, and 10% die within a year of a spinal fracture.

NAPCA is dedicated to improving the quality of life of older Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander adults. We urge all older adults, especially women, to prioritize osteoporosis screening and treatment to prevent further bone loss and reduce the risk of fractures.

<Q3> What should older AANHPI older women do to learn bone health, screen-

ings, and treatment options? Osteoporosis is a serious condition, but it is often overlooked in the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities. While bone density tests are recommended for women 65 and older, fewer than 20% of patients who suffer osteoporosis are properly assessed and treated. According to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, only 7% of postmenopausal women report taking osteoporosis medication.

Older AANHPI adults, especially women, are strongly encouraged to prioritize bone health by undergoing bone density screening every year and treatments to prevent further bone loss and reduce the risk of fractures. If you or a loved one are at risk, speak with your healthcare provider about bone health, screenings, and treatment options to stay strong and independent for years to come. Prevention and early treatment can make a big difference.

'You'll know what Kurkure, Maggi are...': Why SC move on clear food labels is big

Sonal Khetarpal

The Supreme Court last week set a deadline for the Centre to implement food safety norms. The rationale is to provide key information about nutrients of concern, namely salt, sugar and fat, on packaging so that consumers can make informed decisions.

The court was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by the Pune-based non-profit 3S and Our Health, concerning food safety and labelling norms in the country. During the oral observations, the bench offered a poignant reminder: “You all have grandchildren? Let the order on the petition come. You will know what Kurkure and Maggi are and how their wrappers should be. The packets have no information,” remarked Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan. The bench directed the expert committee, appointed by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to provide scientific and technical advice on



various food safety matters, to submit a report with recommendations on food labelling norms. The bench also wanted amendments to the Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2020, within three months, allowing for new regulations that clearly define the nutritional information on labels to come into effect.

During the hearing, FSSAI asked for time to come up with the new rules. However, it should be noted that Front-of-Pack Nutrition Labelling (FOPNL) norms have been in the works in India

for over a decade. The first draft, introduced in September 2022, had proposed Health Star Rating (HSR), a suggestion strongly

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opposed by health practitioners and various consumer groups. In fact, according to the writ petition, the FSSAI received over 14,000 comments on the proposed rules.

The Health Star Rating model evaluates the overall nutritional profile of a food item on a scale of star to 5 stars. “There is no

way to find out from ‘stars’ how much sugar or salt is in the packet. Stars can be misleading as the system assigns a rating from ‘least healthy’ (star) to ‘healthiest’ (5 stars). As a result, none of the food packets would be categorised as unhealthy, which is quite the opposite,” says Dr Arun Gupta, convenor of the National Advocacy in Public Interest (NAPi), a national think-tank on nutrition. George Cheriyan, working president of the Agartala-based non-profit Consumers Protection Association (CPA), explains that companies can offset the negative effects of high sugar or salt content by adding protein or vitamins, thereby still receiving a favorable rating. For example, a chocolate bar with some nuts may earn a healthy score despite excessive fat and sugar. “The entire purpose of warning consumers about harmful ingredients is lost,” says Cheriyan. Dr Gupta argues it is high time FOPNL rules are

finalised since India faces a growing epidemic of lifestyle diseases, such as diabetes and obesity, largely driven by unhealthy diets. It is, therefore, critical to empower consumers to make informed choices by letting them know what is inside the packet in the form of sugar or salt. Dr Gupta points out that the Supreme Court ruling though asks the expert committee to submit recommendations at the earliest so that amendments are done by the end of three months. “The onus is on FSSAI to show that it cares, and there is no further delay. Similar are our expectations from the scientific committee and authority,” he says. Cheriyan also warns that the amendments should prioritise public health, and a balanced dialogue to shape appropriate regulations.

During the last discussions on the draft in 2021-22, he noted, the meeting was heavily skewed in favour of industry, with 25 rep-



Greenland: How To Handle An America That Wants Everything?

By Amb Anil Trigunayat

Donald Trump is omnipresent - from boardrooms to strategists' dens, to bedrooms and living rooms across the globe. There are those who may vehemently agree with and support him, as he tends to turn everything into a MAGA (Make America Great Again), MAWA (Make America Work Again), or MARA (Make America Rich Again) agenda, driven by the pointed arrows of 'America First'. He has sought to measure his friends, enemies, and frenemies alike-sometimes being much harsher with allies and friends, as he attempts to flog and push the decaying corpse of the so-called liberal order down the very hill the US and the West built themselves.

