



The South Asian

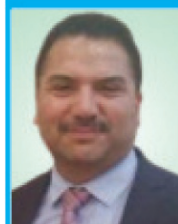


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## Harvard's Student Visa Program Terminated

- Trump administration tells existing international students to transfer or leave the U.S.
- Department of Homeland Security demands Gaza protest footage and disciplinary records
- Developing Story: A federal judge on Friday barred the Trump administration from rescinding Harvard University's ability to enroll foreign students, granting the school's emergency request to stave off "immediate and irreparable injury."



Department of Homeland Security (DHS)  
Secretary Kristi Noem

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## Indian Army denies deploying air defence guns at Golden Temple during Operation Sindoor



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Speed, Sophistication, and Multi-Domain nature of India's military and political response.

## Why Operation Sindoor Will Be Studied The World Over?



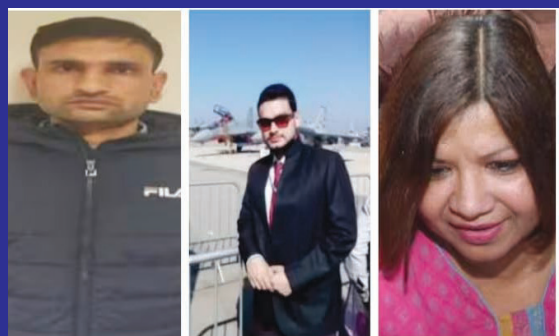
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## Preity Zinta Moves Court Against Punjab Kings Co-owners Over Disputed Meeting

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## Honeytraps and high treason The faces behind India's spy scandals



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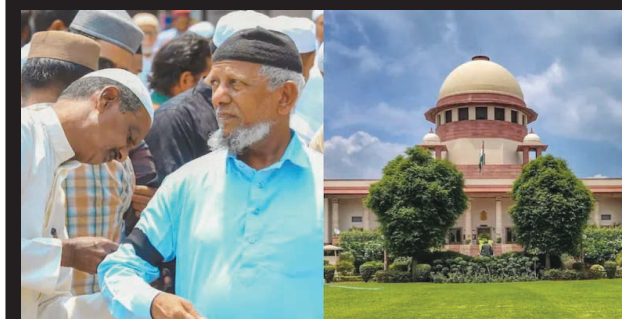
## Dubai-based Indian billionaire Balvinder Singh Sahni jailed for money laundering



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## Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025

'Religious donation' isn't exclusive to Islam; "... in Hinduism there is 'moksha'," Observes India Supreme Court.



Story on Page 20



# Indian-origin professor who lost OCI tag testified against India on Kashmir in US

**Nitasha Kaul, a UK-based Indian-origin professor, lost her Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) status over anti-India activities. The Kashmiri Pandit academician testified before a US Congressional Committee after the revocation of Article 370, criticising human rights violations in Kashmir.**

(By our staff reporter) - A Britain-based academic and professor, Nitasha Kaul, shared that the Government of India cancelled her Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) status. The notice from the Government of India cited her "anti-India activities" as the reason for revoking her OCI status, accusing her of being motivated by malice and repeatedly attacking India's sovereignty in international forums and on social media. The Kashmiri Pandit academician had, in fact, testified against the Indian government at the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs in 2019 over "human rights violations" in Kashmir. On May 18, Nitasha Kaul shared a part of the government notice on X: "...and whereas it has been brought to the notice of the Government of India that you have been indulging in anti-India activities, motivated by malice and complete disregard for facts or history."The notice



added, "Through your numerous inimical writings, speeches, and journalistic activities at various international forums and on social media platforms, you regularly target India and its institutions on the matters of India's sovereignty."A section of people on social media

supported the government's move to cancel Kaul's OCI status, saying that she "didn't deserve any kind of access to India".In 2024, Kaul was deported within hours of landing at the Bengaluru international airport. She was travelling at the invitation of the Congress-led

Karnataka government, and her deportation triggered a massive controversy.

**KEY WITNESS IN US HOUSE COMMITTEE AGAINST INDIA ON ARTICLE 370**

On October 22, 2019, Nitasha Kaul served as one of the key witnesses at a United States House Committee on Foreign Affairs hearing about the human rights situation in Jammu and Kashmir. This was after the revocation of Article 370 in August that year, which revoked the special autonomous status granted to Jammu and Kashmir under the Indian Constitution and the bifurcation of the state into two union territories.

Kaul is a professor of Politics, International Relations, and Critical Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Westminster in London. The university shared her testimony on its website.

## Indian tourist jailed for molesting child in Singapore



(By our staff reporter) - An Indian tourist has been jailed for three months in Singapore for molesting a 12-year-old girl at a swimming complex and sending her inappropriate messages on Instagram.Pramender, 25, who goes by only one name and was a tourist here, pleaded guilty on Friday to one charge of attempting to procure the commission of an indecent act by a child and one charge of molesting a child under 14, according to a Channel News Asia (CNA) report. A third charge of trespassing was taken into account for his sentencing.Pramender was accused of following the victim to the toilet at Jalan Besar swimming complex, where she was with her family on Mar 31, the CNA report said on Friday.Pramender also took the

girl's phone and accessed her Instagram account and used it to follow his account. He later sent 13 inappropriate messages to her on Instagram. The victim got scared seeing the messages and reported the incident to the lifeguard on duty.The victim's mother later complained to police, following which Pramender was arrested on April 2.During the court hearing on Friday, Deputy Public Prosecutor Ashley Chin noted that the victim was young and vulnerable at 12 years old, and that there was "some degree of exploitation".While pronouncing his verdict, District Judge Chay Yuen Fatt noted that the situation could have been worse if the victim's cousins were not there to protect her from Pramender.



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# TLCA Inaugurates Telugu Bhavanam—A Landmark Cultural Center and a First of Its Kind in the U.S.



**Grand donors Dr. and Mrs. Badhey, TLCA Chairwoman Raji Kuncham cutting the ribbon at the ceremony**



**Chairwoman Raji Kuncham, making welcoming and inaugural remarks, along with the Board of Trustees and Executive Committee members**



**Congressman Souzzi, Chairwoman Raji Kuncham along with Board of Trustees and dignitaries honor Dr. Badhey and Mrs. Ratnamala Badhey and family.**



**Gracing the inaugural occasion – Congressman Souzzi, Senator Rhoads, Assemblyman John Mikulin, Legislator Debra Mulé, Legislator Koslow, North Hempstead Town Clerk Ragini Srivastava, and representatives from County Executive Bruce Blakeman's office and the Consul General of India.**



**Community leaders gather getting ready for the inaugural of the TLCA Bhavanam**



**Grand donor Dr. Mohan Badhey expressing joy as the TLCA Bhavanam becomes a reality.**

(By Our Staff Reporter) LEVITTOWN, NY — In a momentous celebration of culture, community, and legacy, the Telugu Literary and Cultural Association (TLCA) proudly inaugurated Telugu Bhavanam, the first-ever Telugu community-owned cultural center in the United States, on May 4th, 2025, at 1 North Village Green, Levittown, NY. This historic milestone marks a new era for the 54-year-old nonprofit, which has served as a steadfast guardian of Telugu heritage for over five decades.

The inaugural event was a grand affair, attended by a diverse gathering of community members, dignitaries, and elected officials who came together to honor this long-awaited dream come true. Chairwoman of the TLCA Board of Trustees, Raji Kuncham, opened the ceremony with heartfelt remarks, warmly welcoming attendees and reflecting on the journey that led to this historic day. "Telugu Bhavanam is more than a building—it's a symbol of our unity, our perseverance, and our deep commitment to passing on our rich cultural legacy to future generations," she said. She paid tribute to past Chairmen and Presidents for their foundational leadership and vision, and expressed deep gratitude to all donors and supporters who helped make the dream a reality. A highlight of the event was the special recognition of Dr. Mohan Badhey, Senior Life Trustee and visionary philanthropist, whose extraordinary donation of over \$500,000 was instrumental in the creation of Telugu Bhavanam. In a deeply

meaningful gesture, the new center will bear the name "Narayanswamy and Kamamma Badhey TLCA Telugu Bhavanam," honoring Dr. Badhey's beloved parents and their enduring legacy. Congressman Tom Suozzi and Chairwoman Raji Kuncham came together to formally honor Dr. Badhey for his unparalleled contributions to the Telugu community. In a moving tribute, they presented him with a commemorative plaque and acknowledged his decades of service, leadership, and generosity. Congressman Suozzi praised Dr. Badhey as "a shining example of community spirit and

cultural stewardship," and lauded the TLCA for "preserving and promoting Telugu culture with unwavering passion, ensuring that this vibrant tradition continues to flourish for generations to come." Dr. Badhey expressed his joy and pride, stating, "This is a dream come true. I'm incredibly proud that our community now has a permanent home—a place where our culture can thrive, and our future generations can stay connected to their roots." The impressive 12,000-square-foot facility spans two stories and includes ample parking. TLCA has ambitious plans for future development, including a mini auditorium, a library, children's

and youth activity areas, women's and senior centers, and a full kitchen and dining hall. Chairwoman Kuncham called on the community and public officials for continued support to help realize these exciting next steps. The event was further elevated by the presence of esteemed elected officials, including State Senator Steve Rhoads, Assemblyman John Mikulin, Nassau County Legislators Debra Mulé and Seth Koslow, North Hempstead Town Clerk Ragini Srivastava, and representatives from County Executive Bruce Blakeman's office and the Consul General of India. They echoed the

significance of this achievement and commended TLCA for its unwavering commitment to cultural preservation. Sumanth Ramsetti, TLCA's current Executive Committee President, shared his excitement, noting that his team will be the first to utilize Telugu Bhavanam as a dynamic hub for community programs, cultural celebrations, and educational events. Also in attendance were leaders from prominent Indian American organizations including IALI, AIA, IAF, Kannada Koota, Tamil Sangam and BAPS underscoring the spirit of unity and shared celebration among South Asian communities.



# US cracks down on Indian travel agencies aiding illegal immigration

(By Our Staff Reporter) The US mission in India's consular affairs and diplomatic security services work daily across the embassy and consulates to actively identify and target those engaged in facilitating illegal immigration, human smuggling, and trafficking operations. The United States has announced that it is taking action against Indian travel agencies that facilitate illegal immigration into the US. The US Department of State spokesperson, Tammy Bruce, said the department is taking steps to impose visa restrictions



on owners, executives, and senior officials of travel agencies based in India that knowingly facilitate illegal immigration to the US. The US mission in India's consular affairs and diplomatic security services work daily across the embassy and consulates to actively identify and target those engaged in facilitating illegal immigration, human smuggling, and trafficking operations. Bruce added, "We will continue to take steps to impose visa restrictions against owners, executives, and senior officials of travel

agencies to dismantle alien smuggling networks." This immigration policy aims to inform foreign nationals about the dangers of illegal immigration to the US and hold accountable those who violate US laws, including facilitators of illegal immigration. Enforcing US immigration laws and policies is essential for upholding the rule of law and protecting American interests. This visa restriction policy has global implications and applies to individuals who would otherwise qualify for the visa waiver programme.

## *Don't overstay your visa: US Embassy issues stern warning to Indian travellers*



(By Our Staff Reporter) In a significant escalation of immigration enforcement, the United States has issued a stern new warning to Indian nationals travelling on visas. The US

Embassy in India took to social media to announce that overstaying a visa—even by a short period—could now result in deportation and a permanent ban from entering the country again.

The post, shared on X, comes amid a renewed immigration crackdown under US President Donald Trump's second term in office. The message is particularly directed at Indian nationals traveling on tourist, student, and work visas, emphasising that even legal entry into the United States comes with the obligation to

respect visa terms and American laws. Recently, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) also released a statement declaring that holding a valid visa or green card does not guarantee immunity from deportation.

The agency asserted that coming to America is a privilege, not a right, and that individuals who promote violence, terrorism, or similar unlawful activities could face immediate removal, regardless of their immigration status. Since the start of Trump's second term, his administration

has aggressively pursued immigration reforms and enforcement actions. The US President has declared a national emergency at the Mexico border and stepped up deportation flights, including several that repatriated Indian nationals in February.

The White House has also moved to overhaul the H-1B visa program, expand Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operations, and push to eliminate birthright citizenship for children born in the US to undocumented parents.

## Man who stabbed author Salman Rushdie on stage sentenced to 25 years in jail

(By Our Staff Reporter) The man convicted of stabbing Salman Rushdie on a New York lecture stage in 2022, leaving the prizewinning author blind in one eye, was sentenced on Friday to serve 25 years in prison. A jury found Hadi Matar, 27, guilty of attempted murder and assault in February. Rushdie did not return to court to the western New York courtroom for his assailant's sentencing but submitted a victim impact statement. During the trial, the 77-year-old author was the key witness, describing how he believed he was dying when a masked attacker plunged a knife into his head and body more than a dozen times as he was being introduced at the Chautauqua

Institution to speak about writer safety.

Before being sentenced, Matar stood and made a statement about freedom of speech in which he called Rushdie a hypocrite.

"Salman Rushdie wants to disrespect other people," said Matar, clad in white-striped jail clothing and wearing handcuffs. "He wants to be a bully, he wants to bully other people. I don't agree with that."

Matar received the maximum 25-year sentence for the attempted murder of Rushdie and seven years for wounding a man who was on stage with him. The sentences must run concurrently because both victims were injured in the same event, Chautauqua County

District Attorney Jason Schmidt said.

In requesting the maximum sentence, Schmidt told the judge that Matar "chose this. He designed this attack so that he could inflict the most amount of damage, not just upon Mr Rushdie, but upon this community, upon the 1,400 people who were there to watch it." Public defender Nathaniel Barone pointed out that Matar had an otherwise clean criminal record and disputed that the people in the audience should be considered victims, suggesting that a sentence of 12 years would be appropriate. "Every day since then, for the last couple of years, this case has been an international



publicity sponge," Barone said. "There was no presumption, ever, of innocence for Mr Matar from the very beginning." Rushdie spent 17 days at a Pennsylvania hospital and more than three weeks at a New

York City rehabilitation centre. The author of "Midnight's Children," "The Moor's Last Sigh" and "Victory City" detailed his recovery in his 2024 memoir, "Knife." Matar next faces a federal trial on terrorism-related charges.



# 1-year jail not mandatory for bail: Supreme Court frees liquor scam accused

**The Supreme Court granted bail to businessman Anwar Dhebar in the alleged Rs 2,000 crore liquor scam case and said, "It is not a rule to be in custody for a year to get bail".**

(News Agency)- The Supreme Court has said there was "no rule" that a person accused of money laundering ought to spend a year in jail before being given bail, as it allowed relief to a businessman. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan granted bail to businessman Anwar Dhebar in the alleged Rs 2,000 crore liquor scam case and said, "It is not a rule to be in custody for a year to get bail."

He was arrested in August last year and has spent over nine months in jail.

The top court said the maximum punishment for the offence alleged was seven years, and that the trial against Dhebar was unlikely to start any time soon given the large number of witnesses.

"The appellant was arrested on August 8, 2024. Forty witnesses have been cited. Investigation is



in progress. In the predicate offence there are 450 witnesses. In predicate offence cognisance has not been taken. Therefore there is no possibility of trial commencing in near future. The maximum punishment is seven years," it noted.

Referring to the Senthil Balaji

verdict, the court held Dhebar was entitled to be released on bail with stringent terms and conditions. "He shall surrender passport, if any," the bench added.

The ED counsel urged the bench not to release the accused on bail saying he was arrested in August last year and it hadn't even been

a year of his custody.

The ED lawyer said the top court was following the "one-year custody benchmark" to grant bail in various cases and submitted the yardstick ought to be followed in Dhebar's case.

The accused, the ED lawyer said, was politically connected and an

influential person, and his bail would hamper the trial.

The apex court, however, asked the trial court to release the accused within a week on terms and conditions fixed by the special court.

Dhebar, brother of Congress leader and Raipur Mayor Aijaz Dhebar, was first to be arrested in the money laundering case stemming from an Income Tax department chargesheet filed in connection with alleged tax evasion and irregularities in liquor trade in Chhattisgarh and some other states. The ED, in the prosecution complaint (chargesheet) submitted in the case in a PMLA court in Raipur on July 4, claimed Rs 2,161 crore of corruption money was generated in the "liquor scam" that began in 2019 in Chhattisgarh and this amount should have gone to the state exchequer.

## Pro-Pak content, encrypted chats: Haryana 'spy' YouTuber faces tough questioning

**Booked under espionage and benami laws, YouTuber Jyoti Malhotra is facing an intense grilling by authorities over Pakistan links, encrypted chats, foreign travel, and alleged pro-Pak content.**



(News Agency)-Haryana-based YouTuber Jyoti Malhotra, 33, who runs the popular YouTube channel 'Travel with JO', is under intense questioning by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), Intelligence Bureau (IB), and military intelligence after her arrest on espionage charges.

Authorities arrested Jyoti on May 16 from New Aggarsain Extension in Hisar, booking her under the Official Secrets Act and the Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act. She is one of 12 individuals recently arrested across Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh as part of a

crackdown on a suspected Pakistan-linked spy network operating in northern India.

### LINE OF QUESTIONING

India Today TV has accessed details of Jyoti Malhotra's interrogation, now entering its fourth day. Despite multiple sessions with Haryana Police, NIA, IB, and military intelligence officials, the YouTuber has largely refused to cooperate, asserting her right to freedom of speech. Her custody is set to expire on Wednesday.

Key areas of investigation focus on:

2023 Pakistan visit: Officials are reportedly probing who initiated contact for her trip to Pakistan during Vaisakhi 2023, and whether a man named Harkirat Singh acted as a facilitator. Authorities are scrutinising discrepancies between her stated purpose and the footage she

captured.

Connections with Ehsan Dar (alias Danish): Investigators are determining when Jyoti met Ehsan, a Pakistani official linked to the Pakistan High Commission, and whether this was before or after her visa was denied in 2023. They want to know if she was aware of his official role and maintained contact even after he was declared persona non grata. Authorities are examining if Ehsan or his associates offered support such as visa assistance, funds, content ideas, or equipment, and whether any grooming or influence took place. Visa overstay and content direction: Questions focus on why Jyoti extended her visa in 2024 for over a month, whether this was accidental or deliberate, and who directed the tone and messaging of her videos perceived as pro-Pakistan.

Pahalgam video controversy:

Officials demanded explanations for her video, blaming Indian security forces despite contradictory facts, including the source of her claims.

Further Pakistani contacts: Authorities are investigating if Jyoti met others besides Ehsan from the Pakistani side, the nature and duration of such contacts, and whether she communicated with them after incidents such as the Pahalgam attack. Encrypted chats and digital propaganda: Interrogators are reviewing encrypted chats found on her devices, the identity of her main contacts, and the use of secure communication tools such as Signal, Telegram, VPNs, or TOR. They are probing whether she received digital instructions, used foreign SIM cards, or had her devices modified under foreign guidance.



# ***IAS officer Vinay Choubey among 2 arrested in Jharkhand excise scam***

**The ACB has accused Vinay Choubey of colluding with the Chhattisgarh liquor syndicate to formulate a new liquor policy in Jharkhand and causing financial loss to the state exchequer.**

(News Agency)- The Jharkhand Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Tuesday arrested Excise Secretary Vinay Choubey (IAS) in the Ranchi excise scam case, officials said. Joint Commissioner of Excise, Gajendra Singh, was also arrested for his alleged role in the liquor scam.

The ACB has accused Vinay Choubey of colluding with the Chhattisgarh liquor syndicate to formulate a new excise policy in Jharkhand and causing financial losses to the state exchequer.

The case pertains to the new liquor policy made in Jharkhand in the year 2022. It is alleged that the policy was altered to benefit the people associated with the liquor syndicate of Chhattisgarh. A case was registered in the matter on



September 27, 2024, naming seven people, including Choubey, as accused.

Later, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) raided several places on charges of money laundering and seized

incriminating documents, before the ACB of Chhattisgarh sought permission from the Jharkhand government to prosecute Vinay Choubey and Gajendra Singh.

On the complaint of Ranchi resident Vikas Kumar, an FIR

was registered in Raipur in 2024 under sections 420 (fraud) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Another businessman Anil Tuteja, was also named in the FIR.

According to the FIR, the accused businessmen of Chhattisgarh together got contracts for the supply of liquor, arrangement of workers and hologram system in Jharkhand, which resulted in financial losses to the Jharkhand state exchequer, while the accused benefitted with kickbacks.

The Jharkhand ACB registered a case after an FIR filed by the Chhattisgarh Economic Offences Wing (EOW). During the investigation of the same, the ACB interrogated both Choubey and Gajendra Singh. On the basis of the information

received during the preliminary inquiry, the ACB registered a regular FIR in the liquor scam with the permission of the Jharkhand government.

Meanwhile, in March 2025, the EOW, after completing the investigation of the FIR registered in Chhattisgarh, wrote a letter to the state government and requested it to issue a prosecution sanction order against Vinay Choubey and Gajendra Singh.

After receiving a legal opinion from a Supreme Court lawyer into the matter, the Jharkhand ACB detained Choubey from his residence on Tuesday morning, hours before summoning Gajendra Singh to their office. After the duo were questioned about their alleged role in the excise scam, the anti-corruption agency arrested both of them.

## **Kerala activist held for terror charges was active on dark web: ATS Officials**



**A 26-year-old student activist and self-proclaimed journalist from Kerala, arrested for allegedly preparing to wage war against India, was active on the dark web, Maharashtra ATS officials confirmed.**

A student activist and self-described independent journalist from Kerala arrested earlier this month under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and several provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita for allegedly preparing to wage war against the country was active on the dark web, an official from the Nagpur unit of the

Maharashtra Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS) said on Monday.

