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Oumair Aejaaz, a doctor from Michigan, arrested for recording nude videos of kids, women



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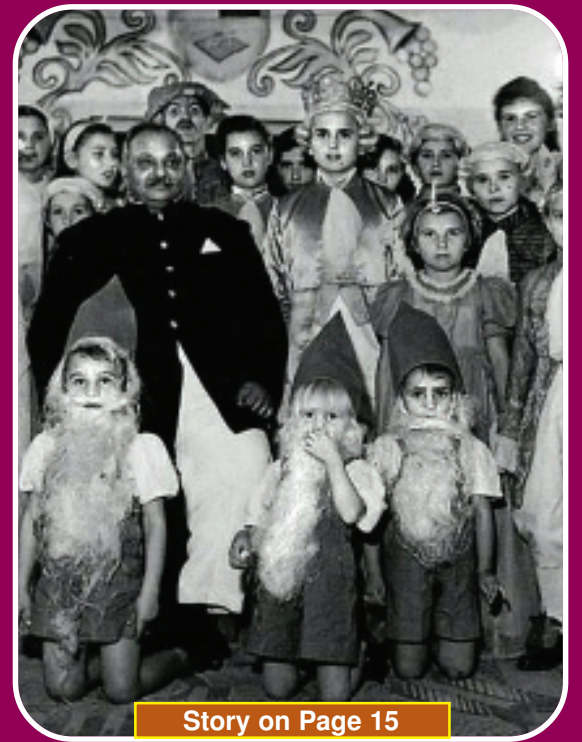
## The Rise of "Daughter of India"

As she wins over Democrats and swing voters, Kamala Harris Looks Pretty Darn Electable Now. Harris is disrupting old arguments about whether women and people of color can beat Trump. Indian Americans are Cheering in large numbers for Kamala Harris, But Can She Shift Their Votes?



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# The Rise of "Daughter of India"

**As she wins over Democrats and swing voters, Kamala Harris Looks Pretty Darn Electable Now. Harris is disrupting old arguments about whether women and people of color can beat Trump. Indian Americans are Cheering in large numbers for Kamala Harris, But Can She Shift Their Votes?**

(South Asian Insider Bureau) New York- Democratic organisers are inundated with Indian American youth "coming out of the woodwork" to support Kamala Harris. A political activist for a South Asian PAC, which mobilises South Asian American voters, points to a spike in volunteer signups to canvas for the Democratic Presidential nominee. "High school and college students are reaching out. It's way more than even Obama, Biden and Clinton years," he says. He observed that the tide turned when President Joe Biden stepped out of the race. "Kamala's nomination after Biden decided not to rerun raised a lot more excitement among my peers," he says. "With the media narratives around Biden's age and foreign policy issues, we were struggling to bring young people in. Now, my phone is blowing away. The momentum is unprecedented in the South Asian community," says an activist for another group of South Asians for Harris. Hundreds of volunteers across the country have been knocking on doors, running phone banks, and writing postcards to bring out voters for Harris. It's not only her shared heritage but also her "better speeches" compared to Biden that make her resonate with Indian American supporters. Young voters find her campaign "uplifting", with "hope and positivity" for a "bright" White House amidst the "doom and gloom" that Donald Trump's rhetoric represents for many.

Biden's Campaign "Lacked Urgency" A July 2024 voter survey has shown Asian American support for Biden has declined since 2020. His 15-point margin this year contrasts with the nearly 30-point edge he held over Trump during the last Presidential election cycle. The campaign, some say, lacked the "urgency" seen in 2020. "A complacency had set in. Kamala jumping into this race has transformed the landscape," he said.

According to Sangay Mishra, the author of the book *Desis Divided: The Political Lives of South Asian Americans* and Associate Professor of Political Science at Drew University, there is palpable change among people who were feeling hesitant after Biden's performance in the debate. "They are much more connected now. The broader trend seems that at the minimum, we will see the kind of support for Harris that we saw for Biden in 2020, probably even more," he says. That may not be entirely off the mark given the robust mobilisation for Harris: crowded rallies, young supporters offering free catchy videos on social media, a 9,000-strong condemnation of the violence happening against Bangladeshi Hindus." 'South Asian Women for Harris' fundraiser followed by the formation of South Asian

Men for Harris (the campaign raised \$36 million within 24 hours after she picked Governor Tim Walz to be her vice presidential candidate), merchandise fashioned around the viral meme 'Lotus for POTUS'. Wooing Loyal Republicans Won't Be Easy Yet, for all the enthusiasm, shared roots haven't been enough to convert many Republican supporters. Sure, Harris's Indian-American identity does strike a chord with the community, but it may not translate to votes beyond her party. According to a census survey, Indian Americans are the largest population among Asian Americans in the US. Their votes are critical in narrowly fought elections. But they're not a monolithic voter bloc. Except for a small group, 'Haley Supporters for Harris', which staunchly backed Republican Nikki Haley during her Presidential primary and continues to hold an anti-Trump stance (despite Haley having endorsed Donald Trump), other Republican supporters have largely not switched to Harris. "One hundred per cent I support President Trump! I am not voting for Kamala Harris," says Florida-based hotelier Danny Gaekwad, who has raised funds for all Republican presidential candidates since George W. Bush. Issues that matter to him are border security, legal immigration, less government and lower taxes. Gaekwad thinks mere 'home country' affinity shouldn't shape the electoral decisions of immigrant voters. Local issues must define people's choices, he says. "Indians have this habit of finding links in common with prominent Indian The Israel-Gaza Blot On Democrats Americans, seeking common relatives, uncles, aunties, ancestral villages! What kind of an obsession is that!" Similarly, Republican fundraiser Pravina Kakodkar hopes that Trump will, as he promised, "drain the swamp in DC". She says, "We need a person who will shake Washington DC. It's become this exclusive class of people who are very disconnected from the rest of the country. I want this smashed, and only Donald Trump has the capacity to do that." Kakodkar's children, on the other hand, are Democrat supporters. On Being Indian Enough Some Republicans believe that Harris downplays her Indian identity - something Trump has also commented on. "Kamala Harris has always projected herself as a black woman. I have never heard her say once that she's Indian," says Gaekwad. In her autobiography though, Harris has spoken openly about her Indian roots, her Indian grandparents and growing up biracial in California. Then there are others who feel that Harris didn't do enough for the community as Vice-President. California-based independent voter Pushpita Prasad, an

advocate for the rights of Hindus, acknowledges that Harris's background does create a "certain strong pull of representation", but issues are a priority, she stresses. "It's ironic that the situation of Indian Americans in terms of the immigration process and visas has become so bad. We've had a South Asian person in the office during which we have seen attacks on Hindu temples in the US, even in her home state of California. I really wish for Vice President Harris to condemn those temple attacks and to There are also Indian Americans who find themselves being single-issue voters in this presidential election. They don't support Trump and his far-right 'Project 2025' agenda, but, at the same time, view America's handling of the Israel-Palestine conflict as a stain on the Biden-Harris administration. Zainab Hakim, who stands strongly for US divestment from Israel, was at a recent Harris rally in Detroit with a group of protesters, seeking accountability and demanding a ceasefire. But Harris responded to Hakim's slogans by saying that they

should let her speak unless they wanted "Donald Trump to win". Referring to the incident, Hakim says, "She's saying, 'I'm absolutely better than this guy', even while continuing to fund a genocide. She has been the Vice President for three years. We are set on not voting for somebody that will continue to allow the genocide." For Hakim and others like her, Harris's gender and race credentials mean little against such discontents. "I think it doesn't mean anything for somebody to be a woman, or a black woman or an Indian American in power if they're continuing to sanction the murder of people abroad," says Hakim, who has been at the forefront of student protests at the University of Michigan. Experts note that the Israel-Gaza conflict continues to be a concern among some communities. "There is a lot of pushback among younger people within the Indian American community also. Numerous campuses have South Asian American students who were involved in protests, Muslims particularly," says Mishra.

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# Kamala Harris's husband shares their love story: 'Met on a blind date in 2013'

(Sai Bureau)-Kamala Harris' husband Douglas Emhoff shared his love story and recalled how he met his wife on a blind date in 2013 and left an awkward voice message for her which she plays for him every year on their wedding anniversary.

Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff took to the stage at the Democratic National Convention here on Tuesday night with this deeply personal story to drum up support for Harris, who is of Indian and African heritage. He said he loved working as a lawyer, became a dad to son Cole and daughter Ella, got a divorce and then "something unexpected happened" -- he was set up on a blind date with Harris. "In 2013, I walked into a contentious client meeting. We worked through the issue and, by the end of the meeting, the now happy client offered to set me up on a blind date--which is how I ended up with Kamala Harris's phone number," he said.

Emhoff, 59, said he left a long and awkward first voicemail which Harris, also 59, now plays for him every year on their anniversary. "For generations, people have debated when to call the person you're being set up with, and never in history has anyone suggested 8:30 am. And yet, that's



when I dialled," he said. "I got Kamala's voicemail, and I just started rambling."

"I remember trying to grab the words out of the air and put them back in my mouth. After what seemed like far too many minutes, I hung up. By the way, Kamala saved that voicemail, and she makes me listen to it every anniversary. That message wasn't the only unusual thing about that day," he said, drawing laughs and cheers from the Democratic Party supporters.

"Kamala, who normally would have been working hard at the office, just happened to be waiting at her apartment for a

contractor to do some work on her kitchen. I was eating at my desk, which was not a regular occurrence for a busy lawyer like me who appreciates a good business lunch," Emhoff said.

"That's when she called me back. We talked for an hour. We laughed. You know that laugh. I love that laugh. Maybe that counted as our first date. Or, maybe it was that Saturday, when I picked her up and told her "Buckle up-I'm a really bad driver"," he said. He called his wife a "joyful warrior" and a loving co-parent to his kids. Emhoff, a Los Angeles attorney

who took leave from his firm when Harris became vice president, has two now-grown children from his first marriage. He said Harris, who has no biological children of her own, has put their family first, no matter how demanding her job gets.

Those of you who belong to blended families know things can be a little complicated. But as soon as they started calling her 'Momala,' I knew we were going to be OK," said Emhoff.

"Kamala is a joyful warrior," he said. "It's doing for her country what she has always done for the people she loves. Her passion will benefit all of us when she's our president." This Thursday, as Harris

accepts the party's nomination for president, will be their 10th wedding anniversary, he noted, adding that means he's "about to hear the most embarrassing voicemail of my life once again". "Kamala was exactly the right person for me at an important moment in my life. And at this moment in our nation's history, she is exactly the right president," he said. Emhoff, who was raised in a Jewish family in New Jersey, said that Harris comes to synagogue with him on holidays and he goes to church with her on other occasions.

## Hulk Hogan jokes about Kamala Harris's Indian heritage, says 'body slam' her



(Sai Bureau)-Hulk Hogan, a legendary WWE wrestler and supporter of former President Donald Trump, joked about US Vice President and Democratic Presidential candidate Kamala Harris and her Indian heritage. He even joked about body-slaming her and referred to his signature wrestling move during an event at the Thirsty Cowboy bar in Ohio, US. Hogan was promoting his new beer at the time. Kamala Harris, 59, is an Indian-American politician. During his promotional event for the new beer on Monday, Hogan made several controversial statements, including, "Want me to body slam somebody? You want me to body slam Kamala Harris?" and "Is Kamala a

chameleon? Is she Indian?" reported the New York Post. He also referred to his signature wrestling move and asked his fans, "You want me to drop the leg on Kamala?"

This incident follows Hogan's fervent speech in support of Trump, 77, at the Republican National Convention just a month ago. During the event in Milwaukee, Hogan dramatically ripped off his shirt to reveal a Trump-Vance tank top while delivering an intense onstage speech. Hogan even said that his remarks would likely stir up a lot of backlash, but then he quipped, "That was not me. That was the beer talking," according to the Daily Mail.



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# Rajnath's strategic US visit aims to fast-track jet engine delivery amid rough patch in diplomatic ties

(Sai Bureau)-At a time of global geopolitical tumult, defence minister Rajnath Singh, who is also the highest-ranking cabinet minister in the Narendra Modi government, will be visiting the United States from August 23 to 27. While Singh's visit will help cement India-US defence relations further, it will also lay the ground for Prime Minister Modi's highly anticipated visit to New York on September 22 to attend the UN's Summit of the Future.

Incidentally, while Singh is travelling to the US, Modi is embarking on a much-awaited state visit to Poland and subsequently to war-torn Ukraine.

"The visit [of Rajnath Singh] comes in the backdrop of the growing momentum in India-US relations and defence engagements at multiple levels. The visit is expected to further deepen and broaden the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership," the ministry of defence (MoD) said in an official statement. Singh will also chair a high-level roundtable meeting with the US defence industry on ongoing and future defence collaborations.

India-US ties are going through a rough patch after Washington asked New



Delhi to come clear on an alleged conspiracy to eliminate Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, an American-Canadian citizen, on US soil. Moreover, Modi's visit to Moscow in July has not gone down well with Washington. The US has expressed unease in the past over India's ongoing ties with Russia, particularly its purchase of Russian oil and defence equipment. However, the US also understands India's need to maintain its relationship with Russia, given New Delhi's dependence on Russian defence supplies and its desire to avoid any

adverse impact on strategic calculations, especially in the context of China. While the US is heading for presidential elections later this year, the key focus of Singh's visit would be to expedite an off-the-shelf supply of GE-F404 jet engines that power India's homegrown Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas Mark-1A fighter. During the visit, discussions are likely to cover pending deals, such as for MQ-9B Predator drones, which are critical for India's surveillance capabilities, besides joint research initiatives and

defence technology transfers under the Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI). The delivery of GE-F404 engines is particularly significant as delays have affected the production schedule of the Tejas fighter jet, central to the modernisation plans of the Indian Air Force (IAF). Singh's visit is expected to push the deal forward, ensuring that India's homegrown fighter jet programme, which relies heavily on the US, stays on track. The Tejas Mark-1 and Mark-1A variants are powered by the off-the-shelf GE-F404 engines purchased from the US. The IAF, in the recent past, has repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the current pace of the LCA Mark-1A programme. The first aircraft from the existing order was scheduled for delivery by March 31, 2024. However, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has faced repeated delays, with delivery now projected for November 2024. GE Aerospace, manufacturer of the F404 jet engines, has cited supply chain issues as the main reason for the delay in supplying the engines to India. The F404 series engines are required to produce the 83 Tejas Mark-1A jets ordered by MoD under a contract worth Rs 48,000 crore signed in February 2021.