In the next four years, the US and the world may bear little resemblance to what has existed hitherto. Like jilted lovers, nations are seeking new alliances - even if transient or unpleasant. No wonder that across the US itself, over a thousand demonstrations have taken place in response to the Trumpian quake. Allies of the US - from Canada and Mexico to Europe - are bracing for impact,

retreating into their own cocoons in hopes of weathering the after-effects of Trump's excessive actions. Some, like Israel and Hungary, have proven savvy enough to capitalise, while others are still grappling with the tsunami of tariffs and threats. China, perhaps the only likely beneficiary of this disruption, has chosen to call Trump's bluff - an action he dismissed as an "overreaction".

The Four 'U's

If one were to examine the USP of the Trump regime (take it or leave it), especially under what could be dubbed Trump 2.0 - a continuation of Trump 1.0 - four distinct personality and policy traits emerge, summarised here as the Four Us. The first 'U' reflects unorthodox foreign, trade, and security policies, engineering deliberate uncertainty. The second is unilateralism, which undermines established norms. The third understands the dynamics of power games and plays poker to Trump's advantage. Finally, the fourth 'U' represents undermining of sovereignty and multilateralism - the most damaging blow to the

international system.

His bold statements - on acquiring Greenland, turning Canada into the 51st state, reclaiming the Panama Canal, renaming the Gulf of Mexico as the Gulf of America, and issuing a "hell to pay" warning to Palestinians and Iranians - have generated tremendous concerns over global security and sovereignty. Denmark, a longstanding ally, has felt particular pressure due to Trump's continued interest in acquiring Greenland. Far from abating, his appetite seems undiminished.

The message is clear: get it by hook or by crook, given Greenland's critical geostrategic value for US security. Located between the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans, east of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, Greenland is the world's largest island. Trump told NBC News that he believes the US can "get" Greenland, "100 percent", and while military force is not his preferred route, "I don't take anything off the table". The current administration sees Greenland as vital to Arctic dominance, military mobility, and mineral extraction.

A Visit To Denmark

I happened to visit Denmark recently on a lecture tour marking 75 years of our diplomatic relations, an event that nearly coincided with the news that US Second Lady Usha Vance would be visiting Greenland, apparently to watch dog-sledding sports. Perhaps a soft, barometric landing. The Danish Prime Minister called it part of an "unacceptable pressure" campaign on the semi-autonomous Danish territory. Denmark was far from amused, especially given the timing and the swirling acquisitional rhetoric impinging on its sovereignty. Matters escalated when Vice President JD Vance visited the US base in Greenland, further irking Danish citizens - a sentiment I witnessed first-hand. Vance repeatedly criticised Denmark's "underinvestment" in Greenland's infrastructure and security, reiterating Trump's position: "This matters to our security, this matters to our missile defence, and we're going to protect America's interests come hell or high water."

The question many countries are now grappling with is: how does

one confront an unbridled superpower?

Following this, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen visited Greenland - part of the Kingdom of Denmark - which holds immense strategic significance in the Arctic. Trump perceives growing Russian and Chinese footprints in the region, with direct consequences for US and European security. Yet his approach is entirely unacceptable to the Danish people. Frederiksen challenged Trump's ambitions, stating, "You cannot annex another country," even in the name of international security. Feeling hurt and cornered, she remarked: "When you ask our businesses to invest in the US, they do. When you ask us to spend more on our defence, we do. When you ask us to strengthen security in the Arctic, we are on the same page. But when you demand to take over a part of the Kingdom of Denmark's territory, and we are met with pressure and threats from our closest ally, what are we to believe about the country we have admired for so many years?"

Madame Tussaud: How a French Revolution survivor turned beheadings into business



writer Jean-Jacques Rousseau, US Founding Father and scientist Benjamin Franklin, and others followed.

But then came the French Revolution -- and the glamour of Paris turned to blood.

DEATH MASKS FOR THE REVOLUTION

When the Revolution exploded in 1789, Marie's skill became a chilling necessity. She was arrested for her ties to the royal court but released on one condition: she would make death masks of the freshly executed. Imagine it: in the days following a beheading, Tussaud was escorted to the morgue, armed

Tussaud was summoned to cast his corpse exactly as it was found -- stab wound and all. The resulting figure was displayed in the streets as revolutionary propaganda.

She even kept some of the real hair from her subjects, weaving it into the wax for maximum realism. It was art on the edge of horror -- and it kept her alive.

ESCAPING FRANCE, STRANDED IN ENGLAND

In 1802, Marie left France with a trunk full of wax figures and her youngest son. Her goal was to tour Britain and showcase her collection. But war broke out -- again -- and she was

Among them were the Guillotine that had once stood in Place de la Rvolution in Paris, the bloodied clothes of murder victims, wax figures of French aristocrats mid-decapitation, their eyes wide in frozen terror, criminals like Burke and Hare, and the Edinburgh body snatchers, recreated in grim detail.