Rejaz M Sheeba Sydeek, aged 26, was arrested by Lakadganj police on May 7, from a hotel in Nagpur, Maharashtra, after his

online activities were placed under surveillance. Sydeek had made social media posts on Instagram condemning Operation Sindoor, the recent strike by

Indian Armed Forces on terror targets in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and also criticised counterinsurgency operations against Naxals.

His house in Kerala's Ernakulam district was later raided on May 11, resulting in the seizure of incriminating documents, the official added. "A preliminary scan of the digital devices belonging to

him has revealed he was active on the dark web and was making inflammatory comments and posting his ideas. The Anti Terrorism Squad will send the digital devices to the cyber-forensic laboratory for in-depth investigation," the official said. The dark web refers to a part of the internet not indexed by standard search engines, accessible only through specific software. It offers a high degree of anonymity to users and is frequently associated with illicit activities, including drug trafficking and data breaches.

The official further said that a local court extended Sydeek's police custody by two days on Sunday. His online activity reportedly

included provocative posts and an image in which he was holding a firearm after visiting a rifle shop in Nagpur. He was initially booked under sections 149 (preparing to wage war against the Government of India), 192 (provocation with intent to cause riots), 351 (criminal intimidation), and 353 (statements conducive to public mischief) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Following further investigation, sections 38 and 39 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, pertaining to membership of a terrorist organisation and providing support to such groups, were added to the case, which was subsequently transferred from Lakadganj police to the ATS.



# Rs 11.5 crore stolen in cyber heist at Himachal Co-operative Bank

**Cybercriminals siphoned off Rs 11.55 crore from the Himachal Pradesh State Co-operative Bank by tricking a customer into installing a malicious app that gave them remote access.**

(News Agency)- In a major case of cyber fraud, scammers siphoned off Rs 11.55 crore from the Himachal Pradesh State Co-operative Bank by hacking into a customer's bank account.

According to the police, the fraudsters tricked the victim into downloading a malicious mobile application named HimPaisa. Once installed, the app gave the attackers remote access to the customer's device, enabling them to infiltrate the bank's internet banking system on May 11 and 12. Once inside, the hackers carried out unauthorised transactions and transferred the stolen funds to 20 different bank accounts using NEFT and RTGS payment channels. A special investigation team has been formed to probe the fraud, and efforts are underway to trace the



recipients of the diverted funds following a complaint lodged by bank authorities.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Cyber Crime Himachal, Mohit

Chawla, told India Today that central agencies are also investigating how such a significant breach occurred in a government bank, despite

claims that the bank's systems were up to the mark.

"We have formed a special team working in coordination with CERT-In and IFORC. Teams

from Delhi are also investigating and will submit a detailed report on the incident soon," Chawla said.

The probe is also examining whether the bank staff were alert to potential cyber threats around the clock, whether proper data log entries were maintained, if firewall systems were up to date, and how account security was managed over weekends.

Investigators are further looking into the bank's preparedness and response systems to deal with cyber-attacks, and whether there was any internal involvement from bank staff.

The central team from the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) is expected to return to Delhi and submit its report within the next couple of days.

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# Lure, marry, flee with cash: UP's 'looteri dulhan' arrested for duping 25 men

**The 'looteri dulhan', named Anuradha, was arrested in Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh. Anuradha was eventually trapped after the police tricked her into a fake marriage.**

(News Agency)- She would entice prospective grooms with her charm, marry them, only to disappear with their hard-earned money and jewellery.

In an incident straight out of the Bollywood movie 'Ladies vs Ricky Bahl' (the difference being the accused is a woman here), Rajasthan police on Tuesday arrested a woman for cheating 25 grooms and fleeing with cash worth lakhs.

The 'looteri dulhan' (looting bride), named Anuradha, was arrested in Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh. She is a native of Uttar Pradesh's Maharajganj district. Surprisingly, only one case has been registered against her so far - in the Mantoan police station of Rajasthan's Sawai Madhopur district. Anuradha was eventually arrested after the police tricked her into a fake marriage. Senior Rajasthan police officer Meetha Lal Yadav said a complaint was filed by one Vishnu Sharma on May 3.



Vishnu claimed that two individuals - Sunita from Madhya Pradesh and Pappu Meena from Rajasthan - promised to find a suitable bride for him and showed Anuradha's photo.

After Vishnu agreed to marry her, Sunita and Pappu facilitated a fake marriage

agreement at the Sawai Madhopur court premises on April 20. For this, Vishnu was charged Rs 2 lakh.

However, on May 2, barely 12 days after the wedding, Anuradha fled with jewellery, cash, and a mobile phone from Vishnu's home.

A police team was formed after the cops received intel about Anuradha's presence in Bhopal. ASI Yadav travelled to Bhopal with his team and set a trap, with a constable posing as a prospective groom. The constable then reached out to marriage brokers and was shown photos of potential brides. One of them was Anuradha.

She was eventually arrested and brought to Rajasthan. Further investigation into the case revealed a larger fake marriage racket in Bhopal.

Individuals like Sunita and Pappu acted as intermediaries, tapping into prospective grooms through local agents. They would demand anywhere from Rs 2-5 lakh to conduct the marriages. Days after the wedding, the brides would flee with cash and jewellery. After duping Vishnu, Anuradha allegedly married another man - Gabbar, a resident of Bhopal - and cheated him of Rs 2 lakh. She was arrested from his house.

## Man caught smuggling Rs 70 lakh, gold in custom-made jacket into Kerala

(News Agency)-A man attempting to smuggle cash and gold hidden in a specially tailored jacket from Tamil Nadu's Coimbatore district into Kerala was caught by the police.

The incident occurred in the Velanthavalam area in Palakkad district, where Kerala Police were inspecting vehicles as a routine check. Officers



grams of gold from the jacket. The man has been identified as Sagar. He, along with his two companions, Manikandan and Sandeep, have been detained for further questioning as the investigation continues. In a similar but much larger smuggling attempt, Kannada film actor Ranya Rao was arrested at Bengaluru International Airport for allegedly trying to smuggle 14.2 kilograms of gold bars. The gold, valued at over Rs 12.56 crore, was concealed in a hidden waist belt strapped to her body and had been brought in from Dubai. The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) acted on a tip-off and arrested the actress upon her arrival from Dubai on an Emirates

flight on March 3. She had been under surveillance due to her repeated international trips. Authorities found that Ranya Rao travelled to Dubai 52 times between 2023 and 2025, with 45 of them being a single-day round trip. In the first two months of 2025, she made 27 visits, often passing through Bengaluru, Goa, and Mumbai, raising suspicions of illicit activities. A targeted operation was launched upon her return to India, leading to her arrest.

stopped three men travelling on two motorbikes when they noticed something suspicious about one of them. The man's attire appeared disproportionate, raising the officers' suspicions. When asked to remove his shirt, the man revealed a black jacket with multiple concealed pockets. Upon inspection, police discovered that the jacket was stuffed with cash and gold. The authorities reportedly recovered Rs 70 lakh in cash and 200

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# ED's allegations against Sonia Gandhi, Rahul in National Herald case

India Today has exclusively accessed details of the ED's allegations against Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and others. The probe agency alleges that Sonia Gandhi abused her position as Congress's interim president for the personal gain of herself and Rahul Gandhi.



which the agency describes as merely an instrument for siphoning proceeds of crime. According to the ED, this act defrauded both the public shareholders of Associated Journals Ltd (AJL) and donors of the AICC.

Sources said the ED has alleged that the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) violations committed by Young Indian were done with the consent, connivance, or negligence of Sonia Gandhi, who was a director in the company at the time.

The agency also alleged that the transactions involved could not have been executed without Rahul Gandhi's knowledge and active participation, given his role as General Secretary of the AICC and oversight of its operations. Furthermore, the ED has noted that no steps were taken by AICC office-bearers, including Rahul Gandhi, to recover the loan extended to AJL, despite their awareness of AJL's valuable, income-

generating assets.

Sources told India Today that Sonia Gandhi, when questioned, claimed she was not involved in the day-to-day affairs of Young Indian, despite simultaneously serving as AICC President and holding a 38 per cent stake in Young Indian. According to sources, the ED has alleged that Young Indian received donations and contributions totaling approximately Rs 18.12 crore from various individuals during 2017-18, which the agency contends are not genuine. The ED claims the real purpose behind these bogus donations was to clear Young Indian's income tax liabilities—costs that would have otherwise fallen on the company's majority shareholders and beneficial owners, namely Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. The ED has also alleged that Sonia and Rahul Gandhi, when questioned about the loan and related transactions, repeatedly stated that all decisions were taken by

the late Motilal Vora, then treasurer of the Congress. According to the ED, this demonstrates a deliberate attempt to obstruct the investigation and evade legal accountability by shifting blame to a deceased individual.

Additionally, sources report that the ED has alleged AJL received Rs 29.45 crore in advertising revenue between 2017-18 and 2020-21. However, individuals listed in AJL's advertising ledgers reportedly told investigators they had made payments under instructions from Congress leaders. Some even claimed the payments were made to secure protection from these leaders in the course of their regular business dealings.

Sources also said the ED has argued that Sonia and Rahul Gandhi's hegemony over Young Indian is evident from the fact that, even after the deaths of two shareholders in 2020 and 2021 respectively, their shares remain unallotted to date.

(News Agency)-The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has claimed that proceeds of crime amounting to Rs 988 crore have been identified in the hands of the accused in the National Herald case, sources said.

India Today has exclusively accessed details of the ED's allegations against Sonia

Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and others. The probe agency alleges that Sonia Gandhi abused her position as Congress's interim president for the personal gain of herself and Rahul Gandhi.

The ED has further claimed that the Gandhis diverted public funds for personal use through the company Young Indian,

## 3,000 Agniveers braved Pak assault in Operation Sindoor, guarded key installations

From manning critical air defence systems to holding their ground across multiple installations, cities, and airbases despite repeated enemy assaults, the Agniveers' performance matched that of regular soldiers.

(News Agency)-Around 3,000 Agniveers -- most barely 20 years old and recruited under the Agnipath scheme in the past two years -- were at the forefront of Operation Sindoor, defending Indian military installations from Pakistani missile and drone attacks, sources told India Today TV. From manning critical air defence systems to holding their ground across multiple installations, cities, and airbases despite repeated enemy assaults, the Agniveers' performance matched that of regular soldiers. Frontline feedback described their



contribution as both decisive and commendable, sources in the defence establishment added. Sources revealed that each air defence unit had 150-200 Agniveers in its ranks, deployed

primarily along the western front. The Agniveers served across four specialised trades -- gunners, fire control operators, radio operators, and drivers of heavy-duty vehicles mounted with guns

and missiles. Additionally, they helped activate and operate Akashteer -- the locally developed air defence control and reporting system -- that became the nerve centre of India's air defence response. Agniveers were actively involved in firing shoulder-launched missiles, operating upgraded anti-aircraft guns such as the L-70 and Zu-23-2B, manning systems like Pechora, Schilka, OSA-AK, Strela, and Tunguska, and deploying and launching Akash and other surface-to-air missiles. This real combat experience is seen as a turning point for the Agnipath

model, with officials stating it should "settle the debate" over the short-term recruitment policy's effectiveness. Running radars, communication networks, and Akashteer nodes, some also acted as sentries in forward zones after deploying weapon systems. Additionally, they are covered by an insurance policy worth Rs 48 lakh. The ex-gratia benefit for an Agniveer killed in the line of duty is Rs 44 lakh. Upon completing four years of service, Agniveers are entitled to a Seva Nidhi package of Rs 11.71 lakh, of which Rs 5.02 lakh is self-contributed.



## Strategic Partners, Selective Priorities: India, US, And The Trump Puzzle

For India, US President Donald Trump continues to be an enigma! This should not be surprising at all. It is great if he is on your side of the table, but if he is not, his unpredictability vis-à-vis global politics in general, and Indo-Pacific politics in particular, can be difficult to understand and to keep pace with. The latter view is gaining traction these days, with many in India — including citizens, experts, analysts and observers on South Asian affairs, mandarins in government, etc. — indirectly suggesting that he is indulging in doublespeak when it comes to US ties with Pakistan and its stance on neutralising terror, wherever it emanates from. It is there for all to see! Days before the Indian armed forces launched Operation Sindoor against Pakistan as retribution for its terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam that claimed 26 lives on 22 April, Pakistan's Finance Ministry signed a cryptocurrency deal with a US-based firm. There are rumours that Pakistan's Army Chief, General Asim Munir, is a key beneficiary.

The deal between World Liberty Financial (WLF) and Pakistan's Finance Ministry is targeted at making South Asia a cryptocurrency hub. Officially, the deal aims to promote blockchain innovation, stablecoin adoption, and tokenised trade infrastructure in Pakistan.

The problem is not so much with the deal itself, but the fact that 60 per cent ownership of WLF lies with the Trump family. Behind this "controversial" deal is Trump's "golf buddy" and current US Special Envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff.

What is suspicious is that the deal between WLF and the Pakistan Crypto Council (created in March 2025) made news for its signing surfacing even before the blood from the terror attack in Pahalgam had dried — or, as some reports suggest, it may have been formalised immediately after Operation Sindoor. Pakistan daily The Dawn has expressed its reservations about the deal, stating: "Pakistan's rapid embrace of digital currencies appears to be a leap before looking." The paper further notes that Pakistan is "seemingly eager to capitalise on global digital trends without first addressing unresolved regulatory deficiencies".

This deal attracts further criticism in the wake of the fact that the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) maintains that Pakistan is still falling short in closing critical regulatory and enforcement gaps, and that Islamabad remains on its watchlist for failing to adequately address money laundering and terrorist financing.

The WLF's founder is Steve Witkoff's son, Zachary. The other partners are

Donald Trump's two sons, Donald Jr. and Eric, and his son-in-law, Jared Kushner. They reportedly held in-camera meetings with Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and General Munir before finalising the deal.

Though India's relationship with the US is multifaceted and built on shared democratic values and a convergence of strategic interests across various domains, it's no secret that significant challenges exist. Historically, it is well known that the best India-US deals have come when a Republican — rather than a Democratic — administration is in charge in Washington, D.C.

In that context, exchanges with the Trump administration should have got off to a positive start, but the maverick ways of the current US President seem to be upsetting the bilateral politico-economic apple cart somewhat.

Most notable among the challenges are geopolitical issues, such as US criticism over India's neutrality on the Russia-Ukraine war, and New Delhi's decision to abstain from voting in the UN when the invasion was being condemned.

India — and rightly so — is viewing the global conflict scenario purely through the lens of economic considerations. It is more concerned about wars disrupting food and energy supplies. It is also wary of the possibility of Russia halting crude oil exports to India should it side with the West and NATO. The Trump administration is similarly concerned about India's protectionist policies vis-à-vis its domestic industry. It is also unhappy with the existence of entry barriers for foreign investment.

Another bilateral challenge that requires a meeting of minds is the frequent criticism by US organisations and foundations regarding India's democratic discourse, position on press and religious freedom, and treatment of minorities.

The US export controls on India — in place since May 1998 — have inhibited the free transfer of technology between the two countries. Resolving this issue is crucial to fostering greater collaboration and technological exchange.

India is still not fully committed to the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), a trade and economic cooperation initiative launched by the US and other Indo-Pacific countries in 2022.

There are other challenges, but for now, from India's point of view, post-Pahalgam, the focus should be on enhancing counter-terrorism cooperation to ensure stability in nuclear-armed South Asia. Pressure must be sustained on Pakistan to rein in the support provided by its army and military intelligence to terrorist groups.

## US is facing brain drain. India must decide if it's ready to welcome back scholars

The year 1933 witnessed the beginning of an exodus of scientists, academicians, and intellectuals from Germany. The scale of the exodus, and the quality of people who left Germany, mostly to the US and Western Europe, was so significant that they deeply influenced the development of Western Europe and America in the post-World War II period. History might repeat itself, again. In recent times, reports have emerged that many academicians are looking to migrate from the US to other parts of the world. The present geopolitical situation may not be as grave, or as delicate as it was in 1933 Germany, but a perceived threat to academic freedom is prompting many academicians to consider relocating.

A recent survey carried out by Nature magazine confirms that the brain drain may already be underway in the US. More than 75 per cent of a large number of scientists said that they were looking to move at the earliest opportunity. In the 1930s, many of the displaced scientists from Germany went on to make groundbreaking contributions—only now, on foreign soil. Among them, Albert Einstein, James Franck, and Erwin Schrodinger were already Nobel laureates, while five more won the Nobel Prize later for the work they did abroad. Their acceptance in the UK and the US was partly helped by dedicated organisations set up specifically to support their relocation. It is an undisputed fact that the innovation culture in the US and Western Europe in the post-war period led to their rapid economic growth, and this group of migrants played an important role in promoting such culture.

### Inviting scholars to India

Interestingly, some of the leading academicians had even considered migrating to India in the 1930s. One such

person was Max Born, who went on to win the Nobel Prize in physics in 1954 and was American physicist J Robert Oppenheimer's mentor. Born spent six months during 1935-1936 at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, at the invitation of Indian physicist CV Raman. Raman had recently moved to IISc and was keen to attract global talent to the institute. When Raman offered Born to move to Bengaluru in 1935, initially for six months and later permanently, Born had no hesitation in accepting the invitation. Indeed, Born's six months in Bengaluru were marked by a series of lectures by him and deep academic discussions with Raman and his colleagues.

Similarly, when Pt Madan Mohan Malaviya understood the plight of intellectuals in Germany, foreseeing the immediate need to act, he offered Albert Einstein to visit the newly established Banaras Hindu University. This was in anticipation that Einstein would be pleased with the academic environment at the BHU, and eventually might be persuaded to accept a faculty position there. Both Raman and Malaviya had exceptional foresight on the contemporary situation and were willing to invite outstanding individuals to their institutions.

### US brain drain

If the brain drain does happen now, it could undermine the US' position as the world's most innovation-friendly country—and as its largest economy. Independent analysts have commented on both these aspects. Consequently, countries in Europe have taken swift action on the perceived brain drain from the US. For example, the French President Emmanuel Macron has already extended an open invitation to the best brains to relocate to France.

By **SHEKHAR MANDE**



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# The world is full of idiots, @grok is this true?

**What does a world where people have outsourced their thinking to AI look like? It looks like the one where everyone is groking all the time.**

By Javed Anwer

If you have spent even a moment on X, aka Twitter, in the last one month, you must have seen it. @Grok is it true - this is a line that appears again and again nowadays on X. Somebody will say that the world is in the middle of global warming and pat there would be a reply, "@grok is it true". Sounds reasonable enough. After all, if there is an AI system that poses as an all-knowing and always-answering machine, it makes sense to invoke it when you are looking for some nuance. But that is not all. You may find, just as an example, posts saying "Aliens have landed on top of the Taj Mahal" and even under such a post there will be @grok is it true? It is ubiquitous, this invoking of Grok, which is the AI system cooked by Elon Musk and his company xAI. Compared to the latest ChatGPT or Google Gemini, it is not even that good. Yet, in some form or other, Grok is under almost each X post, with users tagging and calling it to explain or verify something. Most of these users are also, for some reason, Indians.

I have a suspicion that most of the Grok usage on X is now driven by Indians. The AI system became known to Indian



users, and caught their attention, several weeks ago when it started doing MC and BC in Delhi style. Of course, the AI was matching the language that some Indians used while interacting with it. For reasons that are easy to understand, the MC and BC ended up endearing Grok to Indian users. They loved it.

But of late, all this Groking is becoming too much. Nowadays, when I trawl through the replies where Grok has been called to deliver "the truth", I can't help but feel — is the world full of idiots? The kind of inanities that Grok is called on to adjudicate are so far-fetched that it seems impossible to comprehend that

someone wants it fact-checked. Yet obviously, there are people — and the number is quite large if you go by X replies — who want some nonsense or other confirmed or denied.

It is all quite funny. Really, it is. And there are memes around it now. But beyond the humour of it all, there is also a glimpse of a dystopian future in it — absurd but dystopian nonetheless. On the same page here, a few weeks ago, I wrote about Grok in another context. In that piece, I wrote that "the tyranny of AI and machines is going to be a tyranny of bureaucracy...there is a real risk that humans in the future may start using AI

to think - to critically think - on their behalf." The growing trend of Groking is one step towards this future.

In the coming years, there will be two types of AI users: those who use it as a tool and those who just use it. We are already starting to see something like this. People who are experts in their domain are using AI to fine-tune and supercharge their work. They know the limits of AI, they understand where it can be pushed and where it tends to go wrong. When it makes mistakes, these experts see those mistakes glowing green like something radioactive. Then, there is another set of users who are using AI precisely because they are not experts. They are using AI tools to do something that they cannot otherwise do. These users are at a risk of losing forever a chance to become experts in something or the other. Over the years, this can compound to create a world where we lose human ingenuity and turn ourselves into a species that becomes a subject of a Pixar movie. I am talking of Wall-E, in which humans — kept fed, fat, and in a regimented but blissful existence by an AI — are the side actors in a scheme cooked by AUTO, the autopilot of ship Axiom.