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Date(s) of Birth Used: May 15, 1950	Eyes: Brown
Hair: Brown	Weight: 165 pounds
Height: 5'3"	Occupation: Employee of donut shop
Sex: Male	
Nationality: Indian	

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REMARKS

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CAUTION

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## It's a New Race. Harris' Acceptance Speech Showed Why.

Donald Trump has dispensed with either mystery or nuance about the case he will make over the next 74 days against Kamala Harris.

The former president says the current vice president is leftist ("Comrade Kamala," "far more liberal than crazy Bernie Sanders"). She is a lightweight ("stupid," "dumb"). She is a phony, defined only by her ambition, disconnected from ordinary Americans ("So I don't know, is she Indian or she is Black?" "What happened to her laugh?...That's the laugh of a crazy person"). Over just 40 minutes Thursday night, Harris accepted the Democratic nomination with a fluent, forceful, tightly argued address that aimed to dismantle Trump's caricature of her.

It is hard to imagine anyone who started watching the speech with an undecided but genuinely open mind — surely there are a few such people left in this agitated age? — who finished by thinking, You know, I see what Trump was getting at about her. Harris became the Democratic nominee only because of a spectacularly weak public performance by President Joe Biden less than two months ago at his debate with Trump. The format of an acceptance speech is quite different, obviously. Even so Harris' performance was in every way the opposite. Harris validated, and almost certainly fortified, the widespread perception left by recent national and swing-state polls that this is a transformed race. In the wake of the Democratic convention, Trump faces an urgent imperative to prevent Harris from delivering a similarly effective performance at their planned debate on Sept. 10.

Narrating her biography, Harris said her values are shaped by her early career as a prosecutor. This background was also reflected in her rhetorical tone — well-organized, plain-spoken, largely bereft of lyrical flights.

On substance, however, it seemed apparent that Harris wasn't simply prosecuting her case. The speech had a large and strategically important defensive dimension.

Rather than unveiling a markedly left-leaning agenda, Harris mostly presented a composite of priorities that unify most Democrats: Protecting abortion rights, voting rights, and Social Security and Medicare. Even within this familiar terrain, she often played notes that emphasized traditional and tough-minded. She boasted that as a prosecutor and attorney general, she confronted drug cartels as well as exploitative banks. She said she wants a middle-class tax cut, while asserting that Trump's tax changes would provide relief to the rich at the expense of others.

On national security, Harris seemed at pains to put to rest any doubts that the country's first woman president would be sufficiently tough. "As vice president,

I have confronted threats to our security, negotiated with foreign leaders, strengthened our alliances and engaged with our brave troops overseas," she said. "As commander in chief, I will ensure America always has the strongest, most lethal fighting force in the world." Knowing that Trump intends to make her own an immigration crisis, she tried to turn the tables. She blamed him for killing a bipartisan border security bill because he wanted a political issue rather than a policy solution, and vowed she would revive the measure and pass it.

Knowing that the Israel-Hamas war threatens to divide her party, Harris tried — depending on one's perspective — to find a middle ground or blur the issue with language that offered something both sides could connect with. She was equally impassioned in saying "I will always stand up for Israel's right to defend itself," and in asserting that she is part of the Biden administration's effort to see that "the suffering in Gaza ends and the Palestinian people can realize their right to dignity, security, freedom and self-determination."

The most important part of Harris' defensive agenda, however, was not about politics or policy but about herself personally. A woman with a biography that some voters may find exotic — a daughter of a mixed-race marriage, coming from a liberal city in a liberal state — told her story in ways to make herself approachable, familiar, reassuring. There were paeans to a mother who "never lost her cool," and taught her daughters to "never complain about injustice, but do something about it." She described a close-knit community in the East Bay of California, "A beautiful, working-class neighborhood of firefighters, nurses and construction workers." She described her patriotism: "Fellow Americans, I love our country with all my heart." There seemed to be a clear logic to Harris practicing the politics of reassurance. She and her team evidently believe that preempting attacks on her record or character is the necessary prerequisite to leveling her own attacks on Trump's character and record.

She called Trump "an unserious man" but warned that the effects of a second term would be "extremely serious." There was basically no item in Democrats' standard anti-Trump litany that she did not mention: election denialism and the Jan. 6 riot, his recent 34-count felony conviction in New York, the civil suit he lost before that in a sexual harassment case, his skepticism of the NATO alliance and defending Ukraine from Russian attacks, his alleged sympathy for Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong Un in North Korea.

## Modi In Ukraine: Playing 'Mediator' May Not Be Feasible For India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Poland and Ukraine extends the geopolitical scope of India's foreign policy. No Indian Prime Minister has visited Poland for the last 45 years. In recent years, Poland has acquired considerable weight within the European Union (EU). It is a large country in size and population, and it has seen impressive economic growth since 1992, making it the EU's sixth-largest economy. Modi has visited several countries that had not seen a prime ministerial visit from India for a very long time. This is part of a strategy to enlarge India's global footprint in line with our aspirations to play a bigger role on the world stage. In that sense, a visit to Poland would have seemed overdue.

### A Ukraine Visit Had Become Unavoidable

No Indian Prime Minister has visited Ukraine since its independence in 1991. India has had productive ties with Ukraine, especially in the defence area, but these have been adversely affected by its conflict with Russia flowing from the regime change in the country in 2014. Modi will be the first Indian prime minister to visit Ukraine. Whether the conditions for a prime ministerial visit to Ukraine at the strictly bilateral level exist currently can be debated. At the geopolitical level, however, it could be argued that a visit had become more or less unavoidable. Poland's hostility to Russia, anchored in history, is profound. The country's current president and the foreign minister in particular, as well as the prime minister, reflect it in their statements. This visceral animus towards Russia also explains the depth of Poland's ties with the US. Since 2008, Poland has hosted elements of the US anti-ballistic missile shield that the Russians believe is targeted against them, though the US claims that it is directed against Iran's missile capability. Poland

strongly backs Ukraine in its conflict with Russia. As it happens, the western part of Ukraine is historically linked to Poland.

### Is This An Appropriate Time?

It can be argued that India needs to reach out to Central and East European countries to expand its political footprint within the EU, with which it seeks to strengthen ties. The issue, however, is whether it is opportune to do so at this moment when both Ukraine and Poland are locked up in a military confrontation with Russia as front-line states with US and NATO support.

A proxy war is being conducted against Russia through Ukraine, with full Polish support, with the declared goal of imposing a strategic defeat on Russia, causing its economic collapse and isolating it internationally, even if these goals have not been met yet. The question arises whether we need to defer to Russia's sensitivities and concerns when it has been our privileged strategic partner for decades and has stood by us when we were under pressure from the West.

To what extent we should show solidarity with Russia and shun its adversaries when we have no quarrels with them, and, in this context, to what degree we should preserve the independence of our foreign policy and our strategic autonomy vis a vis all our major partners in the East and the West, are pertinent questions.

One can, of course, argue that we have not been deterred from forging increasingly close ties with the US, which is the principal promoter of the proxy war against Russia, or from our efforts to expand ties with the EU, or, within it, with countries like France and Germany, who are fuelling this proxy war too. This logic should dictate that we should not be inhibited from reaching out to Ukraine and Poland.

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# Modi's Ukraine Trip Is Why The World Shouldn't Compare India And China

By Harsh V. Pant

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be in Poland and Ukraine this week. Both visits are historic in their own ways: for Poland, this will be the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister in 45 years, while for Ukraine, Modi's will be the first-ever visit by an Indian Prime Minister. Where Modi has talked about India and Poland's "mutual commitment to democracy and pluralism" reinforcing the bilateral relationship, he has expressed "hope for an early return of peace and stability" in Ukraine.

Often, China and India are put in the same bracket when it comes to their response to the Ukraine war. But Modi's visit to the country, which follows his much-controversial trip to Russia last month, is why the world shouldn't compare them.

India Is More Than Just A Mediator In Europe Modi's visit to Russia last month raised a lot of eyebrows as it was also his first visit abroad in his third term. There is now talk of India becoming a potential peacemaker in the Russia-Ukraine war. But that is missing the woods for the trees. Modi will be in Ukraine to underline that New Delhi's

position on the war remains consistent. Despite close ties with Russia and its decision not to publicly call out Russia as an aggressor, New Delhi has always maintained that the sanctity of territorial integrity and sovereignty remains inviolable in international affairs, and that dialogue



and diplomacy is the only way to a sustainable outcome.

Unlike China, Modi publicly told Putin during his visit to Moscow that this was not the era of war, and expressed pain at the death of children after a lethal strike by Russia on Kyiv's main hospital for children. At that time, Ukrainian President

Volodymyr Zelenskyy had denounced Modi for visiting Russia, calling the trip a "devastating blow to peace efforts". But New Delhi has continued to maintain its ties with both Moscow and Kyiv throughout the course of the war over the last two and a half years, steadfast in its belief that both sides should be engaged if a lasting solution is to be found.

A Renewed Vision For Europe Europe is facing a moment of reckoning with growing internal challenges, a widening regional divide, a war that shows no signs of ending, a rising China, calls for isolationism in the US, and a fracturing of the post-Cold War security arrangement. The end of the Ukraine war will perhaps lay the foundations of a new security order in Europe, but that end is nowhere in sight as both sides search for favourable leverage at the negotiating table. It is at this critical juncture that Europe has started looking at India as a key partner. And New Delhi has reciprocated. India now views Europe as central to its developmental and strategic priorities.

This is borne by the extraordinary diplomatic investment the Modi government has made in imparting momentum to its ties with Europe. What has been an evolving feature of this outreach is India's attempts to engage with different sub-regions of Europe, allowing New Delhi to focus on their core strengths. It is Central Europe that is now the focus, with Modi visiting Austria last month followed by Poland and Ukraine now. The region has developed its own unique voice on European matters, and especially after the Russian invasion, it has been critical in shaping the larger European response to regional and global issues.

Why Poland Matters To New Delhi As for Modi's visit to Poland, it is among the fastest-growing economies in Europe and has been vocal about its strategic aspirations to see Europe emerge as a key geopolitical actor on the global stage. Warsaw's role will also be critical in shaping the European security architecture once the embers of war in Ukraine cool down. Its location makes it a hub of connectivity across Europe, and India enjoys a lot of goodwill.

## Hindu Massacres in Bangladesh: An Ongoing Genocide That Is Rarely Discussed

By: Monidipa Bose Dey

After ex-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled from Bangladesh on August 5, 2024, there has been specific targeting of Hindus in Bangladesh, which includes widespread looting of Hindu houses and shops, vandalism of temples,



While the global community is expressing shock at the recent events in Bangladesh, such acts of barbarism are not new to the country. The communal riots during the 1947 Partition and the 1971 atrocities committed by the Pakistan Army and Razakar-Ansar Bahini against Hindus should have been documented in world history under a chapter titled 'Hindu Genocide.' Unfortunately, discussions on these atrocities and the ongoing genocide of Hindus in Pakistan and Bangladesh remain a taboo subject among Western academicians. However, it is heartening to see that many Hindus are now awakening from their deep slumber and demanding the establishment of a 'Hindu Genocide Day,' similar to

Holocaust Day for the Jews. Below are brief details of some of the brutal massacres perpetrated by Islamists, the Pakistan Army, and their allies—the Ansar Bahini and the Razakars—on Bangladeshi Hindus after Partition and during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war. The Razakars were an East Pakistani paramilitary force formed by the Pakistan Army during the 1971 war, and the Ansar Bahini, like the Razakars, were allies of the Pakistani Army.

lynching and killings of Hindu men, and abductions and rapes of Hindu women. X (formerly Twitter) is replete with videos showing Hindu homes in villages being burned down and their livestock killed. There have also been reports of hospitals, including government facilities, refusing treatment to Hindu patients. These incidents of Islamic atrocities against Bangladeshi Hindus and other minorities have drawn international condemnation, asking for the attacks to stop.

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# Delhi must not let Dhaka's political turmoil hit economic ties

**It is only natural that India returns, in due course, to resume normal diplomatic activity and economic cooperation.**

One of the most significant features of India's relations with its South Asian neighbours has been its close relations with Bangladesh, ever since the country was born out of the India-Pakistan war of 1971. Western economists have claimed since the 1970s that Bangladesh was destined to be an 'international economic basket case', forever dependent on foreign assistance. The economic performance of Bangladesh has, however, been far superior to that of Pakistan. Its annual economic growth rate over the past two years, during the rule of Sheikh Hasina, was around 6 per cent. Pakistan grew by 2.38 per cent in 2023.