Items like Dr. Crippen's glasses and Mary Pearcey's pram were displayed alongside figures of these infamous murderers, offering a chilling glimpse into criminal history. She used to strategically purchase such items and made the associated wax figurines to go with them -- the Pearcey display drew an astonishing crowd of 30,000 visitors. It was horror before Hollywood, and it worked. In the Victorian era, with public hangings fresh in memory, the Chamber of Horrors was irresistible drama. It turned her museum into a must-see. **IMMORTALISING NAPOLEON**

One of Tussaud's most remarkable -- and eerie -- pieces was of Napoleon Bonaparte. After his death in 1821 on the remote island of Saint Helena, a cast was taken of his face. Marie somehow got hold of it (accounts vary -- some say it came from a loyalist officer, others say she bribed a French official).

From that cast, she sculpted a full waxwork of the emperor on his deathbed, complete with military uniform, drooping eyes, and a silk pillow under his head. For years, it stood as a centrepiece of the museum -- a solemn, almost sacred sight for those who had lived through his wars.

THE ROYALS AND THE CROWN

Tussaud's legacy also lives on in her relationship with the British monarchy. She created waxworks of King George III, Queen Victoria, and Prince Albert. The Queen herself visited the museum. Over time, the connection became formalised. Queen Elizabeth II, throughout her reign, had more than 20 different wax figures made -- each marking milestones from her coronation to her Silver Jubilee.

Madame Tussauds, now a global wax museum brand, has its roots in the French Revolution, where Marie Tussaud crafted death masks of guillotined figures. She died on April 16, 1850 -- 135 years ago today. Here's the chilling history behind the wax.

A head in one hand, a candle in the other. That's how history might picture Madame Marie Tussaud, carving the face of the recently guillotined Marie Antoinette by candlelight. Morbid? Definitely.

But it was this eerie precision that made her a legend -- not just a sculptor of wax, but of history itself. In an age obsessed with spectacle, she made a business out of beheadings. **BORN INTO TURMOIL, TRAINED BY A DOCTOR** Marie Grosholtz was born in 1761 in Strasbourg, France. Her father died before she was even born. When she was just a toddler, her mother took her to Bern, Switzerland, where she began working as a house-



keeper for Dr Philippe Curtius -- a physician with an unusual talent: wax modelling.

Curtius wasn't sculpting fruit or flowers; he was creating lifelike anatomical models, and soon, portraiture. Under his wing, young Marie learned not just the art of wax, but its power to imitate life -- down to every wrinkle and pore.

By age 16, she'd crafted her first figure: Voltaire, the razor-tongued philosopher of the Enlightenment. Philosopher and

with wax, bandages, and buckles. Her job? Press wax and plaster onto decapitated heads -- often still warm -- to preserve the face for political theatre. She modelled the faces of King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, and major figures in the French Revolution such as Maximilien Robespierre, and Jean-Paul Marat.

One of the most chilling episodes? After the radical Jean-Paul Marat was murdered in his bath by Charlotte Corday,

stranded.

For 33 years, she toured the British Isles, carting her waxworks from town to town. The exhibitions were part freakshow, part museum. Visitors could see royalty, revolutionaries, scientists, and outlaws all in one room. Some exhibits came with real-life artefacts: weapons, clothing -- even guillotines. This nomadic life wasn't easy. She dragged those wax heads across muddy fields and up creaky staircases, slept in wagons, endured frost and fires. But the British loved it.

By 1835, she finally settled in Baker Street, London, and opened a permanent museum.

THE CHAMBER OF HORRORS: MORBIDLY POPULAR

To keep visitors coming, Tussaud leaned into what people couldn't resist -- crime, punishment, and gore.

She created the Chamber of Horrors, a dimly lit section featuring wax models of serial killers, torturers, and victims.

Middle East is replacing Europe as neutral ground. Prisoner exchange to ceasefire deals

The choice of Oman for US-Iran talks highlights the growing trust in Middle Eastern nations to provide a neutral ground for contentious international negotiations.



By RAAMISH SIDDIQUI

The Middle East has radically transformed its geopolitical positioning in recent years, evolving from a region often characterised by conflict and instability to an increasingly influential diplomatic centre.

Key regional nations, notably Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Oman, demonstrate greater strategic autonomy, moving beyond traditional alignments to act as crucial hubs for international diplomacy and conflict mediation. This evolving significance can also be understood from US President Donald Trump's announcement about his first foreign trip to Saudi Arabia, with stops planned in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

This shift reminds us of what Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) stated in his 2018 statement: "I believe the new Europe is the Middle East." This vision is gradually materialising not through infrastructure development alone but more significantly through changing power dynamics and diplomatic influence.