## No one is asking for proof: Coffins escorted by military revealed the proof to the entire global fraternity-Vice President on Operation Sindoor



By JAG MOHAN THAKEN -INDIA

Praising the execution of 'Operation Sindoor', Indian Vice-President, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar stated, "When India responded remarkably effectively to Pakistan's terrorist misadventure at Pahalgalam on April 22, what a precise targeting of Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba bases in Muridke and Bahawalpur, sent a global message, a message that Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave to the entire world from the heartland of Bihar. Message— 'Terrorism will no longer go unpunished'. The punishment was exemplary. Strike was deep in the territory, beyond international border, keeping in mind our ethos to

target only terrorists. No one is asking for proof because the terrorist targeted revealed the proof to the entire global fraternity because coffins were escorted by military force of that country, by political force of that country and by terrorists. A great achievement, perhaps unrivalled in the annals of democratic functioning."

Vice-President, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar today said that, "Our aim is to be a Viksit Nation, Viksit Bharat @ 2047. This requires an eight-fold increase in per capita income. This calls for peace on our frontiers. Economic development cannot take place if we have war-like situations. Peace is fundamental to

growth and development. Peace comes from strength — strength in security, strength in economy, strength in development, and deep commitment, unflinching commitment, unqualified commitment to nationalism. I have reiterated on a number of occasions, reiterate here, national security demands unshakable, unflinching commitment to nationalism and relentless preparedness."

Addressing the distinguished gathering after inaugurating and dedicating 3 MW solar power plant, commercial operation of two harbour mobile cranes and covered dome for coal handling at the Mormugao port in Goa today, Shri Dhankhar underlined the significance of oceans for the nation and said, "Our Bharat today rises as both global economic force and maritime power committed to peace, sustainability and development. We are already the world's fourth largest economy and emerging in the Indo-Pacific sector, a leader in our own right. Our oceans matter to us now more than ever before. They really matter

to us for economy, for security, for sustaining our trade."

"In rapidly shifting geopolitical realities where global trade, strategic choke points, cyber threats and transnational crimes intersect, enforcing rules-based order at sea is increasingly challenging. It is becoming very important that rules-based order on sea prevails, but securing it is no less a challenge. India's maritime security must be resilient, proactive and future-ready. Let us catch up with shipbuilding. Let us be leaders in shipbuilding. That is essential. The demands will rise. I think if I'm not mistaken, we carry 70 % of our cargo in value by ship, the demand will increase because our economy is not taking leap, it is taking quantum jump, we have to be prepared for it", he added.

Lauding the Union government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Shri Dhankhar stated, "It was a delightful occasion for me, when three projects with financial outlay of about 300 crores came to be dedicated today.



# The Dangerous Consequences of HIV/AIDS Program Cuts: A Call to Protect Our Communities

**In India, where the tech sector gamely followed Silicon Valley into 'WFH', there is now growing pressure to follow it right back into the office - just like its Silicon Valley big brother.**

**By Therese R. Rodriguez, CEO, Apicha Community Health Center and Board Member, Amida Care**

As the CEO of Apicha Community Health Center, a Federally Qualified Community Health Center (FQHC) with a long tradition of providing high quality and culturally responsive care for Asian and Pacific Islanders (API) and other communities most deeply impacted by HIV; and as a board member of the nonprofit Medicaid health plan Amida Care; I've witnessed firsthand the critical importance of HIV/AIDS programs.

Recent announcements by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to significantly cut these programs, as well as potential spending cuts to Medicaid of up to \$880B, are deeply concerning.

For decades, these programs have provided vital resources for people affected by HIV. Medicaid is the largest source of insurance coverage for people with HIV in the U.S. covering an estimated 40% of nonelderly adults with HIV.

Reductions in HIV programs undermine our progress and threaten the health of the very people who need these services the most.

In recognition of National Asian American and Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (May 19), here are five reasons to focus on:

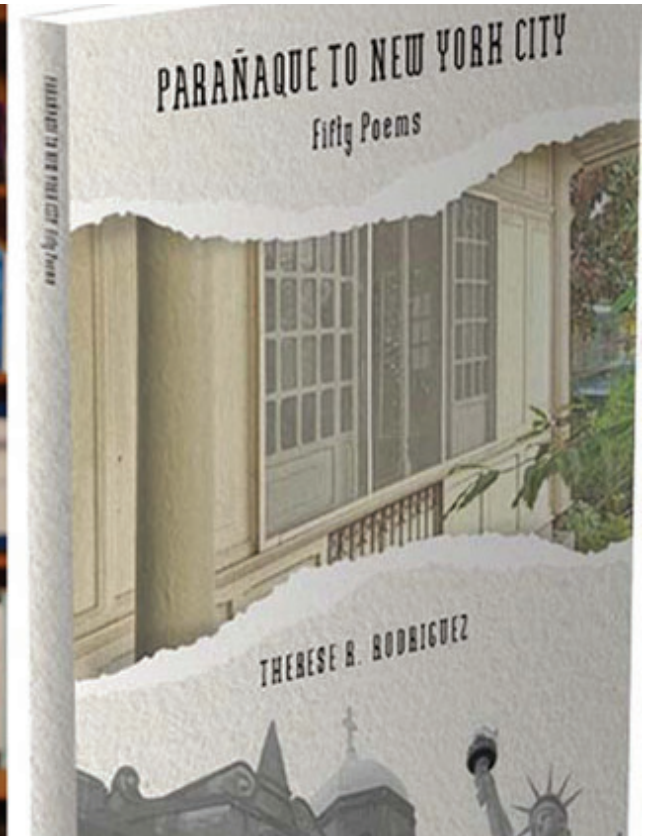
## **1. HIV Disparities in the AANHPI Community Are Alarming**

Despite being an often-overlooked group in public health discussions, the AANHPI community is significantly affected by HIV. While new HIV diagnoses in overall population in U.S. decreased by 12%, HIV diagnoses in the NHPI community increased by 65% between 2017 and 2021.

Moreover, while there is limited specific data on HIV infection among men who have sex with men (MSM) within the AANHPI community, we know that MSMs accounted for 67% of all new infections in 2022 with the greatest risk for young men.

Apicha CHC undertook a needs assessment of LGBTQ APIs in 2022. That study of 344 respondents – surveyed in seven languages – found that LGBTQ APIs have low knowledge of availability of HIV testing.

Cuts to programs that target specific groups will only exacerbate the problem. API does not exist in a vacuum. The lack of information among API on HIV



contributes to the increase in infection and spread to the larger community.

## **2. The Persistence of Cultural Stigma and Silence**

Stigma surrounding HIV remains a significant barrier to care in the AANHPI community and discourage individuals from seeking testing, treatment, or preventive care, such as PrEP. Many cultures still view HIV as a taboo subject. Asians have the lowest PrEP utilization rates (4.5%) compared to the other racial groups. Additionally, within many AANHPI communities, HIV is still perceived as only affecting certain groups, such as gay men or people who use drugs, leading to a lack of prevention efforts to heterosexuals and women.

## **3. Underreporting and Lack of Disaggregated Data**

A critical gap in addressing HIV in the AANHPI community is the underreporting of HIV cases and the lack of disaggregated data. Most national statistics group all AANHPI populations together, which masks important differences between subgroups. Some Southeast Asian American often have significantly higher rates of HIV compared to other AANHPI subgroups. Filipino Americans have some of the highest rates of HIV infection among Asian subgroups, but their experiences are often overlooked due to a lack of specific data.

Many studies only report on HIV for whites, African Americans, Latinos.

AANHPI and Native Americans are lumped into an "Other" category. But this "Other" category has the greatest variability as compared to the other groups. They speak different languages and come from several different cultures. Collecting and analyzing data helps us understand the scope of the epidemic.

## **4. Limited Access to Culturally Responsive Health Services**

While healthcare access in the U.S. has expanded through the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid, there are still significant gaps in services for the AANHPI community. Many immigrants and refugees face language barriers and lack access to culturally responsive healthcare providers.

Among our patients, one in four speak a language other than English. Moreover, we have found that some of our Cambodian, Chinese, and Vietnamese patients do not read nor write in any language.

HHS programs in language assistance and cultural competency training for providers are critical in bridging these gaps. FQHCs play a crucial role in providing this care. Reductions in funding will only worsen these barriers and contribute to increased HIV rates.

## **5. The Long-Term Cost of HIV: Why Prevention and Early Treatment Matter**

The long-term costs of HIV—both in human and financial terms—are profound. Studies have long shown that it is more cost-effective to invest in HIV

prevention and early treatment than to spend the higher medical costs of treating advanced HIV. Early HIV care can prevent the progression of the disease to AIDS, improve health outcomes and reduce avoidable hospitalization and ER use.

If funding for HIV programs is cut, we not only risk the lives and health of AANHPI individuals but also increase the cost to society as a whole due to the long-term consequences of untreated HIV, including increased transmission. Moreover, the increased transmission of HIV correlates with the increased transmission of other sexually transmitted infections (STI), contributing to increases in gonorrhea, syphilis, and herpes. We are particularly concerned about the effect on maternal-child health, with increased congenital syphilis incidence in populations with high HIV prevalence.

## **Conclusion: Protect HIV Programs and Protect Our Communities**

The recent cuts to HIV programs by the HHS are a dangerous step backward. Overall, infection rates are going down in the U.S. but not in populations such as APIs and MSM. "Why stop now?" The end of the epidemic is on the horizon. We cannot truly end the epidemic unless we end the epidemic in all populations. I am deeply concerned about the lasting consequences these cuts will have on the health and well-being of the AANHPI community.



# Trump's Hollywood Tariffs Are A Blow To A Struggling Industry

By Gunjan Singh

In a striking announcement on May 5, President Donald Trump declared 100% tariffs on films produced outside the United States. Citing concerns that the American movie industry is facing a "very fast death," Trump asserted: "Other countries are offering all sorts of incentives to draw our filmmakers and studios away from the United States. Hollywood, and many other areas within the US, are being devastated. This is a concerted effort by other nations, and therefore, a national security threat. It is, in addition to everything else, messaging and propaganda! (sic)."

The move aligns with Trump's recurring theme of making America great again - this time, by revitalising domestic film production. For years, Hollywood films have been increasingly produced abroad due to cost advantages. Reports over the past decade indicate that Los Angeles has seen a 40% decline in film and television production. Industry experts fear that such protectionist measures will only accelerate this decline. Producing films in the U.S. is prohibitively expensive, and many believe that these tariffs could "bring the movie business to a standstill, which is the last thing Hollywood needs after dual strikes and a content recession." Given the global nature of the industry, implementation details remain unclear, but the general consensus is that the



move could further damage an already beleaguered sector.

## A Global Impact

These tariffs won't just affect Hollywood - they will have significant consequences for international filmmaking as well. The Indian film industry, for example, is already facing similar challenges. The added cost due to tariffs could nearly double production expenses. India has also seen a dip in cinema attendance, and the U.S. remains a vital market for Indian films, particularly due to its large diaspora. Bollywood is expected to be hit hard. As producer Mukesh Bhatt put it: "America is the most expensive country on the planet. Even a Hollywood producer can't afford to shoot in America. You're not helping; you're destroying Hollywood."

The British film industry, too, has raised

alarms. Actor Tamer Hassan noted, "It's going to cause unrest and fear, especially among investors - that's our biggest hurdle." With the UK long serving as a popular and cost-effective shooting location, the ripple effects are expected to be substantial. The British film industry, valued at approximately 1.36 billion pounds, supports nearly 200,000 jobs, and many within the sector are bracing for disruption.

## The China Factor

It is difficult to ignore the possibility that this move may be a reaction to Beijing's recent decision to reconsider the number of Hollywood films allowed to be released in China, the world's second-largest movie market. After the setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of streaming platforms, Chinese cinema-goers were instrumental in

reviving Hollywood's fortunes. On April 10, Beijing announced that it was reviewing its import quota, which has traditionally been capped at 34 films since 2012.

If fewer Hollywood films are allowed into China, the impact on upcoming summer releases could be significant. Some analysts suggest the U.S. tariff announcement is a tit-for-tat response. Meanwhile, Beijing has framed the move as a nationalist act, warning that such tariffs could affect the viewing preferences of Chinese audiences. There are even voices within China calling for a complete ban on U.S. film releases. Unsurprisingly, this uncertainty has already led to falling share prices for companies like Paramount Global, Warner Bros., and Walt Disney.

## Propaganda and Nationalism

Trump's framing of the issue as one of propaganda and national security finds resonance in ongoing debates about China's influence on Hollywood. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) exercises considerable control over the media, employing strict vetting processes to ensure only ideologically acceptable films make it into Chinese theatres. Hollywood studios, eager to access China's massive market, have often been criticised for self-censorship on sensitive topics like Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang.

# Why Bangladesh Army Chief's Russia Tilt May Be Good For India



By Aditi Bhaduri

While Indian attention has been focused on our western borders since the Pahalgam tragedy of April 22, some major geopolitical shifts have been taking place on India's eastern front. First is the banning of the Awami League party by Bangladesh's interim government. The party, founded by Bangladesh's founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, has been

ruling the country for much of its existence as a sovereign state since December 1971, till the uprisings in the country last August forced Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to flee to India, where she has remained since.

## The 'Humanitarian Corridor'

The second major geopolitical shift, which has far-reaching ramifications for India, is the Bangladesh interim government's

apparent plan to create a 'humanitarian corridor', with the US and the UN backing the Rakhine state in Myanmar. The entire state's border with Myanmar is controlled by the rebel Arakan Army. And, since Rohingya refugees have been fleeing the state due to the atrocities committed by the Arakan Army, the corridor, it is alleged, is less a humanitarian undertaking and more of a passage intended to facilitate supplies to the Arakan Army to help it fight Myanmar's junta.

Parallel to these have been rumours circulating about a possible "coup" within the army, that is, against the current army chief, General Waqar uz Zaman. Seen in this context, the General's visit to Moscow last month becomes particularly significant, especially to India.

## 'Existing Friendly Relations'

On April 7, Zaman paid an official visit to Russia, where he met with the Russian Deputy Defence Minister, General A. Fomin, and the Army Chief General, Oleg Salyukov, along with representatives of defence firms Rostec, Rosoboronexport, and Rosatom, the Russian state nuclear agency overseeing the construction of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant in Bangladesh.

The Russian Defence Ministry said the sides "discussed prospects for cooperation in the defence sector and expressed mutual determination to further strengthen the existing friendly relations between the armies and peoples of Russia and Bangladesh". Soon after, Russian ships Admiral Tributs, Admiral Panteleyev, and the tanker Pechenga, from the Russian Pacific Fleet Squadron,

docked at Chattogram Port. This was the first time Russian naval ships had visited Bangladesh in 50 years, in a "goodwill" visit, marking a significant milestone in the relationship between the two countries, according to the Russian Embassy in Bangladesh.

## Read Between The Lines

The visit is significant for its timing, context and subtext too. First is the fact that it comes under the watch of an interim government. Following the tumultuous events of last August, Bangladesh remains under a caretaker administration headed by Mohammed Yunus, with his government being closely aligned with the country's Islamist lobby. Increasingly, radical outfits and elements have been gaining power and control in the country under Yunus's watch.



# Trump's Durbar: Back To 'Pax Americana' In The Gulf?

By Mahesh Sachdev

As the dust settles on the pageantry and financial outbidding that accompanied US President Donald Trump's four-day Gulf tour that ended last Friday, several aspects stand out in bold relief. Some of them are flashy and transactional, but several others are germane and are likely to have long-term, even historic, significance. Either way, this first major foreign visit in Trump 2.0 to an area of vital interest to India requires careful analysis for its likely impact on our geopolitical interests.

## Big Money

For its sheer optics, Trump's Gulf tour was quite over the top, with his three hydrocarbon-rich hosts going overboard in offering him mega-deals. Saudi Arabia ordered \$142 billion worth of American weapons and promised to invest up to \$600 billion in the US economy. Qatar, the next stop, offered deals worth \$1.2 trillion, including orders for 210 Boeing airliners still on the drawing board. Apart from a \$400 million gift of a new 'Air Force 1', Doha also promised to spend \$10 billion on America's al-Udaid air base in Qatar. Abu Dhabi was the last stop, and the United Arab Emirates had already committed \$1.2 trillion in bilateral synergy during the next ten years. In the event, \$200 billion worth of



deals, mostly in aircraft, upstream hydrocarbon projects and advanced Artificial Intelligence chips, were signed. Trump's claim to have transacted business worth two trillion dollars during the tour may qualify as a "truthful hyperbole" (a quote from his book *The Art of the Deal*), and a Reuters tally whittled the sum down to \$700 billion. It is, nevertheless, still a substantial harvest for a four-day tour. Apart from sheer numbers, of special significance was the alacrity with which the White House blessed the sale of state-of-the-art weapons to the Kingdom and the UAE. Until recently, the United States administration was quite reluctant to do so as it would erode Israel's qualitative

edge in defence against its Arab adversaries. Similarly, Trump broke new ground by making available the most advanced AI chips to the two countries, dismissing the longstanding compunctions about the cutting-edge technology being passed down to China.

## Why The Arab World Diversified Its Options

The geopolitical gains of the visit were, however, more of a mixed bag. Its biggest achievement was the re-establishment of the Pax Americana over the Arabian Peninsula. Historically, the bilateral oil/investments-for-security compact has been in place for eight decades following the meeting between

US President Roosevelt and Saudi King Abdulaziz aboard USS Quincy in 1945. In the last two decades, this arrangement had been demoted for several reasons. Firstly, the shale upstream technology enabled the US to shrug off its dependence on Gulf oil and gas. Secondly, Arab regimes got tired of moralising by Washington, which was seen as equivocal about supporting them against the tide of the "Arab Spring" phenomenon. Further, the US was deemed an unreliable security guarantor after Washington's inaction in the wake of the Abqaiq attack in 2019 on Saudi oil installations and Houthi missile attacks on Abu Dhabi in 2021. The American denial of offensive weapon systems to these countries was also a case in point. The Gulf Arabs responded to the perceived US unreliability by trying to diversify their geo-strategic options towards China, Russia and India. Beijing became the largest trading partner for almost all the GCC states. President Xi paid a historic visit to Riyadh in December 2022 and held triple Summits. In June 2023, China's mediation led to Iran and Saudi Arabia re-establishing diplomatic ties after nearly a decade of rupture. China's offerings under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and BRICS rubrics found some Gulf takers.

## Bangladesh's Yunus, Army Chief At Loggerheads: Is Emergency Looming?

Has the rift between Bangladesh's chief of interim government Mohammad Yunus and Army chief Waker-Uz-Zaman widened? News18 had earlier reported on the tussle between the two.

The Bangladesh Army chief has called for an urgent meeting to explore the "plan of action". "The Army chief wants Yunus to declare elections as soon as possible. His biggest worry is instability due to foreign interference, which may be a possibility because of Yunus who is perceived as a puppet of foreign agencies," said sources from the Army.

## 2 MAJOR WORRIES

Zaman plans to bring the parties of Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia to come together and contest elections for the country, said sources. "The Army's biggest worry is Yunus's release of prisoners through executive orders."

Earlier, sources close to the Army chief had told CNN-News18 that the Bangladesh Army was on-board with Zaman. The second biggest worry is Yunus's attempt of division of Army with his appointment of a National Security Advisor in the absence of the Army chief.

Earlier, Quarter-Master General Lt Gen Faizur Rahman held a closed door meeting with NSA Khalilur Rahman, a confidant of Yunus. Sources say the attempt of new

NSA and Yunus will be to remove the Army chief, but most of the commanders want the elections as soon as possible. In the meantime, the Army chief is also clear that he will not take pressure of any civil group and stopped movement of any protests towards his office or home. Sources say he tried to help Yunus initially, but given the foreign interference, the Army chief wants the elections soon. "He has already made backchannels with all the parties to contest together for the sake of democracy."

## WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR

DIFFERENCE OF OPINION: Zaman, appointed Army chief in June 2024, is widely respected as a balanced leader with a pro-India tilt. In stark contrast, Lieutenant General Mohammad Faizur Rahman, the Quartermaster General (QMG), is seen as harbouring pro-Islamist and pro-Pakistan sentiments, putting him at odds with the Army chief's vision, News18 had reported. ARMY CHIEF WASN'T KEEN TO MAKE YUNUS THE ADVISOR: News18 had reported how Hasnat Abdullah, chief organiser of the National Citizen Party (NCP), recently put up a 28-second video in which Youth and Sports Adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiyan said that the Army chief was not keen on making Yunus the advisor.



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# General Asim Munir promoted to Field Marshal, highest military rank in Pakistan

**Pakistan's Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved the proposal to promote Munir as Field Marshal.**

(News Agency) -Days after a major military escalation with India, Pakistan Army chief General Asim Munir has been promoted to the position of Field Marshal, the highest military rank in the country.

According to a statement issued by the Pakistan Prime Minister's office, the Union Cabinet of the country on Tuesday approved the proposal to promote Munir as Field Marshal. The Union Cabinet met to discuss Munir's promotion in a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

According to local media, Munir has been promoted for "successfully" leading Pakistan's armed forces in the recent military conflict with India. The decision was taken for his "exemplary role" in the conflict with India, local media reports said.

Notably, while Pakistan has been claiming victory in the recent conflict, India has busted its lies with evidence at



various forums.

This came just days after the de-facto ruler of Pakistan was handed more power when the country's Supreme Court delivered a landmark ruling, endorsing the trials of civilians in military courts.

This was expected to give a free hand to the Asim Munir-led military establishment, which has already suppressed democracy in Pakistan.

INDIA-PAK CONFLICT

Pakistani military locations, alongside

terrorist infrastructure, suffered heavy damage in precision strikes and the subsequent aerial raids carried out by India under Operation Sindoor in response to the Pahalgam attack, which claimed 26 civilian lives on April 22.