What has emerged is that, contrary to popular belief, Hasina and her government performed well in enhancing the growth of the Bangladeshi economy. Contrary to Western propaganda, it is Pakistan, and not Bangladesh, which has become an 'international basket case', excessively dependent on foreign aid. With the Afghanistan conflict having ended, Pakistan cannot continue with its pretensions of being a crucially important power, controlling strategic equations across the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf. These are important factors that should be kept in mind while analysing the developments in Bangladesh. It appears clear that in recent days, the 'regime change' to oust Hasina was for political reasons, in which Pakistan evidently had an interest. Pakistan, however, does not have the resources, or strategic reach to execute such actions. Its primary emphasis has been on cosying up to Islamist organisations in Bangladesh. Such 'assistance' would naturally be dominated by resorting to religious fundamentalism and what Pakistan's establishment describes as 'radical Islam'. Pakistan has, after all, done nothing to contribute economically to any country anywhere. It has not

provided any economic assistance, even for the welfare of the people of its northern neighbour, Afghanistan, despite having interfered in Afghanistan's internal affairs. Given its precarious economic situation, Bangladesh understands that it is wise to avoid creating complications or tensions in relations with its



neighbours. Both the interim government's chief adviser, Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, and the army chief, Gen Waker-Uz-Zaman, have more than enough problems getting their house in order. They will, hopefully, be careful not to permit violence or terrorism across the country's borders. It is, however, no secret that the 84-year-old Yunus has a long history of good relations with successive American governments, dating back to the days of the Bill Clinton administration. He also has close ties with the British establishment. He has made a notable contribution to the agricultural sector in Bangladesh by promoting the provision of microcredit for small farmers. It would be useful for India to continue and indeed expand trade, economic and people-to-people contacts with Dhaka. Economic and trade ties need to be fully restored

as soon as possible. There have been growing linkages between Bangladeshi and Indian business houses for meeting Dhaka's requirements for its export-oriented textile industry; these should be strengthened. The relations that Bangladesh has with the outside world are inextricably linked to its historical

experiences since its birth in December 1971. There have also been concerns that there could be problems with maritime access, with China's growing interest in strengthening its ties with both the new dispensation in Bangladesh and in continuing its policies to obtain bases in neighbouring Myanmar. India has, therefore, been taking a keen interest in strengthening communication links with both Myanmar and Bangladesh through projects like the jointly constructed Sittwe port (Myanmar), located in the Bay of Bengal. Moreover, it would be worthwhile to consider a framework of trilateral maritime cooperation between India, Bangladesh and Myanmar, particularly in communications and trade. It needs to be borne in mind that China has, for long, sought assured maritime access to and through the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea to the oil-rich Arab states

of the Persian Gulf and beyond. Maintaining assured access and berthing facilities through the Bay of Bengal is important for Beijing to fulfil its larger strategic aspirations. Such access is now available to China only in Pakistan's Gwadar port. It remains to be seen how Yunus would respond to Chinese maritime ambitions.

The Bangladesh military has played a key role in the exit and exile of Hasina to India. It is obvious that Hasina feared for her life before she fled to India. It was only appropriate for India to have responded positively and provide a safe haven. In the meantime, Prime Minister Modi received a call from Yunus, assuring him about the safety of Hindus and other minority groups in Bangladesh. This is an issue about which Modi expressed serious concern earlier. It is, however, clear that Gen Waker-Uz-Zaman has played a key role in this matter. He is calling the shots from behind the scenes. In the meantime, it appears that Yunus also has prime ministerial ambitions. He seems to be well positioned in strengthening ties with the Western powers, including the US and UK. While India stayed away from any involvement in the internal affairs of Bangladesh, it was evident that the Hasina government had lost public confidence. While the military establishment stayed out of political controversy, it had no interest in bailing out a distinctly unpopular Hasina. But, as far as India is concerned, Hasina has been a good friend who has sought refuge, which India has provided.

In these circumstances, it is only natural that India returns, in due course, to resume normal diplomatic activity and economic cooperation with Bangladesh while flatly declining to undertake extradition of Hasina from its soil. India is, after all, not a country that lets down those who have been its longtime friends.

## Righting a wrong : Supreme Court exposes HC overreach

THERE was an air of inevitability about the Supreme Court setting aside an order of the Calcutta High Court in which the latter had not only acquitted an accused in a sexual assault case but also advised adolescent girls to control their sexual urges. Having taken suo motu cognisance of the contentious verdict, the apex court had said in December last year that while writing a judgment, the judges were not expected to preach or express their personal views. The bottom line is that any ruling should be based on the merits of the case, not the prejudices and perceptions of the judges. After all, the Bench is not a pulpit and should not be treated as one.

It is appalling that a Division Bench of the high court chose to sermonise and went to the extent of saying that 'in the eyes of the society, she (every female adolescent) is the loser when she gives in to enjoy the sexual pleasure of hardly two minutes'. Reeking of insensitivity, this observation was no doubt objectionable as well as unwarranted. It seems that these judges were blissfully unaware of the Supreme Court's Handbook on Combating Gender Stereotypes, which was released in August last year. It offers much-needed guidance on how to avoid harmful gender stereotypes, particularly those about women, in judicial decision-making and writing. A bigger push by

the SC is needed to ensure that this document is widely circulated and read by various stakeholders in courts across the country.

What's worrisome is that high courts continue to come up with outrageous statements despite being rapped by the topmost judiciary. In 2017, for instance, the Delhi High Court had shockingly observed that a woman's feeble 'no' may mean 'yes'. Judges who stoop so low are a disgrace to the judiciary. Amid its welcome intervention in the Kolkata rape-murder case, the SC would do well to lay greater emphasis on gender sensitisation.



# How the spate of crumbling bridges in Bihar raises serious questions

By Amitabh Sachdeva

The deteriorating infrastructure in Bihar has long been a subject of concern, but even within this context, the Aguwani-Sultanganj bridge stands out as a glaring example of repeated failures. On August 17, when a section of pylon 9 collapsed into the Ganga river, it marked a new low in the state's ongoing saga of collapsing bridges.

It was the third time a portion of the under-construction bridge had collapsed. In April 2022, a 162.5-metre stretch of the bridge's extra-dosed span had plunged into the river. Again, in June 2023, a 550-metre segment of the bridge, spanning pylons 9 to 13, crumbled into the Ganga. The Bihar Rajya Pul Nirman Nigam Ltd (BRPNL) has sought to downplay the latest collapse, noting that the fallen portion was part of a leftover section of pylon 9, which was slated for demolition. The demolition had been ordered following an investigation into the June 2023 collapse, which identified a technical defect.

The recent rise in water levels of the river then caused this segment to be washed away. The financial impact of this collapse may be minimal, given that the segment was already marked for dismantling, but



the implications for Bihar's reputation are severe as the incident has dealt a significant blow to the state's credibility in infrastructure management. The Aguwani-Sultanganj bridge was not merely another construction project; it was intended to be a flagship initiative for Bihar, envisioned by chief minister Nitish Kumar as a marvel of modern engineering. This four-lane road bridge was designed to span the Ganga, connecting Sultanganj with Aguwani Ghat in Khagaria district. Majestically positioned over the picturesque river, the cable-stayed bridge is meant to serve as a vital link between the Kosi region in the north—

comprising the districts of Khagaria, Saharsa, Madhepura and Supaul—and the southern districts of Bhagalpur, Munger and Jamui, as well as the adjacent Jharkhand districts of Deoghar and Godda. The contract for this ambitious project was signed in November 2014, with S.P. Singla Construction Pvt. Ltd emerging as the lowest bidder. The total project cost was estimated at Rs 1,710.8 crore, with the bridge itself accounting for Rs 859 crore, while the remaining funds were allocated for land acquisition. The bridge was originally scheduled for completion by November 2019. However, five years past

its deadline, in August 2024, the project remains a 'bridge to nowhere,' a testament to the delays, mismanagement and challenges that have plagued its construction.

The ongoing problems with the Aguwani-Sultanganj bridge highlight the broader issues of infrastructure development in Bihar and raise serious questions about the state's ability to fulfil its promises. The repeated collapses have not only resulted in financial losses but have also severely damaged the credibility of the state's administration and its capacity to execute critical infrastructure projects. In a region where reliable infrastructure is essential for economic development and connectivity, the failure of such a high-profile project is nothing short of catastrophic.

Since Nitish assumed office as chief minister in November 2005, Bihar has constructed over 6,200 bridges, both large and small, symbolising a significant leap forward in infrastructure. However, recent events have revealed that a section of engineers and their supervisors seems to have neglected the maintenance of these bridges, moving on after the completion of construction.

## Trinamool vs Trinamool on whether top cop should be probed in Kolkata rape case

Senior Trinamool Congress leader Kunal Ghosh called out fellow party leader Sukhendu Sekhar Ray for demanding the questioning of Kolkata Commissioner of Police in connection with the rape and murder of a trainee doctor.

Ray, a Rajya Sabha MP, demanded strict probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which took over the probe into the rape and murder case from the Kolkata

stages. While the police claimed they did everything that was expected of them, the Calcutta High Court transferred the probe to the CBI, citing no significant progress in the police investigation.

Besides the Commissioner, Sukhendu Sekhar Ray also referred to Sandip Ghosh, the former principal of state-run RG Kar Medical and College and Hospital, who had resigned from the post two days after the trainee doctor's body was found on August 9. Ghosh is currently being probed by the CBI. On Ray's comment, Kunal Ghosh said, "I also demand justice in RG Kar case. But strongly oppose this demand regarding CP. After got information He has tried his best.



Police."CBI must act fairly. Custodial interrogation of ex-Principal and Police Commissioner is a must to know who and why floated suicide story. Why wall of hall demolished, who patronised Roy to be so powerful. Why sniffer dog used after 3 days. Hundreds of such questions. Make them speak," Ray said in the tweet. Ray's remark came as Kolkata's Commissioner of Police Vineet Goyal faces criticism over the police's handling of the case in its nascent

Personally CP was doing his job and investigation was in a positive focus. This kind of post is unfortunate, that too from my senior leader (sic)."The role of the city police and the hospital administration was criticised amid huge uproar over the brutal rape and murder of a 31-year-old trainee doctor. The victim's family alleged that the first call they received about their daughter's death mentioned that she had died by suicide.

There are also allegations that the



# Will J&K Turn The Trend And Deliver a Clear Mandate This Election?

By Amitabh Tiwari

With the election dates announced for Jammu & Kashmir, frantic political activity has begun in the state. This will be the first election after the abrogation of special status.

The founder of the J&K Apni Party has joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), while there are unconfirmed reports of Ghulam Nabi Azad making a gharwapsi to the Congress.

Can the opposition form a united bloc against the BJP, or will the National Conference (NC) and Congress at least continue with their Lok Sabha alliance in the state elections? Or, will all the four main parties go it alone? The answer to this question will determine the course of these elections. In the last three polls in the state, no party secured a simple majority of its own. In 2002, the Congress and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) joined hands post-poll to form a government. In 2008, the Congress backed the National Conference in a post-poll arrangement. In 2014, the PDP and the BJP came together to provide a government for the people of J&K.

Multi-Cornered Battles



Quadrangular contests have made it tricky for any party to cross the halfway mark. The structure of the assembly is such that it makes it difficult for any party to win. Pre-delimitation, the Kashmir valley had 46, Jammu 37, and Ladakh four seats.

In Kashmir, which has a Muslim majority, the main contest is between the two regional parties: the Mufti family's PDP and the Abdullah family's NC. In Jammu, which has a Hindu majority, the main contest is between the two national parties, the Congress and the BJP.

Post-delimitation, the total assembly seats have increased from 87 to 90, with Kashmir having 47 (+1) and Jammu 43 seats (+6). The proportion of seats in Hindu-dominated Jammu has increased from 42.5% to 47.8% post-delimitation.

In the 2014 Vidhan Sabha elections, the PDP had won 28 seats with a 23% vote share, the NC got 15 with 21% votes, the BJP 25 with 23% votes, and the Congress won 12 with 18% votes.

While the BJP almost doubled its vote share, the PDP gained 8% and the NC

lost 2%. The BJP and the PDP gained largely at the expense of others (independents and smaller parties). While the BJP won 25 of the 37 seats on offer in Jammu, the PDP won 25 of the 46 seats in the Valley.

The BJP withdrew support from the government in June 2018. In the 2019 general elections, the NC and BJP won three seats each, with the former sweeping Kashmir and the latter winning in Jammu and Ladakh.

In August 2019, the Central government revoked the special status of Jammu & Kashmir. Parties in the Kashmir Valley, including the NC, PDP, and a few others, soon formed the Gupkar Alliance in response, demanding the restoration of Article 370.

The Recent Lok Sabha Elections

In the recently concluded general elections, the NC won two seats, the BJP got two, and an Independent candidate won one seat. Both ex-chief ministers Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah lost the elections. The PDP's influence declined in the Lok Sabha as it couldn't win any seat and recorded just 8.5% vote share.

## Bangladesh Must Ensure Safety Of Minorities

By Rajiv Tuli, Prashant Barthwal

Bangladesh, formerly known as East Pakistan, gained independence in 1971. Since its inception, the country has been a centre of religious and cultural diversity. However, in recent decades, the situation for religious minorities, particularly Hindus, has become increasingly alarming. The persistent political instability in

Awami League and the BNP has severely affected the governance system. Both parties, once in power, have suppressed opposition and favoured their supporters. The military has seized power several times, further disrupting the democratic process. Currently, the Awami League government has adopted a repressive stance toward the opposition, whose leaders have been jailed, with media freedom being curtailed and allegations of electoral manipulation. These actions undermine the core principles of democracy, signalling a collapse of democratic values when the ruling party suppresses opposition and weakens constitutional institutions.



Bangladesh has exacerbated these problems. The power struggle between the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has repeatedly driven the country towards anarchy, directly impacting minority communities. The influence of Islamic fundamentalist groups in Bangladesh has grown, often targeting Hindus and other religious minorities. Despite economic development, significant economic inequality persists. Bangladesh's democracy has been in crisis for a long time. The intense rivalry between the

The attacks on Hindus have significant implications. Ethnic cleansing refers to the persecution, through imprisonment, expulsion, killing, or rape, of an ethnic minority by a local majority to achieve ethnic homogeneity. This process systematically removes a group of people from a specific area through violence and forced migration. At the time of independence, Hindus comprised about 22% of the population, but this has now decreased to less than 8% (Avishek Biswas & Deep Halder, Being Hindu In Bangladesh: The Untold Story, 2023, pp. 112-14).