The new Europe

Mohammed bin Salman prominently articulated the concept of the Middle East as the "new Europe" during the Future Investment Initiative forum in Riyadh. He declared with conviction that "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in five years will be completely different," highlighting his economic and political ambition for the region. The Prime Minister of the UAE and Dubai's ruler Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum also endorsed the Saudi leader's perspective.

Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid emphasised that the conflicts in the region, rather than being merely destructive, offer "further motivation to adopt modernisation and development." He was suggesting that adversity could catalyse transformation. This shared vision among regional leaders represents a coordinated perspective on the Middle East's future.

The vision highlights intriguing parallels between Europe's post-World War II resurgence as a symbol of economic stability and cultural abundance. The Middle

East might embark on a comparable path. For many years, this region has struggled with challenges and conflicts that often obscure its vibrant history, cultural diversity, and economic potential. The vision of Arab leaders challenges this narrative. For centuries, Romans and Persians engaged in prolonged military and political contests over control of the Middle East. Its strategic location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa made it an invaluable prize for any power seeking to dominate key trade routes, secure buffer zones, and access rich resources. However, today, it encompasses more than just geopolitical positions.

Mediation, peace talks What makes the "new Europe" analogy increasingly apt is the economic development occurring across Gulf states and the emerging role of Middle Eastern countries as mediators and hosts for significant international negotiations—a function historically associated with European capitals like Geneva, Vienna, and Paris.

The United Arab Emirates demonstrated the region's

increasing diplomatic influence by mediating a significant prisoner-of-war exchange between Ukraine and Russia in March 2025. This exchange saw 175 captives from each country return home, bringing the total number of people returned through Emirati mediation efforts to an impressive 3,233. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy publicly acknowledged the UAE's crucial role, thanking the Emirates for its efforts in returning Ukrainian defenders home. Russian President Vladimir Putin also praised the UAE's mediation, thanking the President on call. In March 2025, Saudi Arabia hosted critical negotiations between the US and Russia to make progress toward a ceasefire in Ukraine. These talks in Riyadh followed discussions between US and Ukrainian delegations, positioning Saudi Arabia at the centre of efforts to resolve one of the most consequential conflicts in recent years. United States Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff, who has been leading the Russia-Ukraine negotiations, said that the talks in Saudi Arabia could pave the

way for a "full-on" ceasefire.

This diplomatic initiative represents a significant shift in global power dynamics. By hosting these high-stakes negotiations, Saudi Arabia demonstrates its growing influence and willingness to engage in complex geopolitical issues beyond its immediate region.

Similarly, Oman has emerged as a crucial diplomatic intermediary, recently hosting indirect talks between Iran and the US on 12 April 2025. These negotiations, aimed at addressing Iran's advancing nuclear programme, marked the first round of talks between Tehran and the Trump administration following years of heightened tensions.

The choice of Oman for these sensitive discussions highlights the growing trust in Middle Eastern nations to provide a neutral ground for contentious international negotiations. Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Albusaidi facilitated the exchange of messages between the US and Iranian delegations. New chapter in global diplomacy In the modern era, many factors, like strategic geopolitical positioning, are behind the rise of the Middle East as a diplomatic centre. However, one key factor is the relationship it cultivated with major nations over the years. This move is helping it today to tread this complex path of peace talks. For years, Gulf states have maintained sufficient neutrality to be accepted as mediators by various parties. The emergence of the Middle East as a diplomatic powerhouse has started a new chapter in the evolution of global geopolitics. As these nations continue to host critical negotiations, mediate complex international disputes, and facilitate peace efforts, they are redefining traditional power dynamics and challenging the dominance of established diplomatic centres.

Neha Sharma gets lost in time amidst serenity of Maldives

Actress Neha Sharma is enjoying a dreamy holiday abreast with the serenity of Maldives. The actress appeared lost in time amidst the calm blue waters of the country. On Wednesday, the actress took to her Instagram, and shared a photo dump from her trip to the archipelagic state. The pictures feature her chilling by the pool on a hammock, enjoying a hearty meal, and taking a stroll down the five star property where she has put up. She wrote in the caption, “Baglioni Maldives, where time stood still and every moment felt like a warm embrace. What a dream”.