The attack came just six days after Asim Munir resorted to anti-India rhetoric and raked up the Kashmir issue at an event. His inflammatory speech against Hindus and India raised eyebrows and drew flak from various quarters in India.

In Operation Sindoor, India destroyed nine terror launch pads in Pakistan and POK, including Bahawalpur and Murdike terror hotbeds in the May 7 strikes. A military conflict ensued with an artillery exchange on May 8 and 9.

While India caused considerable damage to 11 air-bases and other military locations in Pakistan, the Shehbaz Sharif administration claimed that the victory was theirs when a ceasefire agreement was reached between the two countries.

## Is Trump family's Pakistan crypto deal behind his Indo-Pak mediation itch?

**Donald Trump's family-backed World Liberty Financial signed a deal with Pakistan Crypto Council days after the Pahalgam attack. Was Trump's urge to mediate in the India-Pakistan war triggered by the deal? The WLF and its stablecoin have been questioned in the US over conflicts of interest.**

(News Agency) US President Donald Trump seemed too eager to play a mediator between India and Pakistan, but knowing the businessman that he is, a big question pops up -- is there some money to be made or a business deal involved? A deal was, in fact, signed by a Trump family-backed venture with the Pakistan Crypto Council on April 26, days after the Pahalgam attack.

India's attack on terror camps in the heart of Pakistan, in its Punjab, saw Pakistani forces attack India's military and civilian areas. The situation snowballed into a crisis. The strikes and counterstrikes came within three days of India launching Operation Sindoor on May 7.

Just 10 days ahead of that, on April 26, the cryptocurrency deal was signed in Pakistan. The confrontation came even before the ink could have dried on the paper.

Any instability, forget a war, is bad for business. So, what does a businessman do? Try to broker peace.

PAKISTAN CRYPTO COUNCIL'S DEAL WITH TRUMP FAMILY-BACKED WLF Pakistan, on April 26, signed a deal with World Liberty Financial, a company in



which Trump's family, including his sons, Eric and Donald Trump Jr, and son-in-law Jared Kushner hold a 60% stake, according to reports. The WLF homepage prominently displays the phrase "Inspired by Donald J Trump" alongside a grand portrait of the US President.

The World Liberty Financial (WLF) is a decentralised finance project and a cryptocurrency company founded in 2024. The deal came close on the heels of the Pakistani government signalling that it might make dealing in cryptocurrency legal.

In March that Bilal bin Saqib, chief advisor to Pakistan's finance minister and CEO of the newly formed Pakistan Crypto Council (PCC), revealed the plan to legalise cryptocurrency in an interview with Bloomberg TV.

The PCC was set up to create regulations for crypto trading, encouraging blockchain technology across various sectors, protecting investors, and ensuring financial stability.

The signing ceremony between PCC and WLF was held in Islamabad and was attended by Pakistan's Minister for

Information Ataullah Tarar, PCC CEO Bilal Bin Saeed, WLF Co-Chairman Zachary Witkoff, and others.

The WLF delegation comprised Zachary Folkman, Chase Herro, and Witkoff, who is the son of Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff, according to a statement issued by Pakistan's Finance Ministry.

Steve Witkoff is US President Trump's close friend and a regular at his Mar-a-Lago residence. Witkoff, a Jewish real estate investor worth \$500 million, is Trump's golfing partner. The interest of the Trump fraternity in the entire Pakistani cryptocurrency deal is thus revealed.

**WLF HAS BEEN UNDER SCANNER OVER TRUMP TIES**

The WLF delegation also met with Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, Army Chief General Asim Munir, the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Information and Defence Ministers to formalise cooperation. The cooperation between PCC and WLF includes exploring the tokenisation of real-world assets like real estate and commodities, and providing strategic advisory on blockchain infrastructure and global regulatory trends.



# Brain-dead pregnant woman kept on life support in Georgia due to abortion ban

**Adriana Smith was declared brain-dead in February. The law in Georgia requires the woman to be on life support until the foetus has developed enough to be delivered.**

(News Agency) -A pregnant woman in the US's Georgia, who was declared brain-dead months ago, has been on life support at a hospital for three months. It is, however, not due to a decision made by her family. But, because of Georgia's strict abortion laws.

As per the law, which has been in effect since 2022 after the US Supreme Court did away with the constitutional right to an abortion, it requires her to be on life support until the foetus has developed enough to be delivered.

Adriana Smith, a 30-year-old nurse, was declared brain-dead at the hospital she worked for in February. A CT scan showed blood clots in her brain, according to a report in AP. She was then two months pregnant.

Three months have now passed, but Smith is being kept alive by doctors in Emory Hospital with ventilators against her family's wishes.

WHAT GEORGIA ABORTION LAW



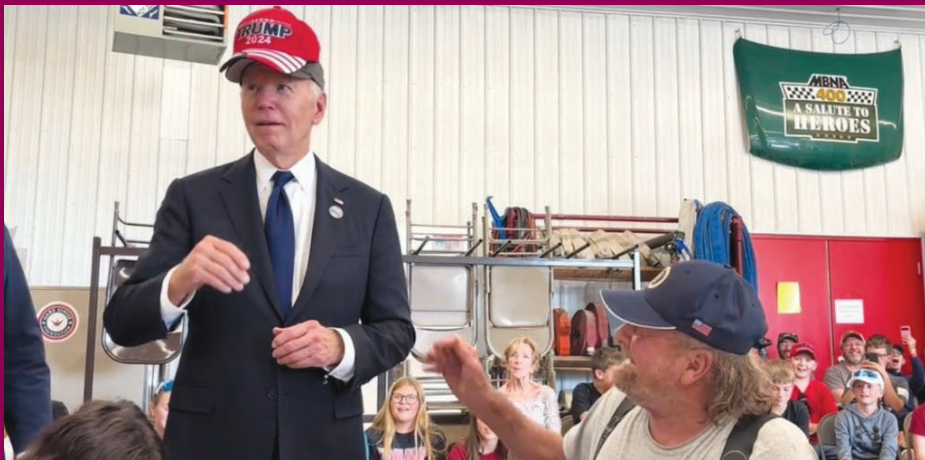
SAYS

As per the law, abortions are illegal in

the state if cardiac activity is detected in the foetus. It is usually detected

around the sixth week of pregnancy. The law provides limited exceptions to the abortion ban, including for rape, or if the mother's life is in danger. However, since Smith is brain-dead, she is no longer considered at risk. Her mother, April Newkirk, said her daughter was now 21 weeks pregnant. "I come here, and I see my daughter breathing by the ventilator, but she's not there," she told Atlanta TV. Reports said doctors plan to keep Smith on life support until the point that her baby can survive outside the womb, which is likely around 32 weeks. However, Emory has not made public what is being done to allow Smith's foetus to continue to develop. The worry for Smith's family is whether the baby will be born with disabilities or will even survive till delivery. "She's pregnant with my grandson. But my grandson may be blind, may not be able to walk... we don't know if he will live once she has him," Newkirk said.

## New book 'Original Sin' reveals moment Kamala Harris campaign cut ties with Biden: 'What is he doing?'



(News Agency) -Kamala Harris was left aghast when President Joe Biden donned a "Trump 2024" cap at a Pennsylvania firehouse in a bizarre scene at the height of last year's presidential race, a bombshell new book has revealed.

During a visit to a Shanksville firehouse while commemorating the 23rd anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, Biden, now 82, posed with more than a dozen youngsters clad in pro-Trump attire — then briefly put on the cap after being egged on by a member of the crowd. "I need that hat," Biden had told an audience member of the pro-Trump merch, according to the new book "Original Sin," co-authored by Jake Tapper and Alex Thompson. Biden had

at first refused when an audience member exhorted, "Put it on!" saying, "I ain't going that far" — only to then plop the hat directly on top of his Station 627 hat honoring the volunteer fire company. "What is he doing?" Harris — by that point the Democratic nominee after Biden ended his re-election bid July 21 — asked her advisers, per Tapper and Thompson. "This is completely unhelpful," the veep added. "And so unnecessary." The Trump campaign seized the viral hat moment to indicate that Biden was actually supporting Trump, and had had enough of Harris. "Thanks for the support, Joe!" the Republican campaign wrote on social media alongside an image of Biden smiling in the hat.

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# Elon Musk says he will cut back on political spending after heavily backing Trump in 2024

Elon Musk, the richest person in the world and a key financial supporter of President Donald Trump, said Tuesday that he'll be spending "a lot less" on political campaigns, a reversal that could be a setback for Republicans ahead of next year's midterm elections. Musk disclosed his decision via videoconference during a Bloomberg forum in Doha, Qatar. It speaks to his possible disenchantment with politics after his tumultuous tenure as Trump's pick to lead the newly created Department of Government Efficiency, which has fallen far short of its goals for reducing federal spending. Musk has scaled back his government role to spend more time at his businesses, including Tesla, which have seen intense blowback. Tesla reported a big drop in profits in the first quarter. "In terms of political spending I'm going to do a lot less in the future," Musk said. Asked why, he responded that "I think I've done enough."

Musk's statement marks a reversal of the course he had set during the 2024 campaign — when he was among the very top political spenders — and immediately after.

Musk spent at least \$250 million supporting Trump in the presidential campaign, as the main contributor to America PAC, a super PAC that was active in advertising and funding door-to-door canvassing groups across the seven most-competitive states in the November presidential election. Musk relished in the publicity, campaigning alongside Trump at times and headlining some of his own campaign rallies on the GOP nominee's behalf.

And while he took credit for helping Trump return to the White House, Musk suffered a public defeat in April, after



he became deeply involved in a Wisconsin Supreme Court campaign. Musk-backed groups America PAC and Rebuilding America's Future spent more than \$21 million on the April 1 election in support of the Republican-backed candidate Brad Schimel.

But Schimel's defeat by 10 percentage points in Wisconsin, a state Trump carried just five months earlier, was a blow to Musk, who campaigned for Schimel in Green Bay the weekend before the election and had also pledged to enforce Trump's agenda in the 2026 midterm elections.

A week after Trump's November victory, Musk said the political action committees he supported would "play a significant role in primaries," adding later that he might help finance Republican challengers to GOP members of Congress who did not support Trump's nominees.

"How else? There is no other way," Musk wrote on X, which he rebranded after purchasing Twitter, in response to the

suggestion of supporting intraparty challenges. An adviser to Musk's PACs declined to comment Tuesday.

Once Trump took office, Musk held a prominent role as an adviser and leader of DOGE. He and his acolytes in the department fanned out widely across the federal government to enact deep cuts to the workforce and spending, in some cases seeking to shutter entire agencies altogether. DOGE has pushed to fire tens of thousands of workers in downsizing at agencies, ranging from the IRS to Health and Human Services, and pressured tens of thousands more to take buyout and early retirement offers. And they sought to shut down agencies such as the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

With backing from DOGE, agencies have cancelled tens of thousands of government contracts and grants that they say do not align with the administration's priorities. Some of those moves were done so quickly that they

had to be reversed after pushback or court rulings finding that they were illegal.

Critics say it amounts to a reckless chain-saw approach that could destroy much of the nation's apolitical civil service, impair services for vulnerable populations, and halt critical research. DOGE claims on its "Wall of Receipts" it has saved an estimated \$170 billion, but those savings numbers have been shown to be flawed and inflated in many cases.

Musk's role prompted intense pushback, including protests at his electric vehicle company, Tesla. Speaking to reporters earlier this month as he prepared to step back from DOGE, Musk noted the backlash.

"Being attacked relentlessly is not super fun," he said. "Seeing cars burning is not fun," he added, referring to the instances of Tesla cars being smashed or set on fire.

Musk's announced intention to step back from political spending comes during multiple new business opportunities, including a deal to host the latest versions of his Grok artificial intelligence chatbot on Microsoft's data centers.

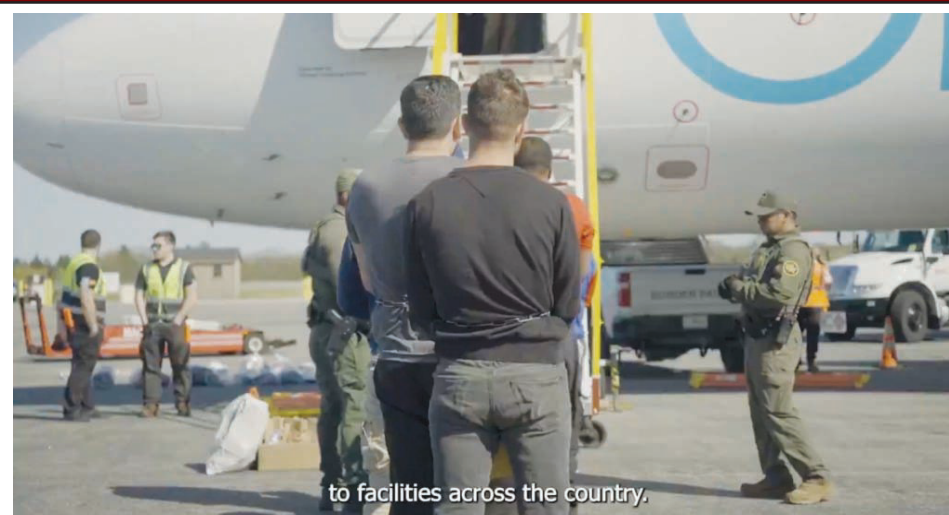
Meanwhile, his brain-computer interface company Neuralink is planning to implant its experimental devices in dozens more people and his electric-vehicle company Tesla is developing a humanoid robot that Musk hopes to one day send to Mars.

Musk could change his mind about campaign spending. The 2026 midterm campaigns are just getting off the ground, while some candidates have not yet announced their candidacy for elections that remain 18 months away. But as of Tuesday, Musk said he did not expect to.

## Illegal crossings into this northern sanctuary state hit a 24-year

(News Agency)- The US Border Patrol in Maine arrested 113 undocumented immigrants in April, the highest number in a single month in nearly 24 years, officials said.

The surge of arrests in Maine, which has two so-called sanctuary counties in Cumberland and Hancock, forced officials to move 29 migrants to other parts of the country for processing, according to US Customs and Border Protection. "Here in Maine, Border Patrol Agents are working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to keep our border secure. If you attempt to cross the border illegally, you will be apprehended," said acting Chief Patrol Agent Craig Shepley.



The increase in arrests, however, are instead from an increase in enforcement throughout the state, CBP noted. The number of people crossing

the border from Canada to Maine has plummeted in April, according to CBP, with 157,000 fewer crossings so far compared to last year.

Last month alone saw 78,000 fewer crossings when compared to the previous April. Immigration arrests in Maine entered the national spotlight last year when one of President Trump's advisers accused officials in Cumberland and Hancock counties of maintaining sanctuary policies and refusing to work with Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers. Stephen Miller, the White House deputy chief of staff, accused the counties' policies of effectively making a "mockery of American democracy" and demonstrating "a shocking disrespect for the rule of law."



# Supreme Court allows Trump to strip legal protections from 350,000 Venezuelans who risk deportation

The Supreme Court on Monday allowed the Trump administration to strip legal protections from 350,000 Venezuelans, potentially exposing them to deportation. The court's order, with only one noted dissent, puts on hold a ruling from a federal judge in San Francisco that kept in place Temporary Protected Status for the Venezuelans that would have otherwise expired last month. The justices provided no rationale, which is common in emergency appeals.

The status allows people already in the United States to live and work legally because their native countries are deemed unsafe for return due to natural disaster or civil strife. The high court's order appears to be the "single largest action in modern American history stripping any group of non-citizens of immigration status," said Ahilan Arulanantham, one of the attorneys for Venezuelan migrants.

"This decision will force families to be in an impossible position either choosing to survive or choosing stability," said Cecilia Gonzalez Herrera, who sued to try and stop the Trump administration from revoking legal protections from her and others like her. "Venezuelans are not criminals," Gonzalez Herrera said.

"We all deserve the chance to thrive without being sent back to danger," she said.

The ramifications for the hundreds of thousands of people affected aren't yet clear, Arulanantham said.

Mariana Moleros, her husband and their daughter left their native Venezuela in September 2005 after receiving death threats for their open political opposition to the socialist government. They came to the United States hoping to find peace and protection and requested asylum, but their application was denied.

They were temporarily granted TPS but now they live in fear again — fear of being detained and deported to a country where they don't feel safe.

"Today we are all exposed to being imprisoned in Venezuela if the U.S. return us," said



Moleros, a 44-year-old Venezuelan attorney who lives in Florida. "They should not deport someone who is at risk of being assassinated, torture and incarcerated."

A federal appeals court had earlier rejected the administration's request to put the order on hold while the lawsuit continues. A hearing is set for next week in front of U.S. District Judge Edward Chen, who had paused the administration's plans.

In a statement, Homeland Security called the court's decision a "win for the American people and the safety of our communities" and said the Biden administration "exploited programs to let poorly vetted migrants into this country."

"The Trump administration is reinstituting integrity into our immigration system to keep our homeland and its people safe," said spokeswoman Tricia McLaughlin.

The case is the latest in a string of emergency appeals

President Donald Trump's administration has made to the Supreme Court, many of them related to immigration and involving Venezuela. Earlier this month, the government asked the court to allow it to end humanitarian parole for hundreds of thousands of immigrants from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela, setting them up for potential deportation as well.

The high court also has been involved in slowing Trump's efforts to swiftly deport Venezuelans accused of being gang members to a prison in El Salvador under an 18th century wartime law called the Alien Enemies Act.

The complex economic and political crisis in Venezuela has driven more than 7.7 million people to leave the South American nation since 2013. Venezuela's most recent economic troubles pushed year-over-year inflation in April to 172%. The latest chapter even prompted President Nicolás

Maduro to declare an "economic emergency" last month. Maduro, whose reelection last year to a third term has been condemned internationally as illegitimate, also has cracked down on his political opponents.

In the dispute over TPS, the administration has moved aggressively to withdraw various protections that have allowed immigrants to remain in the country, including ending the temporary protected status for a total of 600,000 Venezuelans and 500,000 Haitians. That status is granted in 18-month increments. Venezuela was first designated for TPS in 2021; Haiti, in 2010.

Last week, DHS announced that TPS for Afghanistan, first provided in 2022, would end in mid-July.

The protections for Venezuelans had been set to expire April 7, but Chen found that the expiration threatened to severely disrupt the lives of

hundreds of thousands of people and could cost billions in lost economic activity.

Chen, who was appointed to the bench by Democratic President Barack Obama, found the government hadn't shown any harm caused by keeping the program alive.

But Solicitor General D. John Sauer wrote on behalf of the administration that Chen's order impermissibly interferes with the administration's power over immigration and foreign affairs. In addition, Sauer told the justices, people affected by ending the protected status might have other legal options to try to remain in the country because the "decision to terminate TPS is not equivalent to a final removal order."

Congress created TPS in 1990 to prevent deportations to countries suffering from natural disasters or civil strife.

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson said she would have rejected the administration's emergency appeal.



# Harvard's student visa program terminated

(By our staff reporter) The Trump administration on Thursday blocked the ability of Harvard University to enroll future international students and to retain its existing enrolled foreign students. The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is eliminating the student visa program at Harvard University due to "pro-terrorist conduct" at campus protests, as reported by multiple media outlets and confirmed by Department of Homeland Security Kristi Noem in a statement posted on the social media site X. Harvard may no longer enroll foreign students in the 2025-2026 school year, and existing foreign students must transfer or lose their legal status to reside in the U.S. before the next academic year begins. It's a severe consequence for what DHS claims is Harvard's refusal to comply with its requests for behavioral records of student visa holders. "This administration is holding Harvard accountable for fostering violence, antisemitism, and



coordinating with the Chinese Communist Party on its campus," said Secretary Kristi Noem. "It is a privilege, not a right, for universities to enroll foreign students and benefit from their higher tuition payments to help pad their multibillion-dollar endowments. Harvard had plenty of opportunity to do the right thing. It refused. They have lost their Student and Exchange Visitor Program certification as a result of their failure to adhere to the law.

Let this serve as a warning to all universities and academic institutions across the country." DHS said that in addition to barring enrollment of future international students, "existing foreign students must transfer to lose their legal status." The administration in April froze \$2.2 billion in federal grants to Harvard, hours after the university roundly rejected demands that it eliminate diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, and evaluate international students for ideological concerns. Department of

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem ordered DHS staff to revoke Harvard's Student and Exchange Visitor Program certification, which allows colleges to enroll foreign students. DHS said that in addition to barring enrollment of future international students, "existing foreign students must transfer to lose their legal status." The revocation, which DHS said was the result of "pro-terrorist conduct," was first reported by The New York Times. As of the fall 2023 semester, International students comprised more than 27% of Harvard's total enrollment, according to university data. Noem in April had threatened to revoke Harvard's ability to enroll international students. She warned the university at that time that its certification to enroll foreign students was contingent upon complying with federal immigration laws. The administration in April froze \$2.2 billion in federal grants to Harvard, hours after the university roundly rejected demands that it eliminate diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, and evaluate international students for ideological concerns.

# Why Operation Sindoor Will Be Studied The World Over

By Syed Ata Hasnain

In the midst of two ongoing conflicts – Ukraine's prolonged war of attrition and Israel's intensive campaign in Gaza – the world has now witnessed a third theatre of modern military conflict: the India-Pakistan standoff with India's Operation Sindoor. While brief in duration compared to the grinding wars of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, the significance of Sindoor lies in the speed, sophistication, and multi-domain nature of India's military and political response. The lessons from this operation are both immediate and instructive, not just for India, but for militaries and policymakers across the globe.