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# Rapes won't stop until our culture separates women from family honour

By Ananya Bhattacharya

Every Raksha Bandhan, a brother tells his sister that he will protect her. But from whom? From someone else's brother? Why can't all brothers tell their sisters that they will not be the reason that someone else's sister is unsafe?" A letter from listener Utsukraat to the Aaj Tak Radio podcast Teen Taal this week is an eye-opener. It is the week that India is protesting against a rape-murder in the East, even as mobs bring life to a standstill raising their voice against molestation of two kids in the West. It is the week that the North celebrated Raksha Bandhan, and all the country sat still to reminisce 77 years of independence.



the diamond on the street, certainly the dog will take it out. You can't stop it," says defence lawyer ML Sharma about the 2012 gangrape victim, and about women in general. While it is alright to be aghast at Sharmaji ka Beta's thoughts, it is precisely how most betas, Sharmaji's or others' in this country, think of women. That women are 'precious'. They are like 'diamonds', they are 'Lakshmi', they are material, and they are divine, they are everything but human. They are idolised and spoken of like something unattainable; which is why rapists like Mukesh Singh say that a woman roaming around late at night 'needs to be taught a lesson'. Rape is a lesson too.

Next week, the cruel machinery of news will roll on over. Then there will be another rape, another molestation, another death, another set of headlines, more protests, more calls for resignation, more answers asked of the ones in power. But there will be no talk of the problem. Rape is not just a policing problem. Rape is a family, community, and culture problem. Think the Mahabharat, where Draupadi had to battle the besmirching of her honour, and summon Lord Krishna to 'save' her. The Kauravas died a grisly death. Justice is poetic in our epics. Out here in real life, life isn't as rosy. Justice is often denied.

More often, delayed. An organised gangrape racket in Ajmer takes 32 years to reach a verdict. There are only protests. So, when we're done with all our #NotAllMen sermons on Twitter, maybe we should go back to raising our boys right. "Why can't all brothers tell their sisters that they will not be the reason that someone else's sister is unsafe?" At home in India, girls and boys are not brought up the same way. It's not a problem that's new, nor will it be cured overnight. But perhaps we can talk about it. Identifying and acknowledging the gaps

is the first step to fixing a problem. No police force can save women from being raped by men till the family treats women as second-class citizens. Worse is the notion that a woman is the family's honour. That she has to be 'protected'. Take a blood-boiling bit from Leslee Udwin's banned documentary, India's Daughter (2015). "She should not be put out on the street, just like food. The 'lady', on the other hand, we can say the 'girl' or the 'woman', are more precious than a gem, than a diamond. It is up to you how you want to keep the diamond in your hand. If you put

Till the time our culture identifies a woman with its honour, while leaving our men loose, no force on Earth, no law or cops, can stop rapes from happening. Let's talk families. A National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) in 2022 said that nearly 1 in 3 women have suffered some form of spousal abuse. Another alarming statistic said that 50% of all children in India have endured sexual abuse before turning 18 - more often than not at the hands of family members or individuals known to them. Most of these cases go unreported because of how inherently closed our family units are.

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# As Kamala Harris stays away from press meets, questions shadow her campaign

Seema Sirohi

The question is how long can Kamala Harris run on the "vibe", the "joy", and dance away the blues without addressing the many policy elephants in the room?

Things have gone exceedingly well for Kamala Harris thus far. She is dashing through the country on Air Force 2, addressing large crowds and jolting the Democrats awake from their slumber. The coverage in the mainstream press has been fawning. And free.

But the free ride is beginning to rankle those who see themselves as the arbiters between the people and the politicians. The media rapture might be over. Harris is under increasing pressure from media stars, editorial boards, and sundry opinion makers to grant interviews and answer questions.

Enough with all the positive coverage, the fourth estate wants the real deal. Was the mainstream/liberal press embarrassed into raising the question since the conservative/right-wing channels have repeatedly contrasted Harris's absence with Donald Trump's presence in the mediascape, whether for a rambling press conference or friendly encounters with Fox News anchors? Harris's reluctance to find time to meet the

press has become an issue and could potentially become a problem.

Access denied could become anger multiplied.



Here's a warning from The Washington Post editorial board: "If she hopes to prevail, Ms. Harris needs to present her ideas. The media and public have legitimate questions, and she should face them. This is a political necessity — Mr. Trump is already turning her avoidance of the media into an attack line."

That is indeed true. Trump has claimed Harris is afraid of press conferences because

she is "not smart enough" to do one. Others say she is too smart to do one. Trump's media blitz, Harris's silence

To drive the point home, Trump held a long,

Sunday talk shows in rapid succession.

The Harris campaign's response to all the hullabaloo about press interviews: Why spoil a good thing? As the saying goes, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Media scrutiny, potential gaffes, and policy disputes will only complicate matters. She has equalised the race for the most part.

The Harris honeymoon with the people — minus the press — is making the Republicans nervous and Trump angrier. Deep down in their hearts, they know it's not fear of the press, but a political strategy deployed by Harris. And she will likely follow it until she can't. As John Stoehr, editor of The Editorial Board, a politics newsletter for "normal people," said on X, "ælook how well she's doing as a result" of avoiding the media. The question is how long can Harris run on the "vibe", the "joy", and dance away the blues without addressing the many policy elephants in the room? After three weeks of gushing coverage, she is now inviting more questions about her platform. But wait. There is no platform or manifesto — yet — on her campaign website, only bios, photos, and buttons to donate large and small amounts.

## Trump, Musk, And The Importance Of 'Exaggeration' In Storytelling

By Nishtha Gautam

Why harp on the facts, it's the exaggerations that makes a tale interesting!" A favourite aunt once exclaimed when I tried to fact-check a funny family story she was narrating to a huge, giggling audience two decades ago. Each member of my clan cheered her on and it was the start of a delightful evening. Donald Trump's



interview with Elon Musk sent me back in time as I waded through the conversation. Both Trump and Musk know the importance of exaggerations in any narrative. The Indic epic poets knew it. Herodotus knew it. And so did Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Shakespeare. Trump's exaggerations, ably supported by his interviewer, made for a good story for his supporters. All 60 million of them he thought were

tuned into the live broadcast. This number is an exaggeration, too.

### A Risk Worth Taking

But why does Trump exaggerate all the time despite a bevy of fact-checkers waiting to give each syllable uttered by him a hang-draw-quarter treatment? Political storytelling is assessed under different rubrics than literary texts. Is this a risk worth taking? The answer is a resounding yes. Trump capitalises on narcissism when he indulges in making outlandish claims. To understand this link better, let's look at what the experts have to say about narcissism. "For the narcissistically involved person, there

is only one reality: that of his own thought processes, feelings and needs. The world outside is not experienced or perceived objectively, i.e., as existing in its own terms, conditions and needs," Erich Fromm proposed in the 1950s. Fromm also posited that narcissists have a stronger sense of entitlement. This lays bare the reasons behind Trump's constant resort to exaggerations.

rambling news conference at Mar-a-Lago and conducted a two-hour "conversation" with Elon Musk on X on a variety of topics, which at one time had 1.2 million listeners. The Trump-Musk encounter was a bonanza of disjointedness, but the point that Trump is available was made to his followers. Trump's running mate, JD Vance, appeared on three

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# Indian Americans Cheer Kamala Harris, But Can She Shift Their Votes?

By Savita Patel

Democratic organisers are inundated with Indian American youth "coming out of the woodwork" to support Kamala Harris. Rajeev Bhateja, co-founder of the group They See Blue, which mobilises South Asian American voters, points to a spike in volunteer signups to canvas for the Democratic Presidential nominee. "High school and college students are reaching out. It's way more than even Obama, Biden and Clinton years," he says.

The leader of They See Blue's youth chapter, Akash Borde, observed that the tide turned when President Joe Biden stepped out of the race. "Kamala's nomination after Biden decided not to rerun raised a lot more excitement among my peers," he says. "With the media narratives around Biden's age and foreign policy issues, we were struggling to bring young people in. Now, my phone is blowing away. The momentum is unprecedented in the South Asian community," says Harini Krishnan, Co-director of the group South Asians for Harris. Hundreds of volunteers across the country have been knocking on doors, running phone banks, and writing postcards to bring out voters for Harris. It's not only her shared heritage but also her "better speeches" compared to Biden that make her resonate with Indian-American supporters. Young voters find her campaign "uplifting", with "hope and positivity" for a "bright" White House amidst the "doom and gloom" that Donald Trump's rhetoric represents for many.

Biden's Campaign "Lacked Urgency" A July 2024 voter survey has shown Asian-American support for Biden has declined since 2020. His 15-point margin this year contrasts with the nearly 30-point edge he held over Trump during the last Presidential election cycle. The campaign, some say, lacked the "urgency" seen in 2020. "A complacency had set in. Kamala jumping into this race has transformed the landscape," says Krishnan.

According to Sangay Mishra, the author of the book *Desis Divided: The Political Lives of South Asian Americans* and Associate Professor of Political Science at Drew University, there is palpable change among people who were feeling hesitant after Biden's performance in the debate. "They are much more connected now. The broader trend seems that at the minimum, we will see the kind of support for Harris that we saw for Biden in 2020, probably even more," he says. That may not be entirely off the mark given the robust mobilisation for Harris: crowded rallies, young supporters offering free catchy videos on social media, a 9,000-strong

'South Asian Women for Harris' fundraiser followed by the formation of South Asian Men for Harris (the campaign raised \$36 million within 24 hours after she picked Governor Tim Walz to be her vice-presidential candidate), merchandise fashioned around the viral meme 'Lotus for POTUS'.

Wooing Loyal Republicans Won't Be Easy Yet, for all the enthusiasm, shared roots haven't been enough to convert many Republican supporters. Sure, Harris's Indian-American identity does strike a chord with the community, but it may not translate to votes beyond her party.

According to a census survey, Indian Americans are the largest population among Asian Americans in the US. Their votes are critical in narrowly fought elections. But they're not a monolithic voter bloc. Except for a small group, 'Haley Supporters for Harris', which staunchly backed Republican Nikki Haley during her Presidential primary and continues to hold an anti-Trump stance (despite Haley having endorsed Donald Trump), other Republican supporters have largely not switched to Harris.

"One hundred per cent I support President Trump! I am not voting for Kamala Harris," says Florida-based hotelier Danny Gaekwad, who has raised funds for all Republican presidential candidates since George W. Bush. Issues that matter to him are border security, legal immigration, less government and lower taxes. Gaekwad thinks mere 'home country' affinity shouldn't shape the electoral decisions of immigrant voters. Local issues must define people's choices, he says. "Indians have this habit of finding links in common with prominent Indian

Americans, seeking common relatives, uncles, aunties, ancestral villages! What kind of an obsession is that!"

Similarly, Republican fundraiser Pravina Kakodkar hopes that Trump will, as he promised, "drain the swamp in DC". She says, "We need a person who will shake Washington DC. It's become this exclusive class of people who are very disconnected from the rest of the country. I want this smashed, and only Donald Trump has the capacity to do that." Kakodkar's children, on the other hand, are Democrat supporters.

**On Being Indian Enough**

Some Republicans believe that Harris downplays her Indian identity - something Trump has also commented on. "Kamala Harris has always projected herself as a black woman. I have never heard her say once that she's Indian," says Gaekwad. In her autobiography though, Harris has spoken openly about her Indian roots, her Indian grandparents and growing up biracial in California.

Then there are others who feel that Harris didn't do enough for the community as Vice-President. California-based independent voter Pushpita Prasad, an advocate for the rights of Hindus, acknowledges that Harris's background does create a "certain strong pull of representation", but issues are a priority, she stresses. "It's ironic that the situation of Indian Americans in terms of the immigration process and visas has become so bad. We've had a South Asian person in the office during which we have seen attacks on Hindu temples in the US, even in her home state of California. I really wish for Vice President Harris to condemn those temple attacks and to

condemn the violence happening against Bangladeshi Hindus."

**The Israel-Gaza Blot On Democrats**

There are also Indian Americans who find themselves being single-issue voters in this presidential election. They don't support Trump and his far-right 'Project 2025' agenda, but, at the same time, view America's handling of the Israel-Palestine conflict as a stain on the Biden-Harris administration. Zainab Hakim, who stands strongly for US divestment from Israel, was at a recent Harris rally in Detroit with a group of protesters, seeking accountability and demanding a ceasefire. But Harris responded to Hakim's slogans by saying that they should let her speak unless they wanted "Donald Trump to win".

Referring to the incident, Hakim says, "She's saying, 'I'm absolutely better than this guy', even while continuing to fund a genocide. She has been the Vice-President for three years. We are set on not voting for somebody that will continue to allow the genocide." For Hakim and others like her, Harris's gender and race credentials mean little against such discontents. "I think it doesn't mean anything for somebody to be a woman, or a black woman or an Indian American in power if they're continuing to sanction the murder of people abroad," says Hakim, who has been at the forefront of student protests at the University of Michigan.

Experts note that the Israel-Gaza conflict continues to be a concern among some communities. "There is a lot of pushback among younger people within the Indian American community also. Numerous campuses have South Asian American students who were involved in protests, Muslims particularly," says Mishra.

## Sunita Williams in space: Moon man of India says there is always a solution

Mayilsamy Annadurai, known as the "Moon Man of India," expressed confidence in the safe return of astronaut Sunita Williams from the International Space Station (ISS) despite the technical challenges faced by the Boeing Starliner spacecraft.

Williams, along with fellow astronaut Barry Wilmore, has been aboard the ISS longer than planned due to issues with the Starliner, including thruster malfunctions and helium leaks. Annadurai, a former director at the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro), reassured that there are multiple options for Williams' return, including the possibility of using SpaceX's Crew Dragon or Russia's Soyuz capsules if necessary. He emphasised that technical glitches are common in space missions

and that solutions are always available for worst-case scenarios. "Definitely Sunita Williams will reach safely back to Earth," he stated, highlighting the resilience and problem-solving capabilities inherent in space exploration. Speaking on the role of the private sector in the space industry, Annadurai noted that the increasing demand for satellite services necessitates private industry involvement, drawing parallels to sectors like media, telecommunications, and air travel. He pointed out that the number of satellites launched in the past five years has surpassed those launched in the previous 60 years, underscoring the need for competition and collaboration with private entities.