This comes after tensions between India and Maldives continue to ease after the diplomatic row last year. Relations faced a strain in January 2024 due to derogatory remarks by Maldivian officials and concerns over racism, targeted towards Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi as well as India. This was seen very negatively in India, with citizens calling for a boycott of vacations in Maldives, with many renowned Bollywood actors and personalities criticising the government of Maldives. Meanwhile, Neha was last seen in the streaming series ‘36 Days’ in which she essayed the role of a femme fatale with deep secrets. Murders, dark secrets, betrayal, and forbidden truths for the underbelly of the show. The show also starred Purab Kohli, Shruti Seth, Chandan Roy Sanyal, Amruta Khanvilkar, Sharib Hashmi, Sushant Divgikar, Shernaz Patel, Faishal Rashid, Chahat Vig, and Kenneth Desai. It was directed by Vishal Furia, and is the official Indian adaptation of the UK show ‘35 Days’, originally produced by Boom Cymru for S4C and distributed by ITV Studios. ‘36 Days’ was produced by Applause Entertainment in association with BBC Studios India. The show is available to stream on Sony LIV.



Kritika Kamra to star in women-led drama by ‘Peepli Live’ director



Actress Kritika Kamra will be seen as one of the leads in an upcoming yet-untitled women-led drama by Peepli Live director Anusha Rizvi. A source from the production house said, “We are thrilled to bring together such a talented team for this project. The narrative is both powerful and timely, and we believe it will resonate deeply with the audiences.” The film is being produced by Jio Studios and features a stellar ensemble cast, including Sheeba Chaddha and Shreya Dhanwanthary. The source added, “The project is set to begin filming this week in Delhi. The cast is currently in the middle of prep workshops in Delhi.” Set against the vibrant backdrop of Delhi, the film delves into a poignant human story that highlights the strength and resilience of its female protagonists. Principal photography commenced earlier this month in the capital and is slated to continue through mid-May. Born in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, Kritika gained prominence with her role as

Arohi in the popular TV show “Kitani Mohabbat Hai.” She then went on to star in shows such as Kuch Toh Log Kahenge and Reporters. The actress has also participated in the dance reality show ‘Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa 7’ and showcased her talent in series such as ‘Tandav’ and ‘Bambai Meri Jaan.’ The 35-year-old actress made her film debut with ‘Mitron,’ which was released in 2018. She also appeared in ‘For Your Eyes Only’ with Pratik Gandhi. She made her transition to films with Mitron and has since appeared in projects like Bheed. The actress showcased her prowess in the digital space too with Tandav, Hush Hush, and Bambai Meri Jaan. Kritika will next be seen in ‘Matka King.’ It delves into the intricate world of Matka gambling that started in Mumbai. The series also features Vijay Varma, who will be seen in the titular role of the Matka King. Talking about “Peepli Live,” the satirical black comedy film released in 2010.

Sonam Kapoor looks boardroom-ready in a monotone outfit & Sakura-toned makeup

Sonam Kapoor's name is synonymous with fashion with the diva making heads turn with every attire she chooses to wear. Sonam delivered another sleek look in a monotone attire which made her look absolutely boardroom-ready. Her classy look has been styled by her sister, Rhea Kapoor, along with Abhilasha Devnani. Sonam looked extremely elegant in a tailored black double-breasted jacket along with side buttons, and flap pockets on either side. The diva added a belt over the blazer, to enhance the appeal.

She paired the blazer with a white shirt with cuffs visible from the blazer's sleeves. These cuffs were further styled with cufflinks. The three-piece attire was tied up with a sleek, structured midi skirt with a minimal sharp

cut. In contrast to the monochrome outfit, Sonam chose a black and white handbag to go with her outfit. She also posed in black pointed-toe stilettos. Keeping in tune with the Sakura aesthetics, Sonam's makeup included a sculpted base, along with defined eyebrows, neat eyeliner, pink-toned eyeshadow, pink blush, and lipstick. As for hair, Sonam styled them in a sleek center-parted bun. She completed the look with statement dangler earrings that perfectly complemented the attire, along with some matching rings. Sharing the pictures on her IG, the 'Neerje' actress wrote, "Namaste Japan! Looking forward to the show tomorrow @dior," while her sister captioned, "Sakura Season with @sonamkapoor in Kyoto with @dior."



Sanjay Dutt dons a fierce Shiv Bhakt avatar in The Bhootnii's first track 'Mahakaal-Mahakaali'

The makers of 'The Bhootnii' have dropped the first track, 'Mahakaal-Mahakaali,' showcasing Sanjay Dutt in a commanding avatar as a devoted follower of Lord Shiva. The song is a powerful ode to divine strength, fusing energetic rhythms with spiritual fervor. Showcasing Dutt in a powerful Shiv Bhakt avatar, the song delivers a thunderous tribute to divine power. Sharing a special anecdote about the track, the actor stated, "The makers initially approached me for this song, and I felt an instant connection with it. A few conversations later, I was on board for the movie. This is my favourite track from the film, as I have always been a Shiv Bhakt—this is my tribute to the Almighty." The devotional track "Mahakaal-Mahakaali" is sung by Hansraj Raghuwanshi, with music and lyrics by Shabbir Ahmed. The makers