Such a transformational campaign, even though short in duration, will probably be studied avidly to cull out relevant lessons over a longer period of time.

This essay attempts to distil only the early and most visible lessons from Operation Sindoor across different domains – strategic, operational, technological, and informational.

**Strategic Clarity and Political Messaging**

One of the standout features of Operation Sindoor was the clarity of political intent. In previous India-Pakistan confrontations, strategic ambiguity often marked India's stance. This time, the messaging was unambiguous – Pakistan's attempts to stoke cross-border terrorism through networked proxy groups, for the sake of regaining any of the space that it has lost, would meet a proportionate but decisive response from a spectrum of choice India retained.

Importantly, India managed escalation without triggering a full-blown war. Sindoor demonstrated an evolved doctrine of punitive deterrence, calibrated to avoid nuclear thresholds – a lesson that has relevance for other nuclear-armed dyads, such as North and South Korea.

Civil-military synergy (fusion) was another quiet success. Decision-making appeared

swift, coordinated, and insulated from public hysteria. This stands in contrast to fragmented responses seen in other democracies under pressure.

The fortnight when Pakistan kept waiting for a response added to its dilemma, though some claim that it helped Islamabad prepare its counter-response. Clearly, the time lag helped with better decision-making, target-selection and calibration, all in our favour. Operational Agility and Jointness

At the operational level, Sindoor demonstrated the Indian military's growing ability to conduct integrated, cross-domain campaigns. While details remain classified, early reports suggest that air, ground, and special forces (in waiting) operated with tight coordination. The ability to strike key logistical hubs, training camps, and communication nodes on the Pakistani side – all without significant collateral damage – indicates an intelligence-rich and technologically proficient operation.

One lesson echoed from Ukraine is the value of speed and initiative. Indian forces reportedly acted within tight windows, leveraging precision munitions and real-time ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance). The tempo of the operation gave little time for adversarial adaptation – a principle long emphasised in Western military thought.

The Indian Army's Air Defence arm (AAD), a comparatively low-profile entity in earlier matrices, displayed an attitude and capability far above its weight. Its integration with the Air Force was effective and calls for even closer networking in the future.

Technology, Drones, and Cyber Capabilities Modern warfare increasingly hinges on technological superiority. Sindoor, like the Ukraine war, underlined the centrality and importance of drones, both for surveillance and kinetic effect. India's investment in electronic warfare (EW) and cyber capabilities also appeared to bear fruit.

Pakistani communications and some air defences appeared effectively degraded during the brief exchange, highlighting the non-kinetic layers of modern conflict.

For developing countries watching this unfold, the message is clear: asymmetric capability in the form of drones, jamming, and cyber sabotage can serve as force multipliers even in conventional battles.

Logistics, Communications and Resilience Another key takeaway is logistics. As seen in Ukraine, no operation can succeed without secure and mobile supply chains. Sindoor revealed the short, high-intensity nature of the engagement and stressed the importance of pre-positioning and redundancy.

Some of these are lessons that advanced militaries have long internalised. For India, Sindoor validated some ongoing reforms, including for theatre commands and logistics flexibility. I do foresee a re-emergence of the 'theatrisation versus jointness' debate because the effectiveness of 'jointness' was felt quite remarkably, particularly in the field of air defence. Centralisation of resources, particularly in the air domain, was a distinct advantage. Significance of Land and Maritime Warfare This is the first time that India has responded in a conflict situation without placing its ground forces in their deployment areas. This is a huge departure from the past. So, is our obsession with defending each inch of territory now a thing of the past? The willingness to defend with a minimum and deterring the Pakistan land forces from undertaking any adventure has been a new normal. Yet, from the immediacy of imagery or perception, there should be no impression that land or maritime warfare has been diluted in our context. Every war has its own dynamics, and none can really predict the next one.

Battle of Perceptions

One of the defining aspects of any 21st-century conflict is the war for narratives. India's handling of the information domain during Sindoor showed greater maturity than in past conflicts. Controlled information release, measured language from official spokespersons, and timely briefings ensured credibility. However, the media was shrill and with insufficiently corroborated information most times. It may have helped with the maintenance of national morale, but it also triggered negative sentiments at the time of the ceasefire. Official advisories to the media may be in order in the future. By contrast, Pakistani attempts at disinformation were swiftly countered, both by Indian agencies and independent digital verification communities. This underlines a modern truth: winning the battle of perceptions is often as important as winning territory. Like Ukraine's use of social media and Gaza's polarised visual narrative, India's experience reiterates that strategic communication must now be woven into operations right from the outset. Perhaps a coordination authority at the national level is required.

Lessons from Ukraine and Gaza Ukraine has taught the world about the power of resilience, decentralised command, and tech-driven defence. Gaza has revealed the brutal challenges of urban warfare, tunnels, and asymmetric resistance. Operation Sindoor, though different in scale and terrain, offers complementary insights. It shows what a limited but effective conventional response can look like in a nuclear-shadowed environment. It demonstrates hybridisation and combining conventional force with information ops and cyber tools. Suspending the Indus Water Treaty of 1960 can be treated as an act of political warfare, contributing to hybrid war.



# Army denies deploying air defence guns at Golden Temple during Operation Sindoor

**The Indian Army denied deploying air defence systems inside the Golden Temple in Punjab's Amritsar after reports claimed rare coordination with shrine authorities.**

The Indian Army on Tuesday denied reports suggesting that air defence systems were deployed inside the Golden Temple in Amritsar to counter Pakistani drone and missile attacks earlier this month.

"Some media reports are circulating with respect to the deployment of AD Guns in The Golden Temple. It is clarified that no AD guns or any other AD resources were deployed within the premises of Sri Darbar Sahib Amritsar (The Golden Temple)," the Indian Army said in an official statement.

Amritsar was targeted multiple times by Pakistani drones and projectiles in response to India's Operation Sindoor, which was launched as retaliation for the April 22 terrorist attacks in Pahalgam.

The Head Granthi of the Golden Temple, Singh Sahib Giani Raghbir Singh, also dismissed the deployment of air defence systems within the shrine

premises. "I have no information that the Indian Army reached out to us. I was on leave and travelling abroad. I want a thorough investigation into this matter. It must be made clear what the Indian Army's real intent was behind this," he said.

The clarification by the Indian Army came in the wake of reports that the Golden Temple management had allowed the Army to deploy air defence guns within the shrine to counter potential strikes from Pakistan.

The reports quoted Air Defence Chief Lieutenant General Sumer Ivan D'Cunha claiming that the Head Granthi of the Golden Temple had granted permission for the deployment of air defence systems within the sacred premises. "It was very nice that the Head Granthi of the Golden Temple allowed us to deploy our guns. It is possibly the first time in many years that they switched off the Golden Temple lights so

that we could see the drone coming," Lieutenant General Sumer Ivan D'Cunha said in an interview with news agency ANI. The officer, Director General of Army Air Defence, further noted that the Golden Temple authorities "realised there was a potential threat once it was explained to them. They allowed us to deploy guns to secure and protect a national war monument of international repute, which is visited by hundreds of thousands of people every day. As a result, the guns were deployed, and the Golden Temple's lights were switched off."

Referring to an earlier statement by Major General Kartik C Seshadri, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the 15th Infantry Division, who revealed that Army Air Defence gunners had successfully intercepted all drones and missiles aimed at the Golden Temple, D'Cunha added that the Indian Army had anticipated Pakistan might target

religious sites near the border, given the absence of legitimate military targets.

"Fortunately, we visualised what they (Pakistan) were capable of doing. Realising that they would target it because they had no legitimate targets across the border. They were more interested in creating confusion, chaos internally, and hence, we visualised that they would target our civil population and our religious places of worship," Lieutenant General D'Cunha said. Major General Seshadri, who also detailed the Indian Army's operations at the Golden Temple, confirmed that all attacks on the Sikh shrine were successfully thwarted.

"The Pakistan Army has no legitimate targets to strike inside India, nor does it have the courage or capability to confront the Indian armed forces face to face. Hence, it uses terrorism as a state policy and resorts to launching unmanned aerial weapons from its own soil.

## Once earning Rs 1.28 crore, metaverse engineer now sidelined by AI and delivering food

Just a year ago, Shawn Kay, was earning around Rs 1.28 crore a year as a metaverse engineer in the US. Today, the 42-year-old lives in a small trailer in New York and delivers food to survive.

Kay has worked in tech for 20 years. He was involved in virtual reality, web development and artificial intelligence. But after being laid off in April last year, things

took a turn for the worse. The metaverse boom faded and jobs in that space dried up, especially with the sudden rise of AI tools like ChatGPT.

Despite trying for 800 roles, he's barely had 10 interviews, and many were with automated systems, not people.

Since losing his job, Kay has applied to over 800 positions. But he barely had 10

interviews, and many were with automated systems, not people. Despite his struggles, Kay still has faith in AI. He believes it holds great potential but feels companies are misusing it by replacing skilled workers instead of supporting them. He doesn't see his experience as isolated. He cautions that by laying off talent to reduce expenses, companies may be hurting their long-term

potential as well as their ability to grow and evolve. With his savings drying up, Kay is thinking about taking up short courses or getting a commercial driving licence to start earning again, but the high cost of upskilling is holding him back.

His story is a sign of how fast the tech world is changing. And for many like Kay, keeping up feels harder than ever.

## "In Hinduism...": Top Court's Reply As Waqf Hearing Ends, Verdict Reserved

A discussion on waqfs - charitable donation to be de-linked from Islam or an integral part of that religion, 'a dedication to God... for spiritual benefit', - was a highlight in the Supreme Court Thursday as petitioners concluded arguments saying the Waqf (Amendment) Law violates fundamental rights.

Responding to the government's argument Wednesday - that while 'waqf' is an Islamic concept it is not an essential part of the religion and, therefore, not a fundamental right - senior advocate Kapil Sibal told the court, "Waqf is a dedication to God... for afterlife. Unlike other religions, waqf is a charity to God..."

The court, though, pointed out that 'religious donation' isn't exclusive to Islam; "... in Hinduism there is 'moksha'," Chief Justice

BR Gavai said. "Charity is a fundamental concept of other religions too..."

And Justice Augustine George Masih, the second judge on the bench, referred to a similar provision in Christianity, and said, "We are all trying to get into 'heaven'."

At the end of the petitioners' arguments - on this, the hearing's third day - the Chief Justice BR Gavai-led bench reserved its order on a plea for an interim halt of the contentious legislation.

Waqf - Charity Or Religion?

Jostling over the positioning of waqfs - charitable donation or religious activity - has been seen as critical in the larger context of the court either disallowing law or allowing it to stand.

The petitioners have sought to counter the government's argument about waqfs not

being vital religious practice by saying 'no outside authority has any right to say that are not essential...'

The focus on what a waqf means is seen as critical as it informs much of the petitioners' other arguments - that the new law interferes with essential religious, in this case, Islamic, practices.

NDTV Explains | All You Want To Know About The Waqf Row

The government has argued that by not recognising (correctly, it insists) waqf as a fundamental religious right, it allows for fair and transparent administration of the properties. This is important, it has argued, because unlike with Hinduism, waqfs "include many secular institutions like madrasas, orphanages..."

An example of that was heard as the court

wound down for the day; a woman representing a Tamil Nadu village said the entire settlement had been declared waqf land, including a Hindu temple dating to the Chola dynasty, which ruled between the ninth and 13th centuries CE.

Composition Of Waqf Boards

Another argument, one that has been raised repeatedly, in court, in Parliament, and in protests nationwide, is the mandatory appointment of non-Muslims to waqf boards. The government has backed the proposal by arguing waqf boards perform fundamentally 'secular duties' - i.e., management of assets. Those challenging the law, however, insist it violates Article 26 of the Constitution, which guarantees freedom to manage religious affairs.



# Honeytraps and high treason: The faces behind India's spy scandals

The arrests of 11 people for allegedly spying for Pakistan came in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack as security agencies intensified a nationwide crackdown on espionage activities linked to Pakistan.

The arrests and identification of YouTubers and influencers caught allegedly spying for and leaking confidential information to their Pakistani handlers has rocked the nation. This came in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack, which claimed the lives of 26 civilians, as security agencies intensified a nationwide crackdown on espionage activities linked to Pakistan.

This has led to the arrest of at least 11 individuals, including Jyoti Malhotra, across many states.

Even on previous occasions, Indian diplomats, scientists, and embassy staff have been arrested for allegedly leaking sensitive information or falling victim to honey traps by Pakistan's intelligence agency, the Inter Service Intelligence (ISI).

JYOTI MALHOTRA

On May 16, Jyoti Malhotra, a 33-

year-old travel vlogger from Haryana's Hisar, who ran a YouTube channel "Travel with Jo," was arrested on charges of espionage for the ISI.

Her arrest was part of a broader crackdown on espionage activities following the April 22 attack in Pahalgam's Baisaran Valley.

She was allegedly honey-trapped by Pakistan's ISI. Police also said she possibly "fell into a trap for views and likes" and "her travel details show more expenses than her known sources of income".

Jyoti travelled to Pakistan three times: in 2023, 2024, and in March 2025- a month ahead of the Pahalgam massacre, which was orchestrated by Pakistan-linked terrorists.

She came in contact with a Pakistani High Commission staff Danish, who was expelled by India recently.

Jyoti Malhotra's past visits to Pakistan and Jammu and

Kashmir are also under scanner, particularly to ascertain whether she was instructed to upload travel videos showcasing specific locations or content as part of a broader espionage agenda.

SATENDRA SIWAL

In February 2024, Satendra Siwal, an Indian Embassy staff member deployed in Moscow, was arrested by the Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) in Meerut.

A native of UP's Hapur, Siwal has been as MTS (Multi-Tasking Staff) at the Indian Embassy in Moscow since 2021.

According to the ATS, Siwal shared secret documents related to weapons systems of the Indian Air Force and Indian Navy, including warplanes and submarines.

ATS officials also revealed that Satyendra Siwal was approached by a woman disguised as 'Pooja Mehra' on social media. She allegedly honey-trapped Siwal and persuaded him to leak confidential documents in return for financial gain.

Following his confession, Siwal was charged under several provisions, including the Government Secrets Act of 1923.

PRADEEP KURULKAR

Pradeep Kurulkar, a Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) scientist, was arrested by the Maharashtra ATS on May 3, 2023 for allegedly leaking confidential information to a woman Pakistani intelligence operative.

According to the ATS, Siwal was arrested in a possible honeytrap case. He was the director of one of the labs of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in Pune when he was arrested.

On May 6, 2023, DRDO sacked Kurulkar from the post of laboratory director for his involvement in leaking sensitive information to Pakistani operatives.

On June 30, the ATS filed the chargesheet (comprising six volumes and 1,835 pages) against Kurulkar before the special court. The ATS attached with it details of WhatsApp chats between Kurulkar and one Zara Dasgupta, which were allegedly retrieved from his cell phone.

Kurulkar chatted with her about Indian missile systems among other classified defence projects, the chargesheet said. He is in

judicial custody and is lodged at Pune's Yerwada Central Prison.

NISHANT AGRAWAL

Brahmos Aerospace engineer Nishant Agrawal was arrested on October 8, 2018 in a joint operation by Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squads (ATS) from his residence in Nagpur.

Aggarwal, who hails from Roorkee in Uttarakhand, was just 27-years-old when he was arrested.

He graduated from the National Institute of Technology (NIT), Kurukshetra, and was "honey-trapped" on social media by two men posing as girls.

Aggarwal was employed in the technical research section of the company responsible for producing the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile. He worked at the BrahMos facility for four years and was accused of leaking sensitive technical information to the ISI.

In June 2024, the Nagpur district court sentenced life imprisonment to former BrahMos Aerospace Pvt Ltd engineer Nishant Agarwal under the Official Secrets Act for spying at the behest of the ISI.

## Preity Zinta Moves Court Against Punjab Kings Co-owners Over Disputed Meeting: Report

Punjab Kings co-owner and Bollywood actress Preity Zinta has filed a legal case against her fellow co-directors

Mohit Burman and Ness Wadia in a Chandigarh court. The three are directors of KPH Dream Cricket Private Limited, the company that owns the Indian Premier League (IPL) team,

Punjab Kings. Preity Zinta has challenged the legality of an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) held on April 21. She claims the meeting was held without following proper procedures under the Companies Act, 2013, and other secretarial rules. According to her, she had objected to the meeting in an email on April 10, but her objections were ignored. She alleges that Mohit Burman went ahead with the meeting with support from Ness Wadia. Even though Zinta and another director, Karan Paul, attended the meeting, she has asked the court to declare it invalid. One of her main concerns is the

appointment of Muneesh Khanna as a director during the meeting, which she and Paul opposed.

In her suit, Zinta has also asked the court to stop Khanna from acting as a director and to prevent the company from carrying out any decisions taken in that meeting.

She further requested the court to stop the company from holding any more board or general meetings without the presence of both herself and Karan Paul, and without Muneesh Khanna being involved, until the case is resolved. Despite these legal issues, Preity Zinta has continued to support Punjab Kings from the stands during the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 season. This year has been a strong one for the team. Under the leadership of Shreyas Iyer, the Punjab Kings have already qualified for the playoffs for the first time since 2014.

## Dubai-based Indian billionaire Balvinder Singh Sahni jailed for money laundering

Indian businessman Balvinder Singh Sahni, also known as Abu Sabah, has been sentenced to five years in prison for money laundering and other financial crimes. A court in Dubai also fined him 500,000 (around Rs 1.15 crore) and ordered him to give up assets worth 150 million (around Rs 344 crore). After serving his jail term, he will be deported from the UAE. Sahni, 53, is the founder and chairman of the Raj Sahni Group (RSG), a real estate company with projects in the UAE, US, India, and other countries. His firm owns several properties in Dubai, including residential buildings, office spaces, and a luxury hotel.

Well-known in Dubai's elite circles, Sahni is famous for his luxury cars and flashy lifestyle. In 2016, he made headlines when he paid 33 million for the car number plate "D5" for one of his Rolls-Royces. The case against Sahni and 33 others, including his son, began in 2024,

reports reported Khaleej Times. Sahni, 53, is the founder and chairman of the Raj Sahni Group (RSG), a real estate company with projects in the UAE, US, India, and other countries. His firm owns several properties in Dubai, including residential buildings, office spaces, and a luxury hotel.

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The case against Sahni and 33 others, including his son, began in 2024, reports reported Khaleej Times. Investigators found they were running a network of fake companies and using fake invoices to move money illegally. Some of the accused were tried in absentia. Others received lighter sentences, including one-year jail terms or fines.



# Adani drops Chinese lounge partner DragonPass: What it means for Indian flyers

A newly minted partnership between Adani Airport Holdings and Chinese travel platform DragonPass has been dropped barely a week after take-off. The move, triggered by rising national security concerns, has ended DragonPass's access to Adani-managed airport lounges across the country.

"DragonPass customers will no longer have access to lounges at Adani-managed airports," the company said in a statement, adding that regular travellers will see no disruption in lounge or travel services.

## WHY DID ADANI DROP DRAGONPASS?

At the heart of the pullback lies India's sharpened scrutiny of foreign entities operating in critical infrastructure. Following the Pahalgam terror attack and rising cross-border tensions with Pakistan, authorities have stepped up their review of Chinese and Turkish firms in aviation and other sensitive sectors. DragonPass, headquartered in Guangzhou, offers global airport lounge access and travel privileges via credit cards and corporate programs. In India, the company had quietly built a vast footprint—partnering with Adani lounges



in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Jaipur, and Guwahati, as well as securing access to multiple terminals at Delhi's Indra Gandhi International Airport.

Beyond Delhi, DragonPass had been active in over 30 Indian cities, including Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Chennai, Pune, and Srinagar, making it one of the widest-spread foreign players in India's lounge ecosystem.

But that very scale raised red flags. Concerns reportedly emerged over data privacy, passenger information access, and potential surveillance risks. With

lounge operations integrated into airport networks, regulators were wary of giving a Chinese platform backend visibility into passenger movement and behavioural data.

## WHO RUNS DRAGONPASS?

Interestingly, DragonPass is helmed by Mark Ian Koch, a British national. Koch also heads DragonPass International Ltd, a UK-registered arm of the company. Despite its Chinese roots, the firm has been positioning itself as a global brand, claiming over 10 million members and aiming to scale up to

1,500 lounges worldwide by 2025.

However, due to geopolitical headwinds, its ties to China—and its growing control over digital travel infrastructure—proved too strong to handle.

The move against DragonPass isn't isolated. The government has also revoked security clearance for Turkish firm Celebi Airport Services, which handles ground operations at several Indian airports. Together, the actions reflect a strategic rethink of foreign involvement in aviation services—especially from countries that have drawn scrutiny on national security grounds.

## HOW WILL IT IMPACT FLYERS?

For frequent travellers, the change is unlikely to cause major inconvenience. Domestic aggregator DreamFolks continues to dominate the lounge access space in India, while Priority Pass remains the gold standard globally and is widely accepted across Indian airports through partnerships with leading banks. Premium Indian credit cards, too, offer direct lounge access benefits that remain unaffected. So, while DragonPass's departure might mean fewer swipe options for some cards, alternatives are aplenty.