Looking ahead, Annadurai predicted a

significant expansion in satellite-dependent services, impacting various fields from agriculture to aeronomy. He emphasized that the value lies not in the satellites themselves but in the services they enable. With ISRO focusing on scientific and technological advancements, the agency aims to support human presence beyond Earth, including potential habitation on the Moon and Mars. Regarding India's Gaganyaan mission, Annadurai highlighted ISRO's strategy of transferring routine activities to the private sector, allowing the agency to focus on pioneering scientific endeavours. This approach is expected to facilitate advancements in human space travel and potentially reduce the costs and complexities of space travel between continents.

# What Led SEBI To Ban Anil Ambani From Market And Impose Fine?

Not long ago, Anil Ambani was considered the most flamboyant industrialist in the country, exuding a great deal of energy and frequently in the news, from Page Three to political and business pages. The collapse of his business empire made big headlines and became a matter of public discourse, from chatter in elite circles to local chai shops in the hinterland. A bombshell has now arrived in the form of a report from the markets regulator.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), in its 222-page report, has severely castigated Ambani and his associates following an investigation into multiple complaints alleging the siphoning of funds from Reliance Home Finance Ltd between 2018-19. The report calls Anil Ambani, Chairman of the Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group (ADAG), the mastermind behind a fraudulent scheme to siphon off funds from the publicly listed Reliance Home Finance Ltd (RHFL) by disguising them as loans to nondescript and financially weak privately held companies connected to him.

'Cavalier Approach': What The Report Says

The SEBI report notes: "This is also a peculiar case where the company's management has brazenly defied the diktat of its own Board that had raised concerns about 'General Purpose Working Capital Loans (GPCL/GPC) lending and

asked the company management to ensure compliance with the law."

It further adds that "the cavalier approach by the company management and the promoter in approving loans amounting to hundreds of crores to companies many of which had negligible assets, cash flows, net worth, or revenues, suggests a sinister objective behind the 'loans'. This sinister objective becomes all the more clear when the relationship of the borrowers with the promoters of RHFL is taken into account." As a result, SEBI has barred Anil Ambani and 24 other entities, including former key officials of Reliance Home Finance, from the securities market for five years. It has also imposed a penalty of ₹ 25 crore on Ambani and restrained him from being associated with the securities market, including as a director or Key Managerial Personnel (KMP) in any listed company or any intermediary registered with the regulator, for a period of five years.

The SEBI report is likely to prompt other law enforcement agencies to initiate investigations against Ambani and other persons whose names have been red-flagged by the markets regulator.

**Some Startling Findings From SEBI**

As many as 62 loan applications, covering an amount of ₹ 5,552.67 crore were approved on the date of the loan application itself

27 loan applications amounting to ?

1,940.58 crore were disbursed to the borrower on the date of the application itself In the Credit Approval Memo (CAM) for loans amounting to ? 5,850.19 crore, deviations from due process were recorded. The nature of these deviations includes: field investigation waived, probability of default waived, eligibility criteria not as per the norms, no creation of security, no customer rating undertaken, escrow account not opened, etc.

It was found that most of the loan application forms were left blank, and the authorised signatories merely signed on the last page of such application forms. Even after the RHFL Board explicitly instructed the company on February 11, 2019, to stop disbursing any further GPC loans, RHFL continued to do so, disbursing thousands of crores of rupees with impunity, approved by Anil Ambani in his capacity as Group Head. Even at the time of disbursal of the GPC Loans, the internal approval memos themselves recorded that several hundreds of crores of rupees worth of loans were being made to nondescript and dubious entities that were plainly and utterly credit-unworthy. This was all part of an elaborate and nefarious scheme undertaken to divert funds from RHFL to promoter-linked entities while concealing the financial implications

of their actions from the investing public. As a result, the company eventually collapsed, causing immense losses to its investors and the broader ecosystem.

**An Elaborate Scheme?**

The facts and circumstances of this case clearly indicate that the defaults are the culmination of an elaborate and coordinated design to move funds from the publicly listed company to nondescript and financially weak privately held companies connected with the Reliance ADA Group. By a preponderance of probability, the mastermind behind the fraudulent scheme seems to be Anil Ambani. It is also apparent that some other persons in key management positions in the company played an active role in perpetrating the fraudulent scheme. Subsequently, most of the GPCL borrowers' accounts turned into NPAs, and as a consequence, RHFL defaulted on its payment obligations towards its lenders. The company's public shareholders have been left high and dry. For reference, as of March 2018, the RHFL share price had closed at around ₹ 59.60. By March 2020, as the extent of the fraud became clear, the share price had collapsed to ₹ 0.75. Even to this date, there are more than 9 lakh shareholders invested in RHFL.

# Why delivery of justice is difficult in India

**The new criminal laws have many lacunae. The sad part is that police officers, lawyers and judges who deal with criminal cases have not been consulted.**

THE rape-murder of a young trainee doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata has led to a justified hue and cry not just in West Bengal but across the nation. The ruling party in the state and the police are being blamed for not acting fast enough in investigating this horrific crime. The ruling dispensation at the Centre is blaming the state government and vice-versa. A political blame game is going on in which the police are being treated like a football. And now that the case has been transferred to the CBI under considerable public pressure, the ruling party in the state is demanding the conclusion of the investigation within a matter of days. In a bid to save the party from political harm, its members took to the streets to demand death penalty for the accused. The Supreme Court has made scathing observations after taking suo motu cognisance of the Kolkata rape-murder case. It has sent a notice to the state government, set up a task force for recommending security at hospitals and suggested some other measures. Kolkata

witnessed more trouble on Sunday after a Durand Cup football match between Mohun Bagan and East Bengal at Salt Lake Stadium was cancelled due to the non-availability of police personnel in view of the serious law and order situation elsewhere in the city. This led to protests by the young crowd. A lathicharge ensued and many protesters were arrested. The molestation of two schoolgirls at Badlapur in Maharashtra has added to the nationwide disgust. Appalling crimes and political mudslinging are nothing new in our country. These have been happening for years and will continue to happen, as nobody wants to cure the disease, but only treating the symptoms. The disease is that in the states, the police have become the private army of the political party in power as they are accountable to the executive under the Police Act, 1861 — that means being accountable to the leaders of the ruling party. It goes without saying that all political parties are more than happy exercising this control over the police. This is true of

all states and of all parties in India across the board. That's why there is no justice for the ordinary citizen as the police mostly act as per the directions of the party, especially when it comes to high-profile crimes. Action is taken depending upon the interests of the ruling party. Of course, the police leadership is also to be blamed for not doing its job efficiently and quite a bit of it is also compromised unfortunately due to corruption and career interests, due to which many policemen join hands with politicians, primarily because the latter can reward and harm them in many ways. We are still stuck with the 1861 Act. Once the police are made accountable to the law and Parliament, the situation will improve drastically. The force will function independently in accordance with the law without any fear, as in many other countries. Though the Model Police Act was framed many years ago by the Soli Sorabjee Committee, nobody wants to follow it, not even the Central Government. Curiously, the Supreme Court, which gave a historic judgment

in 2006 on police reforms, is not even keen to issue a contempt notice to state governments for not acting on its directions in letter and spirit. States have merely done an eyewash on those directions. Look at the British who gave us these laws and the procedures for the police. They are nimble-footed and change fast according to the need of the hour, with the political parties being apolitical in this matter, delivering speedy justice. In the recent riots in the UK, a few accused have been sent to prison for 20 months within days of the crime having been committed with no political interference! Can you imagine this happening in India? Another problem is the pitiable conditions of the police force in the country. The police are mostly ill-equipped in many respects to handle serious crime. The force is short of manpower. There are about five lakh vacancies to meet challenges like cybercrime, besides infrastructural shortcomings with regard to buildings, vehicles, equipment, etc... the list is endless.

# Is India Really At Risk Of A Monkeypox Outbreak?

By Bharti Mishra Nath

More than four years since Covid-19 was declared a pandemic by the WHO (World Health Organization) in March 2020, fear of another mass outbreak looms large. The WHO, on August 14, declared the current upsurge of Mpx or Monkeypox in Central Africa as a global emergency requiring urgent action. The global concern for the virus grew as it spread to other African countries, and, within no time, the deadly strain of Mpx - Clade 1b - crossed the African continent to reach Sweden, Pakistan, and other countries.

The virus has killed more than 500 people so far, mainly in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the disease has been spreading since last year. The country saw more than 96% of the world's roughly 17,000 recorded cases of Mpx this year. Though India has not reported any cases yet, the Central government is keeping a close eye on the situation. Our healthcare infrastructure faced severe challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic, which resulted in thousands of deaths. One wouldn't wish to be caught unawares this time.

Is Mpx As Dangerous As Covid-19 Or Swine Flu?

Mpx is a zoonotic infection that causes flu-like symptoms and skin lesions. Fatal in some cases, the WHO first declared it

a global emergency in 2022. Mpx virus can be categorised into two clades: Clade 1 and Clade 2. The first, which is found mainly in Central African countries, is more severe and has a high mortality rate. Clade 2 has milder symptoms and is found in western Africa. The latter caused a public health emergency in 2022, wherein some 300 cases — though mild — were reported from Sweden. This time, it's the newer and more serious Clade 1b, identified in September last year, that has been driving the current outbreak.

Though experts worry that Mpx may be as dangerous as Covid-19 or the swine flu, there is a difference in the nature of transmission. Both Covid-19 and swine flu were highly infectious because they were airborne. In contrast, Mpx is transmitted through close skin-to-skin contact, talking or breathing close to an infected person, or using their soiled clothes or bedsheets. "Mpx is unlikely to become a pandemic like Covid-19 primarily due to its mode of spread. It requires very close and physical contact, unlike the airborne SARS-CoV-2. Also, symptoms like blisters on the skin are more visible indicators and therefore, it's easier to identify the disease and isolate a person to contain the spread," says Rakesh K. Mishra, former director of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology.

India's first Mpx case was recorded in Kerala in 2022, from a traveller from the UAE. Soon, the virus spread within the country, with cases emerging in Delhi even from individuals who had no recent international travel. India reported 27 confirmed cases and one death that year, according to WHO. The last case in the country was in March this year, in Kerala, and since then, no new cases have been recorded.

How To Stay Safe

In response to the WHO's warning, both Central and state governments have sprung into action. There are monkeypox advisories in place and public health measures are being taken. Both the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) are closely monitoring the situation and reviewing international trends.

In Tamil Nadu, the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine (DPH) has already issued alerts. Reports say that passengers arriving from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African countries are being tracked by airport health officers and port health personnel. Both Hyderabad and New Delhi — cities popular among African students pursuing higher education — have also been placed on high alert.

The Need For Vaccines

The first Mpx strain was isolated by ICMR researchers in 2022. Pharmaceutical companies and drug manufacturers are being called upon to develop vaccines and testing kits for the virus. Existing vaccines for smallpox and chickenpox might also offer protection in India.

About other prevention strategies, Mishra says, "It is important to closely monitor the spread of the disease in different countries and be ready for screening by already available methods of DNA-based diagnostics. There is an effective vaccine already available but supply of that may not be easy to ensure."

"Simple practices like avoiding close physical contact with suspected/potentially infected person, maintaining distance from people with symptoms, and wearing a mask, should be effective in containing the spread of the infection," Mishra adds.

Developed nations, mostly those in Europe, already have vaccines available for those at greater risk of monkeypox. And given the high quality of healthcare there, containing the disease will be less challenging. It's underdeveloped African countries, which have neither vaccines nor the resources to buy them, that remain at most risk and which need the most help.

## How Poland celebrates India's Good Maharaja who saved Polish kids during WWII

Prime Minister Modi is set to visit Poland for two days on August 21. This is the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister in more than four decades. There is an interesting World War II history connecting Poland and India. During WWII, the Maharaja of Jamnagar and Chatrapati of Kolhapur gave shelter to thousands of Polish refugees, who had witnessed the brutality of war in their homeland. Poland remembers the maharaja's contributions and pays befitting tributes to him. During his Poland trip, PM Modi will also visit the Jam Saheb Of Nawanagar Memorial.

A SAFE HAVEN TO THE POLISH REFUGEES DURING DARK TIMES

Maharaja Jam Saheb Digvijaysinhji Ranjitsinhji Jadeja, the ruler of Nawanagar, was the rescuer of 1,000 Polish children during World War II. This act of kindness by Ranjitsinhji Jadeja dates back to 1941 when the Soviet Union declared an amnesty, permitting Polish orphans, who had been deported to Siberia by the Soviets at the war's outset, to leave Russia.

Another camp was established in Kolhapur under Bhosale Chhatrapati.

During World War II, in 1939, Poland was invaded and divided by USSR and Germany. The outcome was that the Polish government, led by General Sikorski, went

into exile in London. Several Polish people, including women with children, orphans, and disabled adults, were deported to the Soviet Union, leading to severe hardships. General Sikorski then sought refuge for the Polish people from Winston Churchill, the UK Prime Minister. Churchill looked towards India, which was under British rule at the time.

Soon, a decision was made in Delhi to establish a refugee camp under Maharaja Jam Sahab Digvijay of Nawanagar (now Jamnagar, Gujarat) who offered to host Polish children in Balachadi.

Responding to this humanitarian crisis, Maharaja Digvijaysinhji offered refuge to these children in his state of Nawanagar. He took remarkable steps to ensure their well-being by making dormitories and providing essential services such as food, clothing, medical care, and education. He also encouraged learning for them as he arranged for Polish teachers to come and educate the children, giving them a semblance of normalcy amidst the turbulence.

He also set up theatre groups, art studios and cultural activities.

In recognition of his extraordinary kindness, Poland honoured Maharaja

Digvijaysinhji by naming a square in Warsaw after him, known as the 'Square of the Good Maharaja', and also dedicated a school to him.

Furthermore, he was posthumously awarded the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland. His legacy is a symbol of compassion and generosity during some of the darkest periods of history.

The Maharaja was a graduate from University College, London. He was also a second lieutenant in the British army for two decades.

CAMPS AT KOLHAPUR: REFUGE TO 5,000 REFUGEES

The Camp in Kolhapur under Chatrapati Bhonsale also became a safe refuge for many. The camp provided refuge for over 5,000 Polish refugees, including women and children, who had been unsettled by the war.