took to social media to share the track and captioned it, "The divine has descended. Feel the wrath, the rhythm, the roar. #MahakaalMahakaali from Bhootnii — Out Now." On a related note, 'The Bhootnii' stars Sanjay Dutt, Mouni Roy, Sunny Singh, Palak Tiwari, Beyounick, and Aasif Khan in pivotal roles. Sanjay, who essays the role of a ghostbuster for the very first time, had earlier shared, "I love comedies. The Bhootnii is a film that is a good mix of horror and comedy. In fact, horror comedy is one of the toughest genres to crack. But, when I heard the script, I felt that it had the potential to entertain the audience. I was attracted to my role. I am playing a ghostbuster baba for the first time. I had a lot of fun while playing this character, which has mass appeal."

Samantha: Conversations around periods are still met with silence, whispers and shame

Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu has talked about menstruation and said conversations around periods are still met with silence, whispers, and shame. Talking about how periods are still considered to be a taboo subject, Samantha told VOICE, "As women, we've come so far, yet conversations around periods are still met with silence, whispers, and shame." The actress, in an episode of her podcast Take20, spoke to nutritionist Rashi Chowdhary about menstruation, cycle syncing, endometriosis, and the everyday (yet rarely acknowledged) health struggles that women face. She told VOICE, "Speaking with Rashi Choudhary reminded me how crucial it is to break these taboos and dated notions. Our cycles are powerful and, most importantly, life-affirming. Definitely not something to be ashamed of or hide or, for that matter, even taken lightly." In the episode of the podcast, Samantha opened up about her own relationship with her body, learning to listen to it, and the challenges that come with being a woman in the public eye while dealing with something as debilitating as endometriosis. In the

podcast, Samantha said, "The menstrual cycle and how it affects our mind and body is something we need to consistently keep learning about with every passing year. Rashi, with her wealth of experience and the depth of her knowledge, has a very clear manner of explaining things, and I'm glad, together, we could have such a well-rounded chat dedicated to truly understanding & harnessing the power of this life force that we as women are blessed with." On the film front, Samantha, who has turned producer with the film 'Subham,' on April 7 shared the teaser of her maiden production. She wrote, "Presenting to you our little labor of love. A small team with big dreams! We're incredibly grateful for this journey and what we've created together. We truly hope you enjoy our film... And may this be the start of something truly special! Samantha's production house, Tralala Moving Pictures, has produced this film along with Kanakavalli Talkies. Penned by Vasanth Mariganti, "Subham" has been made under the direction of Praveen Kandregula. These two previously worked together on the acclaimed drama "Cinema Bandi."



Karisma Kapoor calls Alia Biwi No 1, Ranveer Hero No 1 after watching their new ad

Actor Karisma "Lolo supremacy." Meanwhile, Kapoor hopped on the bandwagon of those who have been raving about Alia Bhatt and Ranveer Singh's new ad. The actor re-shared the commercial on Instagram, labelling them Biwi No 1 and Hero No 1, respectively. In the said ad, both Alia Bhatt and Ranveer Singh are seen grooving to the beats of a 90s tune. Karisma, who got nostalgic after watching it, captioned, "Got nostalgic after watching this! They both look like Hero no.1 and Biwi no. 1 (sic)." Ranveer Singh reacted to the post and commented, "Lolo supremacy." Meanwhile, fans also reacted and compared Alia to the likes of Madhuri Dixit. One user wrote, "She definitely gives a glimpse of Madhuri dixit may be the hairstyle and the way she does her eyebrows and make-up like her (sic)." Another user assumed it was a promo for an upcoming film and commented, "For the first I saw this I thought it was an upcoming movie (sic)." On the work front, Karisma Kapoor was last seen in Murder Mubarak. It is streaming on Netflix. As for Alia Bhatt, her last screen presence was in Vasan Bala's Jigra. Ranveer, on the other hand, was seen in Singham Again.

Sugandha Mishra joins 'Wagle Ki Duniya' as the over-the-top Suman



Actress-comedian Sugandha Mishra is set to play the role of Suman Gadhiya in the show 'Wagle Ki Duniya' and said that her character is "quirky, unpredictable, and comes with so many layers." Sugandha said, "I instantly fell in love with Suman's character. She's quirky, unpredictable, and comes with so many layers; it's the kind of role that allows you to have fun while constantly surprising yourself." Her character is a quirky, overly dramatic woman with a flair for theatrics and manipulation. Suman, who is working with Yamini, played by Manasi Joshi, on a drama show, cites her reason for moving in for research and claims she wants to observe and learn how to portray a