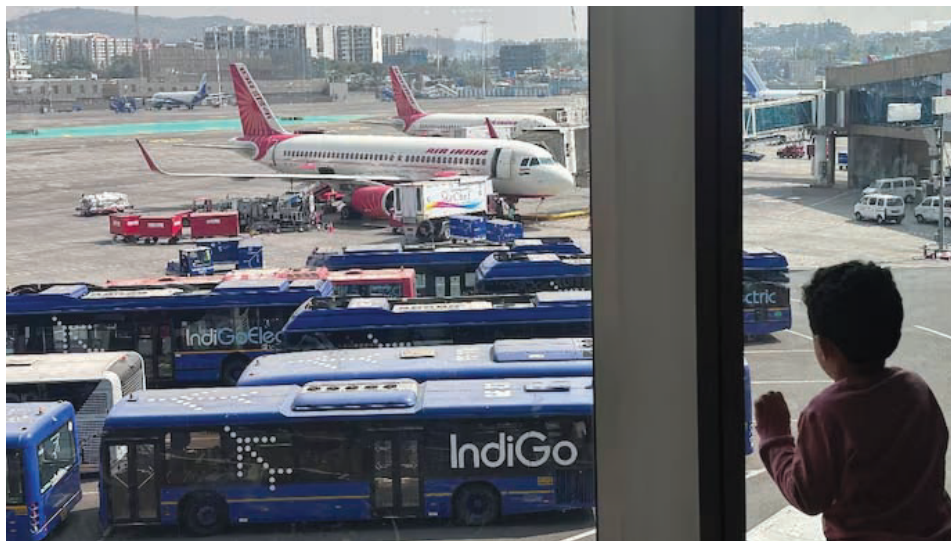
# India ousts Turkey's Celebi: \$200 million lost in market-cap, jobs on the line

Turkish airport services company Celebi has suffered a major financial and operational setback in India. The Indian government has revoked the company's security clearance, forcing it to stop operations across key airports in the country. This sudden move has wiped out nearly \$200 million in shareholder value and severely affected its business worldwide. The company, listed on the Istanbul Stock Exchange, saw its shares drop 20% in just two trading sessions. On 16 May, the stock fell 222 points to close at 2,002 lira. This is one of the sharpest drops in recent times for Celebi, which had been building its business in India for over a decade.

## WHY CELEBI WAS FORCED OUT

The main reason given by the Indian government for cancelling Celebi's security clearance was "national security." The order affected Celebi Airport Services India and its group companies. As a result, all their airport operations came to a halt.

The move comes at a time when relations between India and Turkey have become strained. While the government did not give detailed reasons beyond



security, the timing of the action has raised many questions.

## BIG LOSS FOR CELEBI IN INDIA

India was one of the most important markets for Celebi. In the financial year 2023-24, the company earned Rs 1,522 crore in revenue from its Indian operations. It also reported Rs 393 crore in EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation) from the country.

Two of Celebi's Indian units, Celebi Delhi Cargo and Celebi NAS, were the most profitable, together posting a profit after

tax of Rs 188 crore.

Overall, India brought in over \$195 million of Celebi's \$585 million global revenue. That means almost one-third of its global business came from India. This sudden exit has left a big gap in its income and future plans.

## OPERATIONS STOPPED AT MAJOR AIRPORTS

Celebi had operations at nine of India's busiest airports, including Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Chennai. These are among the country's top air traffic hubs. With

Celebi forced to stop working, other companies have already taken over many of its contracts. This has closed the door on a quick return, even if legal relief is granted later.

Celebi also faces financial trouble due to its large investments in India. The company had put in between \$200 million and \$250 million to build ground handling and cargo infrastructure across the country. Now, much of this investment could go to waste.

It also has Rs 183 crore in loans tied to its Indian business. With operations shut down, it is not clear how these loans will be serviced. The company may need to sell off assets or find other ways to deal with the debt.

Celebi has approached the Delhi High Court to challenge the government's move. A hearing is expected on Monday. But since the reason given is national security, legal experts say it may be difficult to get a quick or favourable decision. Even if the court rules in Celebi's favour, there is no guarantee that airports will restore the contracts or that business will return to normal.



# Easily distracted? How to improve your attention span

**Feel like you can't focus? Like you'll never finish a book again? Like the only way to keep your mind and hands busy is to scroll on social media for hours?**

(News Agency)- You're far from alone. One body of decades-long research found the average person's attention span for a single screen is 47 seconds, down from 2.5 minutes in 2004. The 24/7 news cycle, uncertainty about the state of the world and countless hours of screen time don't help, experts say. "When my patients talk to me about this stuff there is often a feeling of helplessness or powerlessness," said Dr. Michael Ziffra, a psychiatrist at Northwestern Medicine. "But you can change these behaviors. You can improve your attention span."

Here are ways to start that process. As you read, challenge yourself to set a 2.5 minute timer and stay on this article without looking at another device or clicking away.

How did we lose focus?

A shifting attention is an evolutionary feature, not a bug. Our brains are hardwired to quickly filter information and hone in on potential threats or changes in what's happening around us.

What's grabbing our attentions has changed. For our ancestors, it might have been a rustle in the bushes putting us on guard for a lurking tiger. Today, it could be a rash of breaking news alerts and phone notifications.

The COVID-19 pandemic warped many people's sense of time and increased their screen usage like never before, said Stacey Nye, a clinical psychologist at the University of Wisconsin-



Milwaukee. Technology isn't the only thing that influences our attention, experts say, but the effects of those ping-pong notifications or hours scrolling through 30-second long videos can build up over time.

"Our attention span has really been trained to only focus in those little, small blips and it interrupts our natural focus cycles," she said.

Give your wandering mind 'active breaks' Experts say "active" breaks are among the best way to retrain your mind and your attention. They only take about 30 minutes, Nye said, and can be as simple as taking a walk while noticing things around you or moving to another room for lunch.

Don't be afraid to get creative. Develop a list of alternative activities or randomly choose ideas out of a fish bowl. Try craft

projects, a short meditation, fixing a quick meal or talking a walk outside. All the better if you can involve a friend as well.

The break needs to be a physical or mental activity — no passive phone-scrolling.

When the brain is understimulated and looking for change, it'll usually grab onto the first thing it sees. The smartphone, an "ever-producing change machine," is an enticing option, said Cindy Lustig, a cognitive neuroscientist at the University of Michigan.

Turn off unnecessary notifications and put that "do not disturb" mode to good use, especially before bedtime. Better yet, put your phone in a whole different room, Lustig said.

Say no to multitasking

Multitasking may make you feel like

you're getting more done, but brain experts recommend against it.

"Be a single tasker," Nye said. "Work on one thing at a time, for a specified period of time and begin to work your way up."

Lustig is a big fan of the "Pomodoro technique," in which you set a timer and work on something for 25 or 30 minutes before taking a five-minute break.

She tells herself: "I can do anything for this amount of time," and the world will still be waiting for her at the end.

Start with something you actually like and set a goal

It's not enough to just have a hobby, Lustig said. It helps to choose hobbies that include deliberate practice and a goal to strive toward, whether it's playing guitar for an audience or improving in a sport.

It helps to pick something that you enjoy as well.

"You don't want to start with the heavy nonfiction or like 'War and Peace,'" Lustig said. "If you need to start with the romance novel, then start with the romance novel. You can work your way up."

It's also important to be kind to yourself. Everyone has good and bad days, and attention needs are different — and even vary from task to task. The key is to make an intentional effort, experts say. "It is in many ways similar to a muscle in the sense that we can build it up with practice and exercises," Ziffra said. "Conversely, it can weaken if we're not exercising it."

## Spring allergies are back. Here's how to check pollen levels and keep from sneezing

**Allergy season can be miserable for tens of millions of Americans when trees, grass, and other pollens cause runny noses, itchy eyes, coughing and sneezing.**

Where you live, what you're allergic to and your lifestyle can make a big difference when it comes to the severity of your allergies. Experts say climate change is leading to longer and more intense allergy seasons, but also point out that treatments for seasonal allergies have become more effective over the last decade.

Here are some tips from experts to keep allergy symptoms at bay — maybe even enough to allow you to enjoy the outdoors.

Where are pollen levels the worst this year?

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America issues an annual ranking of the most challenging cities to live in if you

have allergies, based on over-the-counter medicine use, pollen counts and the number of available allergy specialists. This year, the top five cities are: Wichita, Kansas; New Orleans; Oklahoma City; Tulsa, Oklahoma; and Memphis.

Which pollens cause allergies?

There are three main types of pollen. Earlier in the spring, tree pollen is the main culprit. After that grasses pollinate, followed by weeds in the late summer and early fall.

Some of the most common tree pollens that cause allergies include birch, cedar, cottonwood, maple, elm, oak and walnut, according to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. Grasses that cause symptoms include Bermuda,

Johnson, rye and Kentucky bluegrass. How do I track pollen levels?

Pollen trackers can help you decide when to go outside. The American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology tracks levels through a network of counting stations across the U.S. Counts are available at its website and via email.

Limit your exposure to pollens

The best and first step to controlling allergies is avoiding exposure. Keep the windows in your car and your home closed, even when it's nice outside.

If you go outside, wearing long sleeves can keep pollen off your skin to help ward off allergic reactions, said Dr. James Baker, an allergist at the University of

Michigan. It also provides some sun protection, he added.

When you get home, change your clothes and shower daily to ensure all the pollen is off of you — including your hair. If you can't wash your hair every day, try covering it when you go outside with a hat or scarf. Don't get in the bed with your outside clothes on, because the pollen will follow.

It's also useful to rinse your eyes and nose with saline to remove any pollen, experts said. And the same masks that got us through the pandemic can protect you from allergies — though they won't help with eye symptoms.



# Spain orders Airbnb to block nearly 66,000 holiday rental listings over rule violations

Spain has ordered Airbnb to block more than 65,000 holiday listings on its platform for having violated rules, the Consumer Rights Ministry said Monday.

The ministry said that many of the 65,935 Airbnb listings it had ordered to be withdrawn did not include their license number or specify whether the owner was an individual or a company. Others listed numbers that didn't match what authorities had, it said.

Spain is grappling with a housing affordability crisis that has spurred government action against short-term rental companies.

In recent months, tens of thousands of Spaniards have taken to the streets protesting rising housing and rental costs, which many say have been driven up by holiday rentals on platforms like Airbnb that have proliferated in cities like Madrid and Barcelona and many other



popular tourist destinations. on Monday.

"Enough already with protecting those who make a business out of the right to housing," Consumer Minister Pablo Bustinduy told reporters

on Monday. Airbnb said that it would appeal the decision. Through a spokesperson, the company said it did not think the ministry was authorized to rule on short-

term rentals — and that it had utilized "an indiscriminate methodology" to include Airbnb rentals that do not need a license to operate. Last year, Barcelona

announced a plan to close down all of the 10,000 apartments licensed in the city as short-term rentals by 2028 to safeguard the housing supply for full-time residents. The ministry said it had notified Airbnb of the noncompliant listings months ago, but that the company had appealed the move in court.

Spain's government said Madrid's high court had backed the order sent to Airbnb. Bustinduy said it involved the immediate removal of 5,800 rental listings from the site. Two subsequent orders would be issued until the nearly 66,000 removals are reached, he said.

Spain's government said the first round of affected properties were located across the country, including in the capital, Madrid, as well as in the regions of Andalusia and Catalonia, whose capital is Barcelona.

# Open-top safari vehicles: Are they worth the risk in forest tourism?

**While most vehicles used in forest safaris are open-top, this raises a critical question: do they leave tourists vulnerable, and is it a risk worth taking?**

Being an automotive journalist comes with its fair share of perks. One of the most exciting is the opportunity to travel, often to the farthest corners of India and beyond. Over the past two decades, my journeys have taken me into nearly every major forest in India. From the dense landscapes of Ranthambore National Park and the serene wilderness of Bandipur Tiger Reserve, to the quiet expanse of Sariska and my personal favourite, Corbett National Park.

These trips haven't always been just for work. I often return on my own time, drawn back by the beauty of the wild. Across countless safaris that I have been a part of in the past, I've ridden in everything from modified Maruti Suzuki Gypsies to the larger Canter. Despite the differences in size or style, they



all shared one trait: they were open-top vehicles.

Which brings me to an important question: are open-top vehicles really the best choice for forest safaris? Especially when ferrying groups of tourists through habitats where wild animals roam freely, and often without any guards or immediate backup in case of an emergency?

Why I say what I say

I write this as I am concerned over the recent developments at Ranthambore National Park, where a tigress named Kankati

has been involved in multiple human fatalities - the most recent being forest ranger Devendra Chaudhary, who was killed on May 12.

The story traces back to Kankati's mother, Arrowhead, a celebrated tigress in the park. She was found limping and, upon examination, was diagnosed with an incurable disease. Since she was nursing cubs at the time, forest officials decided to provide her with live bait to ensure her survival. Kankati, in

turn, was raised on that bait. This arrangement continued until Kankati began attacking humans. So much so that she recently killed Ranger Chaudhary just meters away from the popular tourist spot - the historic Jogi Mahal Hunting Lodge and Ranthambore Fort - while tourist Gypsies waited nearby.

According to experts, Kankati may now associate Gypsy vehicles with food. The emerging fear is chilling: a Gypsy arrives, something steps out, and she perceives it as prey. If that's the case, isn't there a possibility of an attack on tourist vehicles as well?

Are open-top vehicles safe? In forests across the country, the primary choice of vehicle is a Maruti Suzuki Gypsy. This is because the use of diesel vehicles is prohibited in most forests and the Gypsy, being a

petrol-powered car, works just fine. It also comes with 4x4 ability, and this means that the rough tracks within the forest can be dealt with easily. Most importantly, the Gypsy is a soft-top vehicle and hence, the view of the forest is clear to the passengers. Operators also customise these vehicles with forward-facing bench seats that allow them to carry more passengers than mentioned in the registration certificate. While all that is fine, there is one factor that remains unquestioned. What if an animal attacks or charges?

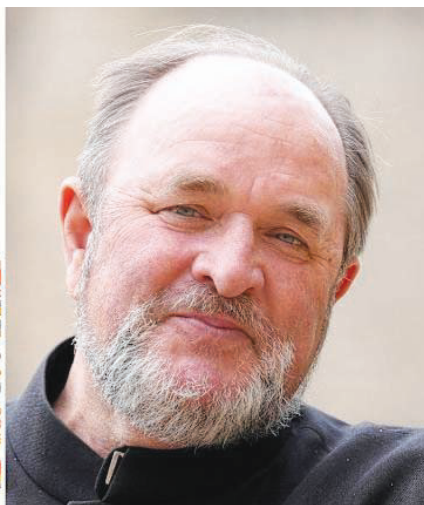
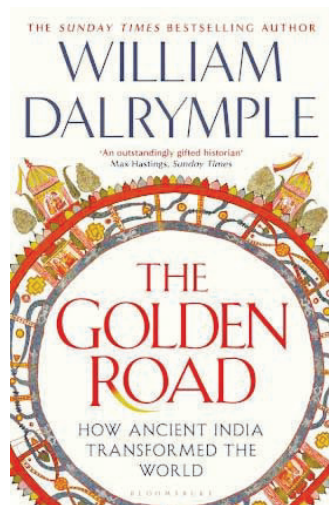
The other vehicle in use is the Canter. These are large trucks that are retrofitted with seats and have high shoulder lines. This, at least, provides more security for the passengers within, although they still remain vulnerable.



# The history book that will transform your view of early civilisation

With his new book, the historian William Dalrymple has written a lucid and compelling account of why it is India, not China, to which we owe the most important developments in human civilisation. “The Golden Road,” he writes, “aims to highlight India’s often forgotten position as a crucial economic fulcrum and civilisational engine, at the heart of the ancient and early medieval worlds, and as one of the main motors of global trade and cultural transmission in early world history, fully on a par with and equal to China.”

He must have been vexed, then, to find that the publication of his book coincides with a blockbuster exhibition, Silk Roads, at the British Museum, which traces roughly from AD500 to 1000 the route in goods and ideas between China and the West, a route that was given its name by a 19th-century German geographer, Ferdinand von Richthofen. Indeed, it is this



concept that Dalrymple is gunning for. “Goods from China largely reached Rome merely as an exotic supplement to its thriving commerce with India ... Silk was never the main commodity imported to the West from the East ... the Silk Route barely existed in antiquity.” So, farewell, Silk Roads; hello, Golden Road.

So... are we more grateful to the Indians, for the numerals we now

call Arabic and the number zero – plus Buddhism – or to the Chinese, for printing, gunpowder and paper? Silk versus peppercorns? Obviously, we are indebted to both.

India has long been acknowledged as the nursery of religion, and Dalrymple points out that there is a Christian community in Kerala that quite plausibly attributes its origins to the apostle Thomas

(though he suggests, bizarrely, that St Thomas, known in scripture as “the Twin”, was thought to be the twin of Christ... no, just no).

He is particularly compelling in his account of Buddhism as the great Indian contribution to spiritual thought. But, while impassive images of the Buddha remind us that the faith maintains detachment from the world (there’s a strikingly emaciated version reproduced here, known as the Fasting Buddha), Buddhism, like Islam later, was very much up for mercantile sponsorship; it was entirely at ease with its lay devotees making money. Whereas Hindu Brahmins regarded money as tainted and caste-compromising, Buddhist monks cheerfully accepted funds from merchants and, as in Renaissance Italy, many beautiful temple complexes were funded by mercantile patrons. Buddhism was India’s greatest intellectual

export to the East – crucially, to China, between the third and fifth centuries AD, whence it was transmitted to Japan and Korea (see the above-mentioned Silk Roads exhibition) – and, near home, it flourished in present-day Afghanistan. At the outset, Dalrymple acknowledges the danger, as in Monty Python, of attributing almost everything to India and/or Buddhism, and sometimes the narrative feels like that. Christian monasticism? Buddhist monks. Congregational worship? Buddhist temples. Chinese pagodas? Buddhist pillar shrines. But he is careful not to push the evidence too far. Yet in some cases the evidence is overwhelming, as with the amount of Roman gold that was found along the trade routes with India: the map of the finds makes the case that from the time of Augustus, India was a crucial trading partner.

## Book Release: The Beginning — Mad Men of Nu Way Advertising



By Sharanjit Thind Singh

The Beginning — Mad Men of Nu Way Advertising is a powerful and inspiring tribute by Sharanjit Thind Singh to all entrepreneurs and their families who dare to dream big, take risks, and persevere through challenges.

This remarkable book takes readers into the heart of entrepreneurship, showcasing the resilience, sleepless nights, financial sacrifices, and unwavering support that go into building a business from the

ground up. Based on real-life experiences—with some names and locations altered—The Beginning chronicles the journey of Nu Way Advertising, a company founded on one simple yet powerful principle: the customer comes first. Long before industry giants like Amazon and Apple popularized customer-centric approaches, Nu Way Advertising was practicing it every day. The agency’s commitment to understanding client needs, solving complex problems, and delivering beyond expectations resulted in long-lasting relationships and remarkable success stories. One such story highlights how a rejected client campaign was reimagined and rebranded, transforming a \$60,000 yearly client into a million-dollar account. In another instance, when a telecom client faced financial challenges, Nu Way Advertising continued working without media commissions — a bold decision that eventually earned trust and direct partnerships with media houses. Through these examples, Sharanjit Thind Singh illustrates that success is not about shortcuts but about persistence, creative problem-solving, and putting people first. Customers are not mere numbers — they are the foundation on which businesses thrive. The Beginning — Mad Men of Nu Way Advertising is a journey of passion, mistakes, learning, and triumph. It’s a must-read for aspiring entrepreneurs, business professionals, and anyone seeking inspiration to build something meaningful.

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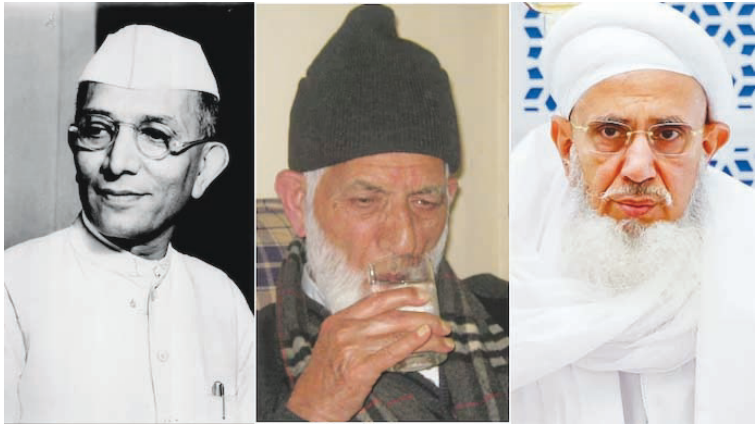
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# Who are the Indians who got Nishan-e-Pakistan and why

A war of words between the BJP and the Congress over Operation Sindoor saw the mention of Nishan-e-Pakistan, the Islamic republic's highest civilian award. Who are the Indians on whom Nishan-e-Pakistan has been conferred upon and why?



acknowledging Prime Minister Narendra Modi's role in what he called a "flawless" operation. "He keeps asking how many jets we lost, but not once has he asked how many Pakistani jets were shot down or destroyed. What's next for Rahul Gandhi? The Nishan-e-Pakistan?" Malviya wrote.

The Congress leader Pawan Khera countered, saying, "...As far as Nishaan-e-Pakistan is concerned, their leader, Morarji Desai, was the only Indian politician who was awarded it." Morarji Desai was the first non-Congress prime minister and Janata Party leader.