Many of the refugees had been deported to Siberia and other parts of the Soviet Union, where they faced harsh weather and forced labor. The camp in Kolhapur provided them with food, shelter, and medical care, as well as educational and recreational facilities.

The camp was functional until the early

1950s, when many of the refugees moved to other countries, including the United States, Canada, and Australia.

'GOOD MAHARAJA' MEMORIAL AT WARSAW

Jam saheb is still referred to as the 'Good Maharaja' in Poland for giving refuge to the Polish orphans in Balachadi.

The Maharaja's connection to Polish history and culture was strengthened further during a stay in Switzerland in the 1920s, where he developed a lasting appreciation for Polish heritage. This personal connection might be one of the reasons why he offered a helping hand to the Polish orphans.

Another Polish refugee, visual artist, Stefan Norblin, came to India under the patronage of the Maharaja of Jodhpur. He was brought to decorate the Umaid Bhawan Palace with paintings, decorations and furniture designs. During this World War II, Norblin also painted portraits of the local aristocrats of Rajasthan and painted their residences.

In November 2017, a plaque honouring Kolhapur-Valivade was inaugurated in Warsaw. As for India, there is a graveyard consisting of 78 Polish refugees and an obelisk in Kolhapur, Maharashtra.

The survivors also made visits to Balachadi

# Oumair Aejaaz, a doctor from Michigan, arrested for recording nude videos of kids, women

A 40-year-old Indian doctor, Oumair Aejaaz, is being held on a \$2-million bond for multiple sex crimes, including recording thousands of nude images and videos of children and women over six years. He allegedly used hidden cameras at hospitals and his home.

A 40-year-old Indian doctor in the US is being held on a \$2-million bond after being charged with 10 counts of multiple sex crimes, including recording thousands of nude images and videos of children and women for at least the past six years. Police discovered over 13,000 videos on a single hard drive and seized 15 external devices during their investigation. Oumair Aejaaz, who specialises in internal medicine, moved to the US in 2011 on a work visa from India. He completed his residency at Sinai Grace Hospital in Michigan. He then moved to Dawson, Alabama.

Aejaaz returned to Oakland County in Michigan to continue practice in internal medicine in

2018. Aejaaz's work history includes employment at Henry Ford Macomb Hospital in Clinton Township and Ascension Genesys Hospital in Grand Blanc, Michigan.

He was most recently contracted as a physician, working at various hospitals.

Aejaaz was arrested on August 8 after allegedly placing hidden cameras in bathrooms, changing areas, hospital rooms, and even in his own home. These cameras reportedly captured disturbing footage of children as young as two years old and women who were either unconscious or asleep, all in varying states of undress, reported Fox News. Authorities also believe Aejaaz may have uploaded some of the illicit videos to cloud storage.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT ALERTED BY AEJAZ'S WIFE**  
The case came to light when Aejaaz's wife provided law enforcement with concerning materials, prompting the Oakland County Sheriff's Office to

execute several search warrants at his Rochester Hills home in Michigan.

Before this, Aejaaz had no known criminal history. On August 13, Aejaaz was formally charged with one count of child sexually abusive activity, four counts of capturing images of unclothed persons, and five counts of using a computer to commit a crime.

Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard stated that the magnitude of Aejaaz's offences is so vast that it could take months to fully investigate the extent of his crimes.

"The victimisation is so broad and the perversion so great, we're just beginning to wrap our arms around it," Bouchard said. He compared the scale of Aejaaz's criminal activities to those of Larry Nasser, the former sports doctor convicted of sexually abusing numerous young women, according to Fox News.

## BOOK REVIEW

# Perceptions About Muslims In New India

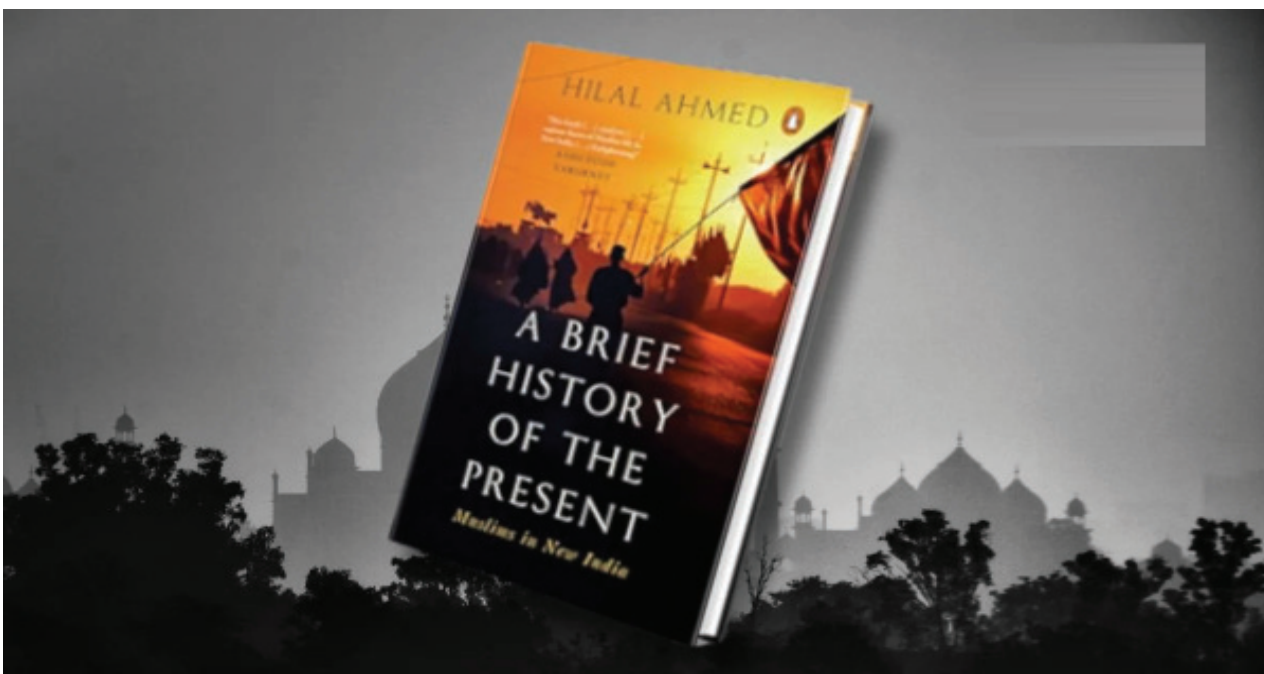
By Mayank Mishra, Marya Shakil

We, the reviewers, have faced this observation often enough over the years. Implicit in this statement is an assumption about what constitutes a 'Bihari'. He (mostly 'he' and rarely 'she') has to be wild, uneducated, ill-mannered, least likely to be law-abiding, in constant pursuit of shortcuts, and forever wedded to the idea of jugaad.

While the observation might come as a compliment, it distresses us nonetheless. Being born and brought up in Bihar during a time of great political and social transformation, we rarely came across any fellow Bihari who fit this assumed definition. Yet, the assumption has persisted for years, in Delhi and elsewhere in India. Having interacted with countless Biharis, we know - to use Hilal Ahmed's distinction between discursive and substantive aspects of an identity - that a whole host of factors contribute to the making of a Bihari. An imagined discourse is an additional burden for every Bihari to deal with. The factors contributing to the making of a Bihari include caste, religion, region, educational background, place of residence, and many others.

### Who Are Indian Muslims?

The same assumption versus reality rule applies when describing a group of nearly 20 crore people known as Indian Muslims. Hilal Ahmed writes, "History of the present is perhaps a provocative title, especially when it is employed in relation to Muslims of India. It is a well-known fact that Islam is the second-largest Indian religion, and Muslims constitute almost 14% of the country's population. This 'community of believers' is highly diversified—they are divided on caste, class, region, and even sub-religious lines." Yet, as he further notes, "Their classification as a religious minority in purely statistical terms, the description of medieval Indian history as Islamic rule, and the media debates around Islamic jihad and terrorism produce a simple and undifferentiated image of a homogeneous Muslim community." Members of the community are perceived to have identical views on all issues under the sun, are



seen as voting strategically, and are associated with multiple imagined jihads. And the list goes on.

### Muslim 'Politophobia'

When such widespread diversity is glossed over and assumptions are made based on stray events - fuelled by a heavy dose of "global anti-Islamism" and "anti-Muslim communalism in the Indian context" - you have a situation that Hilal Ahmed describes as 'Muslim politicophobia'. This leads to political engagement with the community being shunned, accusations such as population jihad (got to know this for the first time while reading the book) being levelled against them, and their representation in various fora being discouraged.

Increased religiosity in recent years, with public displays of aspects of religion that were previously confined to the private domain, has further complicated the situation on the ground.

### No Different From Other Groups

Despite these challenges, members of the community, the author argues, continue to take part in political processes to secure tangible benefits as stakeholders. "They behave like consumers/clients and respond to

the welfare packages offered by political parties," he writes. And in this sense, Muslims are no different from other social groups. What are the ways then to fight this Muslim politicophobia? Is it all doom and gloom as far as Muslim issues are concerned in contemporary India? We couldn't agree more with the author's conclusion.

He says, "The fight against anti-Muslimism cannot be separated from the wider struggle for social justice and economic equality.... One that allows individuals like me to critique economic injustice and social inequalities while adhering to my conception of a liberative Islam."

The book is a refreshing take on New India and all that it represents. There is no bitterness, there is no blame game. It is a foremost social scientist's take on the struggles and triumphs of Muslims in everyday life - their political participation, their survival strategies against odds, their dialogue with modernity and liberalism, and their engagement with what is called Muslim heritage.



# Malaysian PM on Zakir Naik's extradition: Open to any evidence from India



(News Agency)-In an exclusive interview with India Today, Anwar Ibrahim spoke on the extradition of Zakir Naik, the Rohingya migrant issue as well as Kashmir. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has said that he was "open to any evidence" from India regarding its request for the extradition of controversial Islamic preacher Zakir Naik. In an exclusive interview with India Today, Anwar Ibrahim, however, stressed that Naik hadn't said anything controversial against India in Malaysia. "As long as Zakir Naik does not create problems or threatens security, we will let

this matter rest. But we are open to any evidence that India gives to extradite him under law," Ibrahim, who is visiting India for the first time after becoming PM in 2022, said. The Malaysian PM said External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had raised the extradition issue of Zakir Naik during their meeting. Zakir Naik, who was born in Mumbai, fled India in 2016 amid charges of spreading hatred and money laundering. The Islamic preacher was granted permanent residency in Malaysia by the previous Mahathir Mohamed government, much to India's dismay. His Islamic Research

Foundation (IRF) has been banned in India. ON KASHMIR, ROHINGYA MIGRANTS The Malaysian PM refused to wade into the Kashmir issue, saying it was a "purely domestic issue" of India. "We have not taken an open position on Kashmir. We need peace and security, and we need to reduce tensions," he said. The remark comes after tensions soared between the two nations following former Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohamed's criticism over India's move to scrap Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir and the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). However, Anwar Ibrahim expressed concern over the well-being of religious and ethnic minorities in India. "Like India has the right to question Malaysia, so do we on concerns over religious and ethnic minorities," he said. The Malaysian premier, who held a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, invited him to the ASEAN Summit next year in Kuala Lumpur. PM Modi has accepted the invitation. During the meeting, India and Malaysia elevated their ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership and signed eight agreements.

## Pakistan man charged with cybercrime linked to riots in Britain

LAHORE (News Agency)- - Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has charged a local man with cybercrime offences for spreading fake online information which fuelled riots in Britain, it said in a statement on Wednesday. The riots began after false information circulated online wrongly blaming an Islamist migrant for the killing of three young girls in a knife attack in the northern English town of Southport in late July. Farhan Asif, who ran a web publication, was arrested in eastern Pakistani city of Lahore, a statement from the FIA said. It said Asif posted an article on his X social media account which said that the attacker was a Muslim immigrant, and also shared pictures of the killings. Having picked up the fake content from another X account, he was found to be involved in "disseminating the information using his own Twitter (X) account Channel3NOwnnews with the intent to glorify the incident about the arrest of a Muslim Asylum seeker by police in the stabbing incident in Southport, England and created a sense of fear, panic, insecurity," the FIA said. The FIA said that it had been established that the account that spread the fake news belonged to Asif, who has also admitted to having passed on the fake information to a foreign publication as well.

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# Asamai Mandir's Annual Diwali Mela

## OCTOBER 13th 2024

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# Street battle over, Khaleda Zia, son use film, cartoon in battle of perception

(News Agency)-With the dramatic departure of Bangladesh's PM Sheikh Hasina, the top spot is up for grabs. And so is the title of 'mother.' Hasina, fondly hailed as the 'mother of humanity', has left both the political throne and the maternal mantle vacant, inviting another 'mother' to step in and fill the void. Hasina's rival, Begum Khaleda Zia, the supremo of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), seems poised to reclaim both, the top spot and that of the 'mother'. Not as mother of humanity, but mother of democracy. As many say, timing is everything in the art of a comeback. The BNP is expected to leverage the political vacuum, following the anti-quota wave that resulted in Sheikh Hasina's ouster.

## CINEMATIC CROWNING OF KHALEDA ZIA AS MOTHER OF DEMOCRACY

However, with Khaleda's deteriorating health and advancing age, returning to the Prime Minister's seat might be a distant dream. Yet, being labelled as the 'Mother of Democracy' appears more attainable. A film titled 'Mother of Democracy' is on cards and filmmaker MK Zaman is set to direct the film. With the former PM's permission secured, the script finalised, and the title officially registered, pre-



production is now in full swing, reports Dhaka-based Daily Star.