middle-class woman for an upcoming role. Persuading Yamini with her charm, she manages to temporarily stay at Sai Darshan Society. She added, "I've always had a bit of a drama queen in me, so stepping into Suman's shoes felt oddly natural. What made it challenging but equally exciting was that, for the first time, I got to dive into a few intense, emotional scenes as well." "Sharing screen space with Bharti Achrekar ji, who is such a legend, was both nerve-racking and inspiring. The entire team made me feel at home; they were warm, supportive, and encouraging throughout the journey." Sumeet Raghvan, who essays the role of Rajesh Wagle, said, "Rajesh, as a char-

acter, is someone who believes in doing the right thing even when no one's watching—so having him falsely accused of something so serious is a major emotional shift, not just for him but for the entire family. But the show handles the track beautifully, highlighting not only the turmoil but also the strength of relationships and truth." He called working with Sugandha an "absolute delight." Sumeet added, "She brought a burst of energy to the set and truly made Suman her own. Behind the scenes, we laughed a lot, but when it came to the emotional beats on-screen, she matched the tone beautifully." "Wagle Ki Duniya – Nayi Peedi Naye Kisse" airs on Sony SAB.

Big B talks about 'sanskaar, time, and the power of will'

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan has spoken about learning, values, time, and self-discipline; and how all of these blend with the human condition. Amitabh took to his blog and wrote: "Each learning is a day lived .. from the young from the new from this GEN from any other Gen .. a learning exemplifying the worth of its value... Value seems to convey a material being .. no not that value." He said that values are also "what life brings that we apply or believe to be the ethical and considered norm." "The 'sanskaar' that we and our ancestors inculcated and

taught us by their approach, behaviour and guidance .. 'Sanskhaar' ... the inborn power of faculty .. a refinement an adorning .. the conduct of the 'how' and 'when' and 'where' ." He said that 'Sanskhaar' lives an eternal life. "It breathes endlessly to the very end of existence .. not merely of the human but of all being , including the space hemispheric surround .. And to each his or her own .. When there is paucity of time .. strangely the maximum work gets accomplished .. when no paucity of time , work never even gets a start (sic).""And that is the condition one finds oneself in ..



Ajith Kumar reaches Circuit De Spa in Belgium to prepare for next race

Actor Ajith Kumar, whose racing team Ajith Kumar Racing is gearing up for the GT4 series, has reached the Circuit De Spa in Belgium where he is to intensify his preparations for the upcoming races, that are bound to test the endurance levels of drivers. On Wednesday, the actor's racing team, Ajith Kumar Racing, took to its X timeline to post a video clip of the actor on the trackside, watching race cars zoom past and wrote, "Ajith Kumar, trackside today at Circuit de Spa, Belgium. Soaking in the atmosphere, gearing up for the endurance challenge ahead." The GT4 series is a premier sports car



championship featuring GT4-spec vehicles competing across Europe's renowned circuits. The series emphasizes cost-effective racing and serves as a platform for amateur drivers. It includes

multiple classes, such as Silver, Pro-Am, and Am, to accommodate varying driver experience levels. Ajith has a long list of racing events this year. The actor is to participate in the

race in Zandvoort circuit, which is to be held between May 16-18. The actor will again be seen in action between June 26 and 29 at the Spa circuit and between July 18 and 20 at the Misano circuit. In August this year, Ajith is to race at the Nurburgring circuit before finally rounding off the season at Barcelona, the race at which is to be held between October 10 and 12. It may be recalled that Actor Ajith Kumar's racing team had expressed gratitude to sports enthusiasts, fans and audiences for their support, saying they were grateful for the unwavering encouragement. Ajith's racing

team has done the country proud ever since the actor announced its formation. Earlier this year, the team emerged third in the 991 category of the 24H Dubai 2025 event. It followed it up with another third place in the intensely contested 12H Mugello car racing event in Italy. For the uninitiated, Ajith is not only racing but is also the owner of the team Ajith Kumar Racing. Ajith's other teammates who participate with him in races are Mathieu Detry, Fabian Duffieux and Cameron McLeod. Ajith's team has roped in Bas Koeten Racing as its technical and logistical partner.