Not just Desai, there are some more Indians, including a Kashmiri separatist and a spiritual leader, who have received Nishan-e-Pakistan -- the country's highest civilian award.

**WHAT IS NISHAN-E-PAKISTAN AND OTHER CIVILIAN HONOURS?**

Pakistan's civilian honours were established to reward people for exceptional contributions to the country or to humanity—awards

that often reflect not just personal legacies, but broader political, cultural, or humanitarian connections across the subcontinent.

The Nishan-e-Pakistan, the highest civilian award, is conferred for services of the utmost distinction to Pakistan's national interest, equivalent to the military's Nishan-e-Haider. The Nishan-e-Imtiaz, the second-highest civilian honour, is awarded for outstanding achievements in fields like arts, literature, science, or public service.

The Tamgha-e-Pakistan, a fourth-tier civilian award, recognises exceptional bravery or service to Pakistan or humanity.

These awards are generally announced on Pakistan's Independence Day (August 14) and conferred on Pakistan Day (March 23). They are awarded to both Pakistanis and foreign nationals.

**1. MORARJI DESAI: NISHAN-E-PAKISTAN (1990)**

Morarji Desai, India's fourth Prime Minister, received the

Nishan-e-Pakistan in 1990 — years after he left office. A Janata Party leader, Desai was also the first non-Congress PM. Known for his strict Gandhian principles and policy of non-alignment, Desai took diplomatic steps during his tenure to stabilise relations with Pakistan after the 1971 War. He openly rejected nuclear weaponization and avoided escalations despite provocations, particularly after the 1971 War and the formation of Bangladesh.

His 1978 visit to Pakistan marked a thaw in bilateral ties, and his approach to cross-border diplomacy, though often debated at home, was seen as pragmatic in Islamabad.

Desai was recognised for his efforts toward peace and diplomacy between India and Pakistan.

As Prime Minister (1977–1979), he prioritised dialogue over conflict, and was known for his strict anti-war stance. He openly rejected nuclear weaponization and avoided escalations despite provocations.

On May 20, BJP leader Amit Malviya launched a sharp attack on Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, accusing him of undermining India's recent military success in Operation Sindoor and echoing sentiments similar to those of Pakistan. Malviya even asked if Rahul Gandhi was aiming for Pakistan's highest civilian honour, the Nishan-e-Pakistan. The Congress reacted, and suggested names from the BJP for the Pakistani award. However, Indians did get the Nishan-e-Pakistan, with the last recipient being awarded in 2023.

While the Nishan-e-Pakistan in

2023 was awarded to Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin, the spiritual head of the Dawoodi Bohra community, the one in 2020 was for Syde Ali Shah Geelani, a Kashmiri separatist. Even former Prime Minister Morarji Desai was among the few recipients.

The latest political war of words involving Nishan-e-Pakistan has to do with the Opposition's stand on Operation Sindoor, in which India targeted terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK).

In a strongly worded post on X on Tuesday, Amit Malviya criticised Rahul Gandhi for not

## 11 caught 'spying' for Pak: What's the punishment for espionage in India?

The recent arrests of eleven people, including popular travel blogger Jyoti Malhotra, have exposed a covert network leaking sensitive military and security information to foreign operatives.



**Priya Pareek**

Eleven people, including popular travel blogger Jyoti Malhotra, have been arrested in the last three days for allegedly spying for Pakistan amid the ongoing tensions post Operation Sindoor. The Haryana YouTuber, 33, was arrested along with six others on May 16 for allegedly passing sensitive information to Pakistani intelligence operatives.

Spy networks have also been busted in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh with investigations pointing to leak of sensitive information related to Indian army movements. India and neighbouring Pakistan witnessed heightened tensions after a terror attack in Pahalgam mandated India to launch Operation Sindoor to eliminate terrorists and their camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied

Kashmir.

These accused were allegedly in contact with Pakistani handlers and passed on sensitive information using encrypted platforms. In Malhotra's case, she was in contact with an official from the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi and travelled the country frequently. She has been charged under Sections 3 and 5 of the Official Secrets Act, 1923; and Section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Spying is an offence under Official Secrets Act. Violations can attract severe penalties, with imprisonment ranging from three years to life, depending on the gravity of the offence.

**WHAT IS THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT?**

The Official Secrets Act, a colonial-era law, was enacted to

counter espionage and protect sensitive information related to national security. The act aims to prevent the leakage of information that could be exploited by foreign powers or hostile entities to harm India's interests.

The law applies to all Indian citizens and government employees, criminalising activities like spying, unauthorised sharing of confidential government information, and withholding sensitive data that could potentially threaten the state's safety or interests.

It covers offences such as the wrongful communication of official secrets, codes, passwords, sketches, plans, and other classified materials.

Most importantly, a person prosecuted under this Act can be

charged with the crime even if the action was unintentional and not intended to endanger the security of the state.

**WHAT DOES ESPIONAGE COVER?**

**SECTION 3**

Section 3 of the Official Secrets Act criminalises the following acts: Approaching, inspecting, or entering prohibited places (such as military bases and arsenals) with the intent to harm the state. Making sketches, plans, models, or notes that could be directly or indirectly useful to an enemy. Obtaining, collecting, recording, publishing, or communicating secret official codes, passwords, documents, or information that could benefit an enemy, or whose disclosure could undermine India's sovereignty, security, or friendly relations with other nations.



# How Bangladesh is hurting itself by curbing Indian exports

India's decision to restrict imports from Bangladesh through land ports has drawn sharp attention, but according to a trade expert, it's not a provocation. It's a measured response to Dhaka's growing list of curbs on Indian goods.

In an interview with Business Today, Ajay Srivastava, founder of the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), said Bangladesh's restrictive trade policies are not only straining bilateral ties, but also undermining its own economic interests.

He calls India's move a "teaser"—a signal rather than a full-scale retaliation.

**'INFLECTING DAMAGE ON THEMSELVES'**

Highlighting Bangladesh's import restrictions on Indian staples like yarn and rice, alongside increased inspection scrutiny at its borders, Srivastava said, "Bangladesh is inflicting damage on themselves. They cannot do anything to India."

India's decision affects over \$770 million worth of imports,



roughly about 42% of all goods shipped from Bangladesh. Ready-made garments alone made up \$660 million last year. Those will now only be allowed through Kolkata and Nhava Sheva ports, effectively shutting land routes via the Northeast.

"These are big brands—H&M, Zara. They make in Bangladesh and export worldwide. Now, they can't use Indian land ports. Everything must come by sea," Srivastava said.

However, Srivastava said

Bangladesh's increasingly hostile trade posture is rooted in political rather than economic motives.

"Bangladesh was diversifying beyond garments into sectors like leather. But since the last power shake-up, religious elements have taken over. They've taken a hardline stance against India," he said. "Without any provocation, they started blocking Indian goods—rice, yarn, even FMCG."

India, instead of retaliating with bans, opted for a soft signal: nothing is blocked, but key

categories must now use more expensive and slower sea routes. "That's the teaser," Srivastava said. "We haven't blocked their goods. We've just changed the entry point." Srivastava noted that Bangladesh's recent graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status means it can no longer expect tariff-free access by default. "India had given them zero-duty access under LDC norms. That needs to be reviewed now, just like Europe and the US are doing."

"They are under serious pressure. The LDC graduation means they lose access, and their own policies are making things worse. They're damaging themselves," he added.

On speculation that Chinese goods are being routed into India via Bangladesh, Srivastava downplayed the risk.

"There's no large-scale trans-shipment. Legally, it's not allowed. Maybe at a small scale. But mainly, they import fabric from China, make garments, and export," he said.

**STRAINED TIES**  
Relations between New Delhi

and Dhaka have worsened under Prime Minister Muhammad Yunus, especially after his recent remarks in Beijing. Yunus described India's Northeast as "landlocked" and called Bangladesh the "guardian of the ocean" in the region.

Indian officials said the trade curbs are designed to ensure fairness. While India allowed Bangladesh full access through land and seaports, Dhaka has blocked Indian exports selectively, especially those headed to the Northeast.

The new Indian rules block entry of Bangladeshi plastics, processed foods, furniture, drinks and cotton yarn through land ports in Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram and parts of Bengal. These come weeks after India scrapped a five-year arrangement that let Bangladesh transport goods to third countries via Indian airports and ports.

"This is a reciprocal move," a government official told PTI, pointing to Dhaka's tightening of inspections on Indian goods and selective import bans.

## Anita Anand, Canada's first Hindu foreign minister: Will she resolve the 'K' issue amid strained India relations

By RAVEEN THUKRAL

Following Kash Patel's swearing-in as FBI Director with the Bhagavad Gita, Anita Indira Anand, a Canadian of Indian descent, assumed office as Canada's new Foreign Minister with the holy book in her hands. This moment marked a historic milestone in Mark Carney's cabinet reshuffle.

As the first Hindu woman to hold this position, Anita Anand's appointment has been celebrated by Hindu groups across Canada, including the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) Canada and the Canada Hindu Advocacy Coalition, who regard her as a source of inspiration for the Canadian Hindu community. Anand's appointment has sparked significant interest, particularly in the context of strained Canada-India relations following the 2023 assassination of Khalistani activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. However, there have been no public reactions from Sikh groups regarding her



appointment, which may be attributed to the recent events and ongoing tensions between Hindu and pro-Khalistani groups in Canada, as well as her past stance on Nijjar's killing. In July 2023, Anand retweeted a statement from then-Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly condemning posters targeting Indian diplomats in the wake of Nijjar's killing. The statement read, "The materials posted online for a protest on July 8 are unacceptable, and they do not

represent Canadians."

Born in Kentville, Nova Scotia, to Indian immigrant parents from Tamil Nadu and Punjab, Anand has a distinguished political career. She was first elected as a Member of Parliament for Oakville in 2019 and has held several key ministerial roles, including Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Minister of National Defence, and Minister of Transport. Her appointment as the first Hindu woman foreign minister is a

landmark for representation, potentially fostering greater engagement between the Canadian government and diverse communities. However, given the context of the Nijjar case and Sikh groups' advocacy for justice, her role may be closely scrutinised, particularly in light of her assertion of Hindu identity. Hopefully, Anand's appointment will have a positive impact on Indo-Canada relations, given her Indian heritage. While her role could play a key part in addressing the recent tensions between the two countries, the outcomes would largely depend on diplomatic efforts from both sides.

Observers note that her previous role in shaping Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy, with a focus on regional security, could indirectly benefit India-Canada relations, given their shared interests. However, resolving issues like the

Khalistani movement will be complex. While her approach could lead to improved trade and immigration policies, the success will depend on navigating domestic and international pressures.

Indo-Canada relations have been severely strained since the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia in June 2023, followed by claims from former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau accusing Indian officials of involvement. India vehemently denied these allegations, resulting in the mutual expulsion of diplomats. The Khalistani issue has been a bone of contention in Indo-Canada relations. With Canada's large Sikh diaspora, numbering 771,790 as of the 2021 census, playing a role in domestic politics, this may create a complex backdrop for Anand's tenure, as she must balance domestic pressures with international diplomacy.



# Trump Just Gave The World A Wartime Demo Of The 'Art Of The Deal'

By Dinesh Narayanan

The fortnight that will end this Saturday will perhaps go down in history as one of those short periods when the world's future, as anticipated even a few days ago, was rewritten in a burst of diplomacy that might seem cringe to purists.

US President Donald Trump's signature Sharpie was in action in a series of geopolitical shifts, although the weight of his role is disputed. To be sure, despite all the derision he has drawn and the fact that he was the one who first lit the trade fire, Trump has managed to steer the world away from war. That the leader of the world's preeminent superpower is allergic to conflict may not be a bad thing when the Doomsday Clock is just 89 seconds away from midnight. This is not to say that all his moves have been stellar or even constructive, but he has certainly helped bring down the global political temperature, for now. He demonstrated in the past two weeks that he will court anyone willing to give him a deal, even arch rivals and a designated terrorist who spent five years in a US-run jail.

The Dealmaker

Perhaps for the first time ever, a US President shook hands with a person who is designated as a global terrorist by his



country and even carried a bounty of \$10 million on his head until last December. President Donald Trump not only met with the person-Syrian President Ahmad Al-Sharaa-but also lifted sanctions on Syria at the behest of the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, or 'MBS', on his first visit to West Asia after assuming office. Reports suggest the deal brokered by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and MBS has something for everyone, including a Trump Tower in Damascus.

The process to end the three-year-old war between Russia and Ukraine is underway in Istanbul. Trump had offered to attend

it if Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy would too, but Putin decided not to go. President Erdogan, who will host them, has also successfully negotiated a deal with Kurdish separatists who have agreed to join mainstream politics, ending a 40-year militancy. Abrupt Moves In Middle East And China Last week, Trump abruptly ended the US' war on Iran-backed Yemeni rebel militia, the Houthis, in exchange for leaving US ships passing through the Red Sea alone. He even called them bravehearts. The US also directly negotiated the freedom of one of the American hostages held by

the Palestinian Hamas. More importantly, he cut Israel out from the deals, effectively allowing the Houthis and Hamas to continue their fight against Israel. Meanwhile, a report suggests that Iran has offered an unusual nuclear deal, in which it has proposed joint uranium enrichment for civil use with the US, the UAE and Saudi Arabia. That's arch rivals collaborating to develop an explosive technology. In another surprise move, the US and China agreed to roll back their tariff war after secret talks between them in Geneva appear to have found common ground. Trump's most important intervention, however, came in Asia, when he jumped in to calm India and Pakistan, which were in an intense military engagement that threatened to blow up into a full-scale war between two nuclear powers. Trump's unconventional leadership has disrupted global diplomatic norms and ushered in a style of deal-making that is personal and non-consultative, bordering on the whimsical. It should be underscored that most of the countries Trump is dealing with are not democracies. Even countries such as Turkey and Russia, which hold regular elections with questionable fairness, are led by autocratic leaders.

## Modi's Challenge: Beijing's Pakistan Support And The Future Of India-China Ties

By : Sohil Sinha

India & China – International relations and geopolitical experts will call them Strategic Competitors, and an emotionally charged monologue on TV will label them enemies. But after the recent India-Pakistan conflict which saw the extensive use of Chinese weapon systems and Chinese manufactured jets attacking Indian soil, is there even a relationship left to label any more?

It was no secret that China has been arming Pakistan for a long time now. But during the conflict, it went a step further, helping Pakistan diplomatically to secure IMF loans, and on the battlefield helped the terror-sponsoring state reorganise its radar and air defence systems to more effectively detect India's deployments of troops and weaponry. These actions warrant a re-orientation of India-China relations which had been relatively thawing. China's role in enabling India's primary adversary is something that can set this already fractured relationship decades back. It hampers any genuine



cooperation, and raises an important question: Can India and China truly build a stable relationship when one actively arms and diplomatically and militarily supports the other's main regional adversary?

A Strategic Enabler for Pakistan

The recent conflict between India and Pakistan exposed a dimension of the China-Pakistan relationship that extends

beyond mere arms sales, raising profound questions for India's strategic calculus. According to an analysis from a research group under India's Ministry of Defence, China provided significant air defence and satellite support to Pakistan during the hostilities in May 2025. This assessment, offered by the director general of the Centre For Joint Warfare Studies, suggests Beijing was more directly involved than

previously understood.

Specific details highlight the depth of this support: China reportedly assisted Pakistan in reorganising its radar and air defence systems, enhancing their ability to detect Indian troop and weaponry deployments. Furthermore, China allegedly helped Pakistan adjust satellite coverage over India during the critical 15-day period between the April 22 Pahalgam massacre that triggered the conflict and the start of large-scale fighting. This level of logistical and intelligence support goes significantly beyond traditional arms supply and after-sales support. To provide active, real-time assistance to Pakistan in a conflict scenario with India is like being an accessory to a murder.

For New Delhi, it just cements the "two-front situation" that leading experts have always talked about. This means planning for any future conflict with Pakistan must now explicitly factor in Chinese assistance.

The Indian military assessment that



# Foreign Policy Is Not Just High-Table Talk. It Matters

By Shashi Tharoor

In a world buzzing with the relentless static of local news and the fervour of domestic debates, it's all too easy for many Indians to perceive foreign policy as a distant, almost ethereal realm - a sophisticated parlour game played by seasoned diplomats in faraway, gilded capitals. This perception, however, is not merely an oversight; in our increasingly, almost irrevocably, interconnected global village, such a view is a luxury we can ill afford, a blind spot that carries tangible risks. The unvarnished truth is that foreign policy is far from an abstract intellectual exercise. It is, instead, a potent and pervasive force, one that directly and profoundly impacts our collective security, shapes our individual economic realities, and sculpts India's very identity and influence on the world stage. To ignore its reach is to navigate the complexities of the 21st century with our eyes closed.

## Foreign Policy Is Personal

Let's begin by dismantling the persistent, yet erroneous, notion that the average citizen - the aam aadmi whose concerns are often, and rightly, focused on the immediate and the local - is somehow insulated from the grand currents of global affairs. Consider, for a moment, the seemingly simple act of preparing your daily meal, the fuel that propels your commute, or the ubiquitous smartphone that has become an indispensable extension of our modern lives. The cost, the quality, and indeed the very availability of these, and countless other everyday essentials, are intricately tethered to a complex web of international trade agreements, the resilience of global supply chains, the fluctuating values of currencies, and the geopolitical stability (or instability) of regions that may be thousands of miles distant.

A diplomatic impasse leading to sanctions on a key trading partner, a conflict disrupting vital shipping lanes like the Suez Canal or the South China Sea, or even a poor harvest in a major agricultural exporting nation can send economic shockwaves across the globe. These don't just make for dramatic news headlines; they translate directly into the price of daal on your plate, the affordability of petrol at the pump, and the cost of the components that make up your digital devices. Foreign policy, therefore, isn't just about treaties and summits; it's an invisible hand shaping your household budget and your purchasing power. It determines whether Indian farmers get fair prices for their exports, or whether Indian industries can source raw materials competitively.

## An Existential Necessity



Beyond these immediate kitchen-table economics, the security of our nation - that non-negotiable bedrock upon which all progress and prosperity are built - is profoundly and continuously shaped by the quality and foresight of our engagement with other countries. Living in a neighbourhood marked by a legacy of intricate historical disputes and an array of contemporary, often volatile, challenges - from unresolved territorial questions and simmering border tensions to the ever-present, shadowy menace of cross-border terrorism and state-sponsored subterfuge - a robust, agile, and astutely navigated foreign policy is not a discretionary option but a fundamental, existential necessity.

It is through the painstaking, often unglamorous, work of skilled diplomacy, the cultivation of reliable strategic partnerships, active and principled participation in regional security dialogues, and the leveraging of international law that India strives to safeguard its territorial integrity, protect its citizens both at home and abroad, and contribute to a regional and global environment conducive to peace, stability, and shared growth. When our diplomats successfully negotiate intelligence-sharing protocols that thwart a terrorist plot, or when they build coalitions to counter the proliferation of dangerous weapons, or secure maritime cooperation to keep our sea lanes safe, they are, in effect, reinforcing the invisible yet indispensable shield that protects every Indian. This security dimension extends to cyberspace, the new frontier of conflict, where international norms and cooperative defence are paramount.

## The Era Of 'Soft Power'

Moreover, in the complex tapestry of the 21st-century global order, a nation's influence and standing are no longer solely, or even primarily, measured by the traditional metrics of military might or gross domestic product. Increasingly, it is a nation's "soft power" - the appeal of its culture, the resonance of its ideas

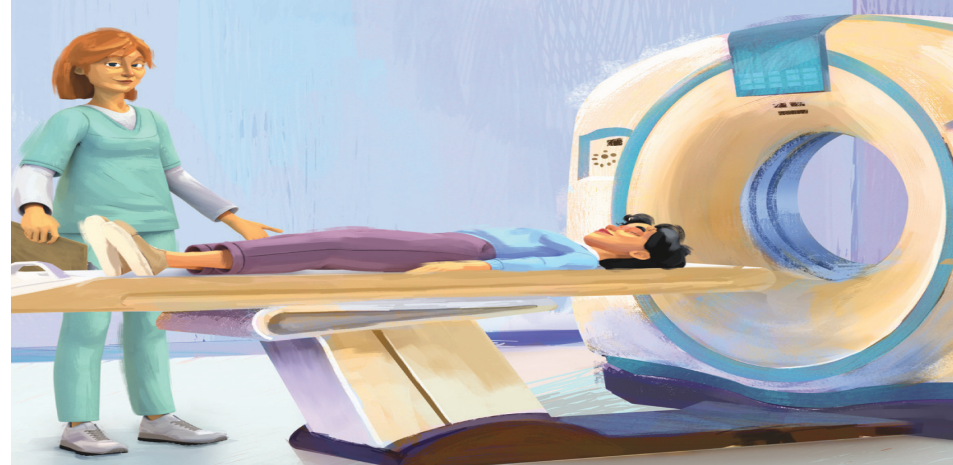
and values, its contributions to global innovation, and its ability to contribute meaningfully to global public goods - that determines its true weight in international affairs. India, as a civilisation with an unparalleled ancient heritage, a vibrant and resilient democratic tradition (however boisterous and imperfect), a demographic dividend of youthful energy, and a rapidly expanding technological prowess, possesses an extraordinary reservoir of soft power. Our foreign policy is the principal conduit through which we project this influence and these values onto the world stage.