It will showcase Khaleda Zia's life, and her contributions to democracy in Bangladesh. The film is expected to portray Khaleda Zia as a champion of democratic principles and a strong leader who has faced numerous challenges throughout her political career. "People need to watch this film to understand and learn about the true democracy in Bangladesh," filmmaker MK Zaman told Kaler Kantho, another local newspaper. This cinematic tribute is seen as part of a

broader effort to project Khaleda Zia's party, the BNP, and her son, Tarique Rahman, as symbols of democracy in the country facing political instability and chaos. This after Hasina's 15-year authoritarian rule. With Khaleda Zia turning 79 and possibly stepping back, her son Tarique Rahman is poised to become the new face of the BNP, if and when the military-backed interim government conducts elections to the Jatiya Sangsad. TARIQUE RAHMAN WELCOMES CARTOONS AS EXPRESSION

With the 'mother' spot sorted, her son and

BNP's acting chair, Tarique Rahman, is at it too. Having deposed Hasina, "the autocratic PM", 56-year-old Tarique Rahman is all in for upholding freedom of expression.

Days ago, he shared a cartoon of him on social media by cartoonist Mehedi Haque and expressed his satisfaction with the restored freedom after Hasina's expulsion on August 5.

"I am deeply gratified that the freedom to draw political cartoons has been restored in Bangladesh," Rahman wrote on his X on August 11.

He did not let the opportunity go to slam Hasina and her 15-year rule. "It clearly highlights the difference between a fascist regime and a democratic party. I'm certain that if this cartoonist had drawn something about Hasina, Joy, or Mujib, they would have faced jail time," added Rahman on the X post. London where he has been in exile since 2008. Since then, the acting BNP chairperson has used video calls and online meetings to coordinate party functioning and mobilise people to support them. Before being exiled in London, Rahman was locked up by the Sheikh Hasina administration after being convicted in a handful of cases.

## Sheikh Hasina's extended stay in India raises diplomatic challenges amid uncertainty

(News Agency)-Sheikh Hasina, the former Prime Minister of Bangladesh, has been in India since August 5, seeking refuge amid escalating violence and threats to her life in Bangladesh. After spending a fortnight in India, Hasina's situation remains precarious as she continues to seek asylum in the UK or

extradition. Despite this, experts note that Bangladesh has yet to make a formal extradition request, and even if one is made, India is not obligated to comply. India faces a delicate situation, navigating the balance between international diplomatic relations and the humanitarian aspects of Hasina's stay.



The timeline of her stay in India remains uncertain, leaving many questions unanswered regarding the future of Indo-Bangladesh relations. In a speech in Dhaka, BNP General Secretary Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir called for the extradition of ousted former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Bangladesh, demanding that she face trial. Addressing India directly, he stated, "It is

another European country, but so far, no nation has granted her clearance.

India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar earlier confirmed in Parliament that Sheikh Hasina is currently in India and required assistance. However, her prolonged stay poses potential diplomatic complications for India, especially as Bangladesh has begun to press for her

our call to you that you should hand her over to the Government of Bangladesh in a legal way. The people of this country have given the decision for her trial, let her face the trial".

According to reports, Mirza Fakhrul also accused Sheikh Hasina of orchestrating plots from her stay in India to undermine the ongoing revolution in Bangladesh.

## Bangladesh unrest hits hospitality sector, majority hotels see empty rooms

(News Agency)-The recent anti-government protests that rocked Bangladesh for over a month have hit the hospitality sector hard in the capital Dhaka with the majority of rooms at several luxury and economy hotels here going empty in the aftermath of the unrest.

Dhaka is both the political and

"The situation is now a bit better, but still far from normal in our sector as the majority of the rooms are still empty. While a certain section of business travellers are still coming, after the unrest in the country, the number of guests occupying rooms has dramatically shrunk," a senior manager in the sales department of a luxury hotel told PTI on the condition of anonymity. This five-star hotel, operating under the current brand name for a year-and-a-half, is located in a towering building near the Gulshan enclave — an affluent area which also houses several diplomatic missions of foreign countries in Bangladesh.



financial capital of Bangladesh and home to several landmark commercial properties managed by international hotel chains which cater largely to business travellers. PTI spoke to front office employees, managers and restaurant staff at some of the luxury chains as well as economy hotels located in plush areas, and they all painted a sombre picture of the current condition of the hospitality sector in Dhaka.

"We have 150 rooms of different categories — standard, premium, junior suite and executive suite. Currently, about 35 rooms are occupied. The numbers are slowly increasing," the senior manager said.

He recalled the situation in the area on August 4-5 when the unrest had reached its peak, leading to the ouster of embattled Bangladeshi leader Sheikh Hasina as the prime minister, plunging the country into a state of crisis.

# Blinken ends latest Mideast visit without a cease-fire, warning 'time is of the essence'

(News Agency)- U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken ended his ninth visit to the Middle East since the war in Gaza began without securing any major breakthrough for a cease-fire deal, warning on Tuesday that "time is of the essence" even as Hamas and Israel signaled that challenges remain.

After meetings in fellow mediating countries Egypt and Qatar, Blinken said that because Israel has accepted a proposal to bridge gaps with the militant group, the focus turns to doing everything possible to "get Hamas on board" and ensure both sides agree to key details on implementation.

"Our message is simple. It's clear and it's urgent," he told reporters before leaving Qatar. "We need to get a cease-fire and hostage agreement over the finish line, and we need to do it now. Time is of the essence."

There has been added urgency after the recent targeted killings of militant leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah in Iran and Lebanon, both attributed to Israel, and vows of retaliation that have sparked fears of a wider regional war. Few details have been released about the so-called bridging proposal put forth by the U.S., Egypt and Qatar. Blinken said it is "very clear on the schedule and the locations of (Israeli military) withdrawals from Gaza." Hamas



earlier Tuesday called the latest proposal a reversal of what it had agreed to, accusing the U.S. of acquiescing to new conditions from Israel. There was no immediate U.S. response to that.

Blinken's comments on ending his latest Israel-Hamas peace mission were notably bare of the optimism that Biden administration officials expressed going into his trip, and earlier.

The upbeat tone through much of the spring and summer — with U.S. officials at times describing a cease-fire and hostage deal as nearer than ever — reflected necessary

messaging, at least in part, said Jonathan Panikoff, director of the Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative at the Atlantic Council's Middle East Program. "If they don't project optimism then it won't create ... even the potential for sufficient momentum to keep things going," Panikoff said.

Americans have little alternative to continuing to push Israel and Hamas to agree to a negotiated end to fighting, but it's fundamentally about Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, who helped mastermind the Oct. 7 attacks, Panikoff

said. And they are "the two people that have been, frankly, most skeptical from the beginning" about making peace.

Netanyahu, meanwhile, met with right-wing groups of families of fallen soldiers and hostages in Gaza. The groups, which oppose a cease-fire deal, said he told them Israel will not abandon two strategic corridors in Gaza whose control has been an obstacle in the talks. Netanyahu's office did not comment on their account.

A senior U.S. official rejected as "totally untrue" that Netanyahu had told Blinken that Israel would never leave the Philadelphia and Netzarim corridors. Such statements are "not constructive to getting a cease-fire deal across the finish line," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss Blinken's private diplomatic talks. Blinken's meetings in Egypt, which borders Gaza, and in Qatar, which hosts some Hamas leaders in exile, came a day after he met Netanyahu. Wide gaps appeared to remain between Israel and Hamas, though angry statements often serve as pressure tactics during negotiations. Both men have seen their political standing improve at home, as Israelis turn their attention from the war in Gaza to a threatened wider conflict with Iran and Hezbollah, and as Hamas further consolidates Sinwar's leadership of the group.

## Trump campaigns to 'make America safe again' as Democratic convention zeroes in on his felony record

(News Agency)- Former President Donald Trump pledged Tuesday to "Make America Safe Again" while campaigning in Michigan as the Democrats who gathered in Chicago to nominate Kamala Harris branded him a career criminal.

As part of a battleground campaign swing designed to counter the Democratic National Convention, Trump stood alongside sheriff's deputies in the city of Howell and labeled Harris, a former San Francisco district attorney and California attorney general, as the "ringleader" of a "Marxist attack on law enforcement" across the country. "Kamala Harris will deliver crime, chaos, destruction and death," Trump said in one of many generalizations about an America under Harris. "You'll see levels of crime that you've never seen before. ... I will deliver law, order, safety and peace."

Trump has sought in recent weeks to blunt the enthusiasm that Harris has attracted since President Joe Biden ended his reelection campaign and endorsed her. That has involved both dark predictions about what electing Harris would mean for



the country and efforts by Trump's advisers to set up events where he can try to draw specific policy contrasts. On Tuesday in Michigan, the subject was crime and public safety.

"Our policemen and women have the backs of law-abiding citizens every day," Trump said. "When we go back to the White House, you're going to see support the likes of which you haven't seen, certainly in four years." In excerpts released before his speech, Trump's campaign also said he would call for the death penalty for child rapists and child traffickers; he did not

mention that during his remarks.

A campaign official who was not authorized to speak publicly said after Trump's appearance that the former president will make those additional formal policy announcements after the Democratic convention, when the campaign expects they can get more attention. Trump's event Tuesday was his latest billed as focused on a specific issue. But on these occasions, Trump has spent considerable time attacking Harris personally and taking shots at Biden, and the same was true after their appearances Monday at the

Democratic convention.

"I watched last night in amazement as they tried to pretend everything was great," Trump said, singling out inflation and the U.S.-Mexico border as topics Democrats glossed over. "We have a fool as president," he said of Biden.

Trump presented a bleak portrait of life in the U.S. and the threat of a Harris presidency, though he was short on specifics and heavy on hyperbole.

"It's just insane," Trump said. "You can't walk across the street to get a loaf of bread. You get shot, you get mugged, you get raped, you get whatever it may be. And you've seen it, and I've seen it, and it's time for a change."

Trump making such claims, surrounded by supportive law enforcement officers, stood in stark contrast to the Democrats' convention. Speaker after speaker found ways Monday night in Chicago to remind Americans that Trump is the first former president ever convicted of felony crimes, has been found civilly liable for sexual assault, and still faces multiple indictments, including for his efforts to overturn his 2020 defeat to Biden.

# Does an Indian diet need fibre supplements?

An array of research-backed benefits of a high-fibre diet has also led wellness companies to add another product to their shelves – fibre supplements. But do Indians need these supplements?

Dietary fibre – you need it for a healthy gut, maintaining weight, controlling blood sugar levels, keeping the heart healthy, and keeping constipation woes at bay. Found in legumes, whole grains, and a variety of fruits and vegetables, fibre is an essential part of a balanced diet.

It is basically a type of carbohydrate that our digestive system cannot break down. It keeps us full for longer as it slows the movement of food in the digestive tract and also slows down the quick absorption of sugar and hence reduces blood sugar spikes. Another important thing that fibre does is bulk up the stool and help it pass through the intestines more easily, reducing constipation. An array of research-backed benefits of a high-fibre diet has also led wellness companies to add another product to their shelves – fibre supplements. Available in the forms of powder, husks, and tablets, these supplements claim to boost the daily fibre consumption that might be compromised owing to several reasons like traditional diets and the craze for processed foods. According to ICMR's Dietary Guidelines, almost 40 per cent of a day's food should be vegetables (30 per cent)

and fruits (10 per cent). However, in eastern regions like West Bengal and Odisha, low-fibre foods such as rice and seafood dominate the traditional diet. It's no surprise that this region leads the market for Isabgol (psyllium husk), a type of dietary fibre commonly used to relieve constipation, according to an IMARC report - much like its dominance in the Gelusil market.

"In arid regions like Rajasthan, the limited variety of fresh produce can reduce fibre intake from fruits and vegetables. Diets in these areas may rely more on grains and legumes, which can affect fibre content depending on how they are prepared. In contrast, tropical regions like Kerala have a rich variety of fruits, vegetables, and legumes, leading to higher fibre intake. However, the predominant use of rice may lower fibre intake from grains," says Dr Rohini Patil, MBBS, nutritionist and founder of Nutracy Lifestyle, Pune.

She adds, however, that it can all be sorted with a mindful approach to meal planning. In May 2023, a study supported by the Protein Foods and Nutrition Development Association of India (PFNDAI) revealed that 69 per cent of Indians consume less



fibre than their recommended daily allowance. "Low fibre intake can lead to elevated cholesterol levels, digestive issues, and a higher risk of chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease. To support overall health, it's crucial to incorporate more fibre-rich foods into the diet, such as fresh fruits, legumes, and whole grains," says Parmeet Kaur, Head Dietician, Marengo Asia Hospitals, Gurugram. But, does an Indian diet need fibre supplements?

With a variety of local foods available across the country, diet and nutrition experts say that an Indian diet high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and

legumes usually provides enough fibre. But it can go wrong if one doesn't follow the concept of a balanced diet or heavily relies on processed foods.

"A trend towards processed foods due to modern lifestyle changes has decreased the consumption of natural fibre," says Parmeet Kaur.

Lovneet Batra, a Delhi-based nutritionist, believes that Indian diets across all regions are rich in fibre as they contain whole grains and vegetables, but it is the urban Indian diets that require fibre supplements. "They (urban Indian diets) often lack vegetables, fruits, and whole grains," says Batra.

## Eyeing that doughnut? What our food cravings indicate

Finding the underlying reasons for cravings is essential to strike a healthy relationship with food



An intense and unavoidable desire for a specific food is something we all can relate to. There are days when we just want to have a plate full of French fries or doughnuts or a large tub of ice-cream. This despite being fully aware that we are giving in to our cravings and nothing else.