Sanjay Dutt dons a fierce Shiv Bhakt avatar in The Bhootnii's first track 'Mahakaal-Mahakaali'

The makers of 'The Bhootnii' have dropped the first track, 'Mahakaal-Mahakaali,' showcasing Sanjay Dutt in a commanding avatar as a devoted follower of Lord Shiva. The song is a powerful ode to divine strength, fusing energetic rhythms with spiritual fervor. Showcasing Dutt in a powerful Shiv Bhakt avatar, the song delivers a thunderous tribute to divine power. Sharing a special anecdote about the track, the actor stated, "The makers initially approached me for this song, and I felt an instant connection with it. A few conversations later, I was on board for the movie. This is my favourite track from the film, as I have always been a Shiv Bhakt—this is my tribute to the Almighty." The devotional track "Mahakaal-Mahakaali" is sung by Hansraj Raghuwanshi, with music and lyrics by Shabbir Ahmed. The makers took to social media to share the track and captioned it, "The divine has descended. Feel the wrath, the rhythm, the roar. #MahakaalMahakaali from

Bhootnii — Out Now." On a related note, 'The Bhootnii' stars Sanjay Dutt, Mouni Roy, Sunny Singh, Palak Tiwari, Beyounick, and Aasif Khan in pivotal roles. Sanjay, who essays the role of a ghostbuster for the very first time, had earlier shared, "I love comedies. The Bhootnii is a film that is a good mix of horror and comedy. In fact, horror comedy is one of the toughest genres to crack. But, when I heard the script, I felt that it had the potential to entertain the audience. I was attracted to my role. I am playing a ghostbuster baba for the first time. I had a lot of fun while playing this character, which has mass appeal." Presented by Zee Studios, Soham Rockstar Entertainment, and Three Dimension Motion Pictures, the horror-comedy is produced by Deepak Mukut and Sanjay Dutt, with co-producers Hunar Mukut and Maanayata Dutt.

Aishwarya Khare: It's always exciting to break out of your comfort zone

Actress Aishwarya Khare and Munira Kudrati disguised themselves as men for a sequence in "Bhagya Lakshmi." Aishwarya said it took immense patience to get the beard glued on properly, adjust the turban, and stay in that get-up for over 12 hours. In the upcoming track, Lakshmi and Shalu slip into the garb of men as they go undercover in a daring attempt to uncover the truth about Malishka's child. While Lakshmi is disguised as a Punjabi man, wearing a beard and a turban, Shalu is seen wearing a wig, a beard, a mustache, and a fake stomach, and she barges into Balwinder's backyard. Talking about the get-up, Aishwarya said, "It was madness — but the fun kind! The first time we saw each other in full look, we just couldn't stop laughing. It took immense patience getting the beard glued on properly, adjusting the turban just right, and staying in that getup for over 12 hours. But once we slipped into character, we

were all in." Aishwarya revealed that the two even tried mimicking how men walk and talk. "The crew had a blast watching us practice our 'manly' walks between takes! As actors, it's always exciting to break out of your comfort zone and try something completely different. Getting into this quirky disguise gave us a chance to explore a whole new layer of performance." "It was challenging — but that's what made it so much fun. Honestly, it's shoots like these that remind you why you love doing what you do," she added. "Bhagya Lakshmi" is produced by Ekta Kapoor and Shobha Kapoor's Balaji Telefilms; the series stars Aishwarya Khare and Rohit Suchanti. The show follows Lakshmi, whose life takes an unexpected turn when her family gets her married to a rich businessman, Rishi Oberoi. However, she is feeling betrayed when she learns the truth about her marriage.



Sachet-Parampara on Kamle from 'Raid 2': We knew it had something special

The makers of "Raid 2" on Wednesday released the second track, 'Kamle,' from the film. The composer duo Sachet-Parampara said that from the moment they started working on the song, they knew it had something special. The song showcases the stunning landscapes of Rajasthan while highlighting the love and chemistry between Ajay Devgn and Vaani Kapoor. The song, which is packed with passion, groove, and irresistible hooks, has lyrics penned by Kausar Munir. Talking about the song, the composer duo said, "Creating 'Kamle' was an incredible experience for us. It's one of those songs that instantly lifts your mood." "From the moment we started working on it, we knew it had something special—an effortless blend of love, exploration, and vibrant energy. We've played around with the sound to make it feel fresh and unique, and we're so excited

for everyone to experience it," they added. Helmed by Raj Kumar Gupta, "Raid 2" stars Ajay Devgn, Riteish Deshmukh, Vaani Kapoor, Supriya Pathak, Saurabh Shukla, and Amit Sial, among other celebrated actors joining this high-stakes sequel. "Raid 2" is produced by Bhushan Kumar, Kumar Mangat Pathak, Abhishek Pathak, and Krishan Kumar. The film is presented by Gulshan Kumar and T-Series and is a Panorama Studios production. Directed by Raj Kumar Gupta, Raid 2 is set to release theatrically on May 1. The first installment of the crime thriller film "Raid" was released in 2018. It stars Ajay, Saurabh Shukla, and Ileana D'Cruz. The film is based on the real-life income tax raid conducted by the officers of the Income Tax Department on Sardar Inder Singh in the 1980s, which distinguished itself from others for being the longest raid in Indian history.