This involves much more than just eloquent speeches; it means working strategically for an authoritative, or at least more representative, seat at the high tables of global governance, such as a permanent seat at the UN Security Council. It means consistently championing the legitimate interests and aspirations of the developing world, the Global South. It means being a first responder in times of international crisis, offering humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, as India has consistently done. It means actively promoting our rich cultural mosaic - our cinema, our music, our classical arts, the global phenomenon of yoga, our diverse cuisines - in a manner that fosters understanding and appreciation.

## A Deeply Connected World

The respect and goodwill that India garners internationally are not mere diplomatic niceties; they translate into tangible, concrete benefits. They attract foreign investment that creates jobs, draw tourists who boost local economies, and, crucially, open doors for our talented youth to study, work, and thrive in the global marketplace. The vast Indian diaspora, a unique asset, serves as a vital bridge, and their success and well-being are often linked to the strength of India's international relationships.

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# India has defused Pak's biggest weapon - its ability to cry nuclear wolf

**In a bid to deter India from responding to cross-border terrorism mounted by organisations nurtured and supported by elements of the Pakistani state - a fact that is well recognised today - it resorts to making thinly veiled nuclear threats.**



**By Manpreet Sethi**

High-pitched nuclear rhetoric from Pakistan has been a standard feature of every crisis with India since it acquired nuclear capability. In a bid to deter India from responding to cross-border terrorism mounted by organisations nurtured and supported by elements of the Pakistani state - a fact that is well recognised today - it resorts to making thinly veiled nuclear threats. This time too, when India vowed to "identify, track and punish" those behind the terrorist strike on hapless tourists on April 22 in Pahalgam, Pakistan was quick to draw the nuclear sabre.

Pakistan's railway minister first voiced the nuclear threat after India announced a slew of diplomatic measures. Next, Pakistan conducted a test of its 450km-range, nuclear-capable, surface-to-surface Abdali missile on May 3. Two days later, the Pakistan army also tested a Fatah surface-to-surface missile with a range of 120km. Then, after India's military strikes on nine carefully chosen terrorist infrastructure targets on May 7, Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that the threat of nuclear war was "clear and present".

India ignored these signals as it undertook a "measured, non-escalatory, proportionate, and responsible" action against terrorist relevant targets in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Pakistan. Within minutes of the operation's completion, the Indian

Ministry of Defence issued a press statement time-stamped 1.44 am on May 7, underscoring "considerable restraint in the selection of targets and method of execution" and that "no Pakistani military facilities have been targeted".

India made a distinction between the Pakistani state and terror infrastructure in choosing the targets. But Islamabad took this as a violation of its territorial sovereignty and hit Indian military and civilian sites. India responded proportionately against Pakistan's airfields and air defence systems. Meanwhile, cross-border firing along the Line of Control continued to be fierce. On the third day of the engagement, after first declaring and then denying a meeting of the National Command Authority, Pakistan called upon the US to bring about a ceasefire. We don't know what General Asim Munir and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif told US Secretary of State Marco Rubio or President Donald Trump, but it was enough to spook them to reverse an earlier hands-off approach in favour of attempts to de-escalate the situation.

## **Three nuclear dimensions**

While much fog persists around the crisis, at least three nuclear dimensions can be discerned. Firstly, Pakistan's ability to conduct nuclear blackmail has been progressively eroded by Indian military actions over the years. In 2016, surgical strikes were conducted just across the Line of Control in PoK. In 2019, India's

air strikes on Balakot went deeper across the international boundary. And this time, Indian missile strikes and drone attacks went further into PoK and Punjab. By doing so, India defied the space threshold that Pakistan had once laid down as a red line for nuclear use.

Secondly, Indian military action in every instance has been executed with high precision and calibration, not only to obviate collateral damage while hitting terror targets, but also to indicate restraint when targeting military sites. This has been enabled by the availability of the right military instruments to effectuate such precision.

In a unique use of the salami-slicing strategy, India has chosen to slice not the "salami" of territory but of Pakistani assets and infrastructure that are used to inflict damage upon India. India's focus on prioritising capabilities for the advantage of flexibility of employment, calibrated control over military engagement, and, hence, over escalation, has paid dividends. This has thereby allowed India's military actions to remain well below the stated military threshold of Pakistan's nuclear redlines.

Thirdly, a declared doctrine of "no first use" has allowed India to go deeper into hitherto virgin territory and targets to reclaim the space for a conventional response that Pakistan's nuclear strategy has tried to deny. Had India professed a first-use

strategy, it would have exacerbated Pakistan's fear of losing its nuclear assets to Indian nuclear preemption.

This would have heightened the possibility of nuclear use in a conflict. By placing the onus of nuclear escalation on Pakistan and by executing its military action in a calibrated fashion, India has consciously stayed away from posing an existential threat that may cause Pakistan to feel the need for nuclear use.

Overall, then, in showing the ability to mount a conventional response even in the face of nuclear brinkmanship and in emphasising that every future act of terrorism will be treated as an act of war, India has forced Pakistan to go back to the drawing board to redefine a credible nuclear strategy for itself. Its endeavour to use nuclear weapons as a shield for mounting terrorism appears to have reached a dead end.

## **Three possible directions**

In finding possible pathways from here, Pakistan could take three possible directions.

One, it could, and would most likely, decide to shore up its conventional military capability since, irrespective of a projection of a low nuclear threshold, the real action takes place in the conventional realm. With the help of China and Turkey, it could further its military build-up. This would impose a high cost on a fragile economy and a population already facing mounting social and environmental challenges.



# Army chief puts Yunus on notice: What it means for a beleaguered Bangladesh

**On Wednesday, in a Durbar bringing together "all available officers in combat uniform" at Dhaka's Senapangan, General Waker declared that the interim government will have to hold national elections by December this year.**

By Subir Bhaumik

Bangladesh Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman has finally sent a stern message to interim government chief adviser Muhammad Yunus: hold early elections, stop interfering with military matters, and keep the military in the loop on key issues like the proposed Rakhine Corridor.

On Wednesday, in a Durbar bringing together "all available officers in combat uniform" at Dhaka's Senapangan, General Waker declared that the interim government will have to hold national elections by December this year. After the violent ouster of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August last year, Waker installed the interim government to create conditions for "a free, fair, and inclusive election".

General wisdom

General Waker avoided the temptation of going for a direct seizure of power because he seems to be driven by a sense of history. He is known to tell his friends that Generals who seized power in the Bengali nation ended up in death or disgrace. Instead, he focused on three tasks: restoring democracy, maintaining stability, and upholding the Bangladesh Army's professional standards that made it one of the leading contributors to United Nations peacekeeping missions. This explains his push for early elections. He wants to take the army back to the barracks, playing the role of a saviour, not a usurper. But this push is also at the centre of his spat with Yunus, who, on the one hand, lambasts Hasina for rigging elections, but on the other, wants to rule without a mandate.

Sources close to the development say Waker also suspects Yunus is trying to orchestrate his ouster by combining street agitation with external machinations. Hence, the stern words to Yunus on Tuesday, with the Air Force and Navy chiefs by his side. This show of strength was meant to drive home three important messages: that the military is united behind the chief, that it will not tolerate "being kept in the dark" about important national matters related to security and defence (as Waker stressed during his speech), and that the military will no longer tolerate chaos and anarchy (hinting at the street agitations through Islamist mobs, a pet tactic of the Yunus brigade).

Corridor of power



General Waker raised the issue of the Chittagong-to-Rakhine corridor, which Yunus was willing to create to deliver humanitarian supplies to Myanmar, but which the US is likely to use to send military supplies to the country's rebel groups. By calling it a "bloody corridor", the army chief made it clear he is firmly against dragging Bangladesh into the festering Burmese civil war. Senior US diplomats lobbying for this corridor met the General this week, but it seems he hasn't changed his mind.

Yunus's attempts to pilot this project appear aimed at pleasing the US — something that could help him continue to run the country without being elected. Bangladesh's leading political parties, the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, as well as Left parties, have all opposed the Rakhine corridor, which was seen as part of an American power play to block China's land-to-sea access granted by the Burmese military junta.

Ruffles and shuffles

Another sore point between the two was the appointment of former diplomat and now US citizen, Khalilur Rahman, as Bangladesh's National Security Adviser, a position created by Yunus to, perhaps, offset the military's control of security matters. Rahman, seen as the man behind the corridor idea, backed out on Wednesday, telling the press after the army Durbar that there was "no military dimension" to the proposed corridor.

Rahman's appointment was followed by rumours that Yunus was promoting Lieutenant General Kamrul Hassan, the Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division in the Prime Minister's Office, as a possible replacement for General Waker.

With no prime minister following Hasina's ouster, Hassan reports to Yunus and has

chief, was the tipping point.

The General's worries about an ouster attempt also stem from a recent pitch by Yunus's student-youth brigade to finalise the July Declaration and use it to run the country in keeping with the "spirit of the July-August revolution". The nascent National Citizens Party is already out in the streets, demanding a proclamation that will nullify the 1972 secular constitution and help Yunus run the country without holding elections.

That would surely mean the end of the current presidency, and the ouster of President Mohammed Shahabuddin Chuppu would be a prelude to a massive rejig in the military ranks and the ouster of the three service chiefs, including General Waker-Uz-Zaman. This roadmap is acceptable to the Islamist radical groups but not to the country's major political parties.

## On it.

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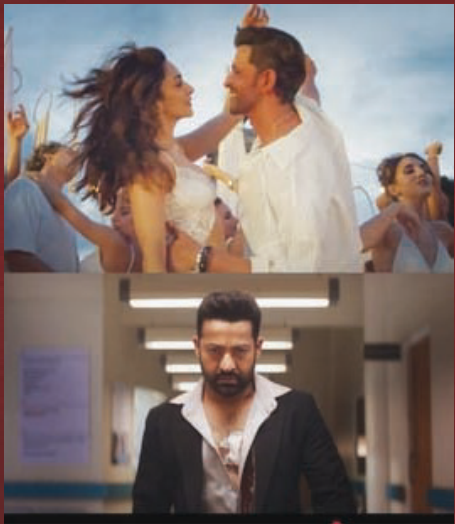
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# Kiara Advani lists her firsts from War 2: Hope we got you excited

(By Our Staff Reporter) Kiara Advani's first look from Hrithik Roshan and Jr NTR's 'War 2' teaser is earning praise from fans online. The actor shared a post highlighting her "lots of firsts" in Yash Raj Films' upcoming spy action-thriller. Kiara is paired opposite Hrithik in the Ayan Mukerji directorial. While sharing a poster featuring Hrithik and Jr NTR from War 2, Kiara tweeted, "Lots of firsts. First @yrf film. First action film. First with Hrithik Roshan, Jr NTR. First collaboration with Ayan. And of course, first bikini shot. Here's the War 2 teaser. Hope we've got you excited



for the 14th of August War2 releasing in theatres in Hindi, Telugu and Tamil (sic)."

In the action-packed teaser, Kiara's character is introduced in a metallic bikini by the poolside. Glimpses of her romantic dance sequence with Hrithik are also seen. The one-minute, thirty-four-second teaser of War 2 shows Jr NTR as the antagonist pitted against RAW agent Major Kabir Dhilawal, played by Hrithik. The film has many high-octane action sequences, including explosions, gunshots, hand-to-hand combats and Hrithik's

sword fight scene. The teaser ends with Hrithik and NTR throwing punches at each other. This is also the latter's Bollywood debut and first film with Hrithik. 'War 2' is the sequel to Aditya Chopra's 2019 action-thriller 'War,' directed by Siddharth Anand. The original featured Hrithik, Tiger Shroff, Vaani Kapoor, Ashutosh Rana, Anupriya Goenka, Dipannita Sharma, Soni Razdan, Arif Zakaria and others. The film is a part of YRF's expanding spy universe, which includes 'Pathaan' and the 'Tiger' franchise. All the films are franchises interconnected spin-offs with overlapping

storylines. The YRF spy universe began with Salman Khan's 'Ek Tha Tiger,' followed by 'Tiger Zinda Hai,' 'War,' 'Pathaan' and 'Tiger 3.'

Post Hrithik-NTR's 'War 2,' Alia Bhatt will be making her debut in the spy world with the action-thriller 'Alpha,' co-starring Sharvari, Bobby Deol, Anil Kapoor, and more. Hrithik is also set to make a cameo appearance in the film as Alia's mentor.

'War 2' is scheduled to release on August 14, 2025.

## Archana Puran Singh reacts to marital trouble rumours with Parmeet Sethi

(By Our Staff Reporter) Actor Archana Puran Singh has addressed persistent rumours about her marriage with actor-director Parmeet Sethi. She put an end to the ongoing speculation with a light-hearted clarification.

In her latest YouTube vlog, Archana responded to ongoing online rumours suggesting "tension" in her relationship with Parmeet. Reassuring fans, she confirmed that all is well in their 30-plus-year marriage. She shared her thoughts during a joyful family outing video featuring their sons,



Aayushmaan and Aaryamann. "Someone left a long comment saying that they noticed some tension between us," she said, "They said that we're such a lovely couple and that they would be heartbroken if something were wrong in our relationship. Let me clear the air. We argue with each other, and we discuss issues, but there's no tension between us... A little violence is okay," she joked, adding a humorous touch to

the clarification. The vlog follows the family on a burger-tasting adventure through Mumbai, where they explore some of the city's top burger joints.

In a particularly entertaining moment, Aaryamann recalls watching one of his father's older films, which left him disturbed. "He lights someone on fire in that movie. He is smoking a cigarette, which he flicks onto that guy, and he's already covered in kerosene," he said. Archana, visibly surprised, said, "What kind of roles have you done? Which movie is this? I haven't seen

90% of his films." Archana and Parmeet's love story began over three decades ago when they met at a party. Their relationship blossomed into a deep bond, despite their contrasting personalities. They lived together for four years before tying the knot on June 30, 1992. The couple now have two sons and continue to support each other both personally and professionally.





# Akshay Kumar sends legal notice to Paresh Rawal for exiting 'Hera Pheri 3', seeks Rs 25 crore in damages

(By Our Staff Reporter) In a significant development that has stirred Bollywood, actor Akshay Kumar has sent a legal notice to his Hera Pheri co-star Paresh Rawal, demanding Rs 25 crore in damages for what has been described as "grossly unprofessional conduct". The notice, issued via Akshay's production company Cape of Good Films, accuses Rawal of abruptly quitting Hera Pheri 3 despite signing a legal contract and even filming initial scenes.

According to a report by Hindustan Times, Akshay who is also the producer of the film after acquiring its rights from Firoz Nadiadwala has initiated legal proceedings following Rawal's exit, which occurred after shooting commenced in April this year under director Priyadarshan. Co-stars Suniel Shetty and Akshay had also begun filming.

Rawal confirmed his departure last week via social media, stating that it was not due to creative differences or financial disagreements. In a tweet, he



wrote, "I wish to put it on record that my decision to step away from Hera Pheri 3 was not due to creative differences. I reiterate that there are no creative disagreements with the filmmaker. I hold immense love, respect, and faith in Mr Priyadarshan, the film director." However, sources involved in the production told Hindustan Times that Rawal did not offer a concrete reason for

leaving, with one insider stating: "He simply did not feel like being part of the film anymore." The source also added that the actor had been offered more than three times his usual fee for this role.

The legal notice argues that Rawal's withdrawal caused significant financial loss, especially since the actor had already taken part in promotional shoots and planning. "Paresh

displayed a blatant disregard for professional integrity and commercial morality. If he didn't want to do the film, he should have said so before signing the contract and accepting the signing amount," said a source familiar with the legal proceedings. This marks the first instance in Akshay Kumar's 35-year-long career where he has taken legal action against a fellow

actor.

This is not the first time Paresh Rawal has exited a project after committing. In 2023, he declined to be part of Oh My God 2, citing dissatisfaction with the script. He had also walked out of Billu Barber, directed by Priyadarshan and produced by Shah Rukh Khan, after initially agreeing to the role. Fans of the Hera Pheri franchise known for its enduring popularity and meme status online have expressed disappointment over Rawal's exit. "Paresh himself announced his involvement in the film on X (formerly Twitter) in January. He participated in pre-production planning and shot the teaser promo. To now withdraw without prior dissatisfaction and disrupt production is in bad faith," a source close to the production said. The Hera Pheri franchise remains one of Indian cinema's most beloved comedy series, and the third instalment has been eagerly awaited by audiences. The current dispute, however, casts uncertainty over its future.

## Ex-actor reveals Harvey Weinstein's 'monster side': Took erectile shot, raped me

(By Our Staff Reporter) A former actor has alleged that disgraced Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein injected himself with an erection drug before raping her in a Manhattan hotel in 2013. In her testimony, Jessica Mann narrated how her consensual relationship with Weinstein spiralled into instances of rape.

The Hollywood producer, 73, is being re-tried on charges of rape and sexual assault, for which he was found guilty and sentenced to 23 years in prison in 2020. He has pleaded not guilty.

Jessica told the jury she was 27 and was looking to launch her acting career in 2012 when she met Weinstein at a party. She said Weinstein took an interest in her career, and they started meeting frequently.

The former actor claimed that even though she wasn't



attracted to Weinstein and refused his first sexual advance, she reluctantly gave him a massage during a meeting in his hotel room.

On another occasion, she claimed she was invited by Weinstein to his hotel room to

hand over a script for a film. However, the former actor said Weinstein forced her into oral sex.

"When he was told no, the monster side would come out," Jessica, who broke down during the testimony, said.

Wary of the consequences of alienating a powerful producer like Weinstein, Jessica said she agreed to more such encounters. However, the incident at a Manhattan hotel in March 2013 left her shattered, leaving her with no option but

to speak out against Weinstein.

In March 2013, Jessica said she was visiting New York with her friends when she met Weinstein for breakfast at a hotel. She claimed that Weinstein had already booked a room in the hotel and asked her to come up to his room.

"I didn't want to go into a room with him," the former actor said, sobbing.

Recalling the ordeal, Jessica said Weinstein shut the door of the room shut as she tried to leave, grabbed her arms and told her to undress.

"This is about the moment where I just gave up," she said.

The ex-actor said Weinstein then went to the bathroom and injected himself with a substance that she later found was to treat erectile dysfunction and then raped her.

"I found on Google that it



# Award-Winning Filmmaker Mukesh Modi to Host Indie Film Festival Awards (IFFA) in NYC on June 2–5, 2025

(By our Staff Reporter) Indie Film Festival Awards (IFFA) Celebrating Global Independent Filmmakers festival at Quad Cinema and Award Ceremony Frederick P. Rose Auditorium New York, NY – May 21, 2025 – Mukesh Modi, celebrated Indian-American filmmaker and recipient of the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award, is set to host the Indie Film Festival Awards (IFFA)—an international celebration dedicated to independent filmmakers—taking place June 2–5, 2025, at Quad Cinema in New York City. The festival's award ceremony will be held at the Frederick P. Rose Auditorium, 41 Cooper Sq, NY. IFFA is a non-profit initiative founded by Modi to recognize, empower, and promote the creative excellence of indie filmmakers from across the globe. The festival received 115 submissions from over 20 countries, with more than 50 films selected for theatrical screenings. "Our goal is to give indie filmmakers a platform to shine," says Modi. "IFFA is here to make sure their voices are heard, their films are seen, and their efforts are celebrated with pride." IFFA aims to assist filmmakers throughout the filmmaking process—offering support, resources, and a path to global distribution through the Indie Films World streaming platform. It strives to break the barriers indie creators often face when navigating the traditional film industry.

Mukesh Modi, known for his acclaimed film "The Elevator" starring Oscar nominee Eric Roberts, is also the creator of the web series "Mission Kashi," and feature films "Political War" and "Torn," all released on Amazon Prime Video. Modi founded IFFA after observing the industry's lack of accessible distribution channels for independent creators. "IFFA isn't just a festival—it's a movement to protect creativity, keep culture alive, and give dreamers the tools to succeed," says Modi. For Ticket/Pass and more information [www.indiefilmfestivalawards.org](http://www.indiefilmfestivalawards.org)



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[IndieFilmFestivalAwards.org](http://IndieFilmFestivalAwards.org)

## Salman Khan Poised to Take Over KBC Hosting Duties from Amitabh Bachchan

(By Our Staff Reporter) Salman Khan is reportedly in serious discussions to step into the legendary shoes of Amitabh Bachchan as the new host of Kaun Banega Crorepati, India's most iconic quiz show. Known for his powerful television presence, Salman has previously impressed viewers with his charisma on Dus Ka Dum and continues to reign over reality TV as the face of Bigg Boss. If finalized, this move could mark a major shift in the show's legacy. Sources close to the development have revealed that Khan is currently in advanced negotiations with Sony Entertainment Television. The makers believe that Salman's mass appeal, especially among audiences in smaller towns and rural regions, makes him an ideal successor to Big B. A source shared that Salman's familiarity with TV hosting and his strong connection with viewers would bring fresh energy to the long-running show.



This wouldn't be the first time a Bollywood superstar has taken the reins of KBC. Shah Rukh Khan had previously hosted the show during a brief stint, and now Salman may become the third megastar to quiz contestants under the iconic format. Talks are reportedly focused on the financial terms of the agreement, with insiders hinting that a final decision could be announced soon. Amitabh Bachchan, who has hosted most of the show's seasons since its launch in 2000, is said to be stepping away from the upcoming edition for personal reasons. While his presence will surely be missed, the producers appear confident that Salman can carry forward the show's immense popularity. In the meantime, Salman is set to return as host for the next season of Bigg Boss and will begin filming for Apoorva Lakhia's upcoming project in July. If everything falls into place, viewers could soon see Salman bring his unique style to the hot seat on Kaun Banega Crorepati.

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