Cravings can be a complex interplay of nutrient deficiencies, environmental factors, emotional needs and specific triggers, but not always limited to these factors. We all have a unique relationship with food, and different reasons can trigger our cravings. Sometimes it's around specific tastes, such as sweet or savoury, and at other

times it's from emotions, environmental changes and stress. Cravings vary among women, men and children due to differences in hormonal fluctuations, psychological factors and lifestyle habits. "Every craving indicates a body response, and addressing it involves understanding what the body might be lacking or what emotional needs might be unmet," says Miten Kakaiya, fitness coach and founder of Miten Says Fitness, an online fitness coaching platform. By understanding what your cravings are indicating, you can address the underlying health issues and improve your overall wellbeing. Cravings

can be common but their intensity and frequency different due to individual relationships with food. "Women crave more for sweets and carbs, men for savoury and protein-rich foods, and children for sweet and salty foods," explains Kakaiya. Cravings such as for chocolates, salty chips, sugary drinks or even red meat are mostly associated with nutritional deficiencies of some minerals or vitamins. Then, food often becomes a comfort factor, connected to feelings of happiness, sadness and anxiety. "Chocolates are high in magnesium, and craving for it could indicate a deficiency in this mineral. The desire for salty food items, such as chips and wafers, might indicate a possible sodium or chloride deficiency. The need for these electrolytes can increase after sweating heavily or dehydration," observes Kakaiya. Sometimes when you crave for just a fruit juice or even a piece of cake, it could be for the sugar in it. Sugar cravings have been linked to the need for quick

energy or deficiency in chromium, tryptophan or serotonin. At times, the weather triggers cravings, such as for warm soups or fritters in winter or for a refreshing drink in summer.

It's important to address food cravings and find healthier alternatives; once you start understanding the root cause, it gets easy to find solutions. The key is to start by journaling your cravings and taking out time to understand what could have triggered it.

Following a balanced and nutritional diet, by including more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, lentils, nuts and seeds, staying hydrated by drinking at least 8-10 glasses of water daily, eating at regular intervals and not skipping meals, and limiting exposure to unhealthy food could be some possible answers to cravings. Avoiding stocking up on tempting snacks can control impulsive eating while being mindful of portion sizes can help resist the temptation to indulge in unhealthy foods.

# Piyush Goyal warns e-commerce boom may turn India into 'nation of couch potatoes'

Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Piyush Goyal, expressed his concerns about the rapid growth of e-commerce and online shopping in India, warning that it could transform the country into 'a nation of couch potatoes.'

"We will land up becoming a country of couch potatoes, watching OTT and having food at home every day," said Piyush Goyal. He also said the growth of e-commerce should be seen as a "matter of concern" rather than a source of pride. Speaking at an event on Wednesday, where a report on the 'Net Impact of E-Commerce on Employment and Consumer Welfare in India' was released, Goyal highlighted the potential social disruptions that could arise from the booming e-commerce sector.

"Are we going to cause huge, social disruption with this massive growth of e-commerce? I don't see it as a matter of pride that half our market may become part of the e-commerce network 10 years from



now; it is a matter of concern," Goyal said.

He mentioned the need for a well-considered approach to the role of e-commerce in India and acknowledged that while e-commerce has a place in the economy, its impact should be carefully managed.

"E-commerce has a role, but we have to think carefully about what that role is and how it can be more organised," Goyal said.

The Union Minister also expressed concerns about the pricing strategies adopted by some e-commerce firms, asking, "Is

predatory pricing policy good for the country?"

Goyal pointed out that e-commerce is particularly affecting small retailers who rely on high-value, high-margin products to survive. He warned that the rapid growth of e-commerce could eat into the business of these small retailers, potentially driving them out of the market.

While acknowledging that e-commerce is here to stay, Goyal highlighted the importance of assessing its broader impact on the economy.

He said that only a small portion of

the population currently uses online platforms to buy essentials like food and groceries, suggesting that the sector does not dominate every aspect of retail.

Goyal's concerns extend to the 100 million small retailers across India who serve the market. He highlighted the rapid growth rate of 27% per year in the e-commerce sector, warning that this could lead to significant disruptions for these small businesses. In this context, he expressed his support for the offline retail sector. The minister also questioned the excitement surrounding Amazon's announcement of a billion-dollar investment in India. He urged a closer examination of what such investments actually mean for the Indian economy. "When Amazon says we are going to invest a billion dollars in India and we celebrate, we forget the underlying story that this billion dollars is not coming for any great service or investment to support the Indian economy," he said.

Goyal pointed out that Amazon reported a billion-dollar loss on its balance sheet that year, suggesting that such losses might be linked to predatory pricing practices.

He questioned the sustainability of such business models, asking, "If you make Rs 6,000 crore loss a year, doesn't it sound like predatory pricing to you? They are, after all, an e-commerce platform, and they are not legally allowed to do B2C. However, the reality is all of you buy on these platforms. How are they doing it? Should it not be a matter of concern for us?"

Goyal also expressed concern over the decline of small mobile stores, which have been outcompeted by larger retailers.

"How many mobile stores do you see now on the corner? And how many were there 10 years ago? Where are those mobile stores? Will only Apple or the large retail sell mobile phones and their accessories?" he asked, highlighting the challenges faced by small retailers in the current market environment.

## Starbucks' new CEO won't relocate, will fly 1,600 km on private jet daily to work

Starbucks' new CEO Brian Niccol will be making an exceptional daily commute to his new office. Niccol, who lives in California, will travel 1,600 kilometres every day to Starbucks' headquarters in Seattle.

According to his employment agreement, Niccol will use a corporate jet for this daily journey. Despite the distance, he is expected to work from Starbucks' Seattle office at least three days a week, in line with the company's hybrid work policy, which has been in effect since 2023. Niccol, aged 50, will receive an annual base salary of \$1.6 million. Additionally, he is eligible for a cash bonus ranging from \$3.6 million to \$7.2 million, depending on his performance. He will also have the opportunity to earn up to \$23 million



in annual equity awards. This commuting arrangement is not new for Niccol. When he was CEO of Chipotle in 2018, he arranged a similar deal. Chipotle, which was headquartered in Colorado, moved its headquarters to California just three months after Niccol took on the role. A Starbucks spokesperson said, "Brian's primary office and a majority of his time will be spent in our Seattle Support Center or out visiting partners

and customers in our stores, roasteries, roasting facilities and offices around the world. His schedule will exceed the hybrid work guidelines and workplace expectations we have for all partners."

Such flexible work terms are often negotiated by high-ranking executives who have significant negotiating power.

For instance, Hillary Super, the CEO of Rihanna's lingerie brand Fenty x Savage, was granted a similar arrangement, allowing her to work from New York City instead of Victoria's Secret's headquarters near Columbus, Ohio.

However, not all CEOs have such leeway. Amazon's Andy Jassy and JPMorgan Chase's Jamie Dimon are actively advocating for a return to in-office work.

The reasons behind Niccol's unique arrangement are linked to Starbucks' recent performance. Sales in the company's largest markets, the US and China, have declined this year under the leadership of current CEO Laxman Narasimhan. Niccol's appointment comes with high expectations, given his impressive track record of revitalising companies. Under his leadership at Chipotle, the company's stock reportedly increased by 773%.

## 'We handle India's common man's money': Ola CEO after IPO success

Ola CEO Bhavish Aggarwal acknowledged the weight of responsibility that comes with managing public funds, especially after the company's recent IPO success. Speaking at the Business Today India@100 event, Aggarwal highlighted the importance of

At the event, where the topic was "The Rise of AI: Will India Board the Bus?", Aggarwal shared insights into his journey with the company and its future plans.

He reflected on Ola's evolution from a ride-hailing service to a diverse group of companies. He referred to Ola Cabs as his "pehla pyaar" (first love), showing his deep emotional connection to the business.

During a conversation with Sourav Majumdar, Editor of Business Today, and Aayush Ailawadi,



Technology Editor at Business Today, Aggarwal discussed how the various arms of Ola will work together to achieve their broader goals. He pointed out that Ola has transformed from just a ride-hailing service to a group of companies, each with a distinct vision. Despite his strong attachment to Ola Cabs, he explained that the business's natural growth led to new ventures like Ola Electric, which aims to position India as a leader in the global electric vehicle (EV) industry.

being cautious with the money entrusted to them by the common people of India. "We are handling India's common man's money," he said, highlighting that this new phase brings added scrutiny and requires a careful balance between immediate results and long-term strategies. He mentioned that the expectations of the public market have made him more aware of the need to ensure that Ola's decisions provide lasting value.

# Jennifer Lopez files for divorce from Ben Affleck after 2 years of marriage

After a relationship that spanned two decades, two engagements, two weddings and headlines too numerous to count, Jennifer Lopez has filed for divorce from Ben Affleck.

The filing Tuesday in Los Angeles brought to an apparent end a celebrity coupling — or at least the second installment of it — that dazzled from the very heights of the pop culture firmament and emblazoned countless tabloid covers. The pair became known, even before such power-couple portmanteaus were ubiquitous, as “Bennifer.”

Court records showed Lopez filed the petition Tuesday in Los Angeles Superior Court. The news was first reported by the TMZ website. TMZ reported further that Lopez listed the date of separation as April 26, 2024. It added that she did not mention any prenuptial agreement.

Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck's



marriage

After meeting, falling in love and getting engaged in the early 2000s — and starring together in 2003's infamous

“Gigli” and 2004's “Jersey Girl” — the couple parted ways, blaming in part the pressure of the public eye. But to the delight of many and perhaps the

skepticism of others, they reunited two decades later and married — twice — in 2022.

“Love is beautiful. Love is kind. And it turns out love is patient. Twenty years patient,” wrote Lopez, announcing their first, quickie Las Vegas wedding that July, and signing off as Jennifer Lynn Affleck.

“Stick around long enough and maybe you'll find the best moment of your life in a drive through in Las Vegas at 12:30 in the morning in the tunnel of love drive through with your kids and the one you'll spend forever with,” she wrote in her newsletter.

The couple had flown to Las Vegas, lined up with their license with four other couples and were wed just after midnight at A Little White Wedding Chapel, where Lopez said a Bluetooth speaker played their brief march down the aisle. She called it the best night of the couple's lives.

## Sanya Malhotra in tears as she gets standing ovation at 'Mrs' screening in Melbourne

Sanya Malhotra was in tears after she received a standing ovation at the screening of her film 'Mrs' at the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne. A video of the same was shared by the actor herself on her Instagram handle.

In a video, Sanya Malhotra was visibly moved as the audience stood up and applauded the film, especially her performance. After the premiere, the actor shared details about her preparation for the role of Richa in 'Mrs.' She said she met several women and took the help of a very close friend, who had similar experiences as shown in the film. Sanya said, “She (Her friend) graciously shared her therapy notes, which I used to read almost every day and used to feel anger and sadness both, as I was very close to her. It pains me to know that some women are going through this, have accepted it and have given up on their dreams, and they want.” Sanya Malhotra won the Best Actress award for her role in 'Mrs' at the New York Indian Film Festival 2024. The film is a remake of the Malayalam film, 'The Great Indian Kitchen', which revolves around Sanya's character who navigates the challenges and expectations imposed by society and her marital life. It is directed by Arati Kadav.

Meanwhile, Sanya Malhotra is preparing for the films 'Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari' and 'Thug Life.' She also has an upcoming untitled film with director Anurag Kashyap.



# Alien: Romulus

Movie Review (By Max Aman Thind)

For decades, the epic blockbuster franchise "Alien" has permeated science fiction's pop-culture scene. With the latest addition, Romulus has captivated audiences with its new-generation pivot, still-familiar tropes paired with lovely twists peppered throughout. The franchise had been so prevalent in society that if I trace back in my memory to such an extent, I could still see the enemy's face, Arnold, on the big screen and jungle everywhere. One would be hard-pressed to find someone who did not know of the franchise, save for tribes we aren't allowed to contact: everyone knows about the series. And while I remember the receipt of Prometheus after its release was less than anticipated, ultimately, the series has rekindled many's love and interest in the franchise.

Now, what does the saying "New-generation pivot" even mean? While the series has been out for quite some time, the actors on the screen previously

had no commonality with today's generation. Romulus likely acted as the studio's opportunity to intrigue a fresh crowd of moviegoers and the likes into its franchise. Without spoiling the movie, the characters' familiarity and simultaneous divergence from familiar tropes enabled a sympathetic note within its viewers. Notably, the familial relations of the brother-in-crisis and well-meaning sister, combined with the overall atmosphere of the "Company," served as a refreshing change from the same tried and true methods of endearing audiences. If you have not seen it on the big screen yet, I suggest you change that. The electric change from quiet to loud in the theatre reverberated throughout our bodies. Many, figuratively and near-literally, had jumped out of their chairs at specific points. Check it out, and let us know if you would appreciate more reviews of this nature.



## Priyanka Chopra's 'very special' Marathi film 'Paani' is set to release on October 18

Actress-producer Priyanka Chopra Jonas's production "Paani" is all set to hit the big screen on October 18. Priyanka took to Instagram, where she shared the motion poster of the film and captioned it: "This is very very special. Our Marathi feature film 'Paani' is all set to release theatrically on 18th October. Rajshri Entertainment and Purple Pebble Pictures Presents 'Paani' in association with Kothare Vision Pvt Ltd."

The drama film is Adinath Kothare and tells the story of an ordinary man living in a Nagderwadi, a village in

Nanded, plagued with drought. The film traces his journey towards making the village independent of water along with facing hiccups on his way. The film is produced by Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Madhu Chopra under the banner of Purple Pebble Pictures, which was founded in 2015. It stars Subodh Bhawe and Kishore Kadam, with Addinath Kothare and Rucha Vaidya. Released in 2019, it was feted with the National Film Awards for Best Film on Environment Conservation.

On the film front, Priyanka has

wrapped up her upcoming film "The Bluff" and even shared a glimpse from her last day on set. She recently took to her Instagram stories to share some moments from her last day of filming. The actress also shared pictures from the wrap-up party of the film. Directed by Frank E. Flowers, the swashbuckler drama film also stars Karl Urban, Ismael Cruz Cordova, Safia Oakley-Green, and Vedanten Naidoo. Shot in the picturesque locales of Australia, "The Bluff" is set in the Caribbean Islands during the 19th century, where Priyanka stars as a former-pirate who protects her family when her past catches up with her. She had also shared that she has started prepping for the second season of the spy action thriller "Citadel." Created by Josh Appelbaum, Bryan Oh, and David Weil, with the Russo brothers as executive producers, the first season of "Citadel" also stars Richard Madden. The Indian adaptation titled "Citadel: Honey Bunny" stars Varun Dhawan and Samantha Ruth Prabhu. It will premiere on November 7.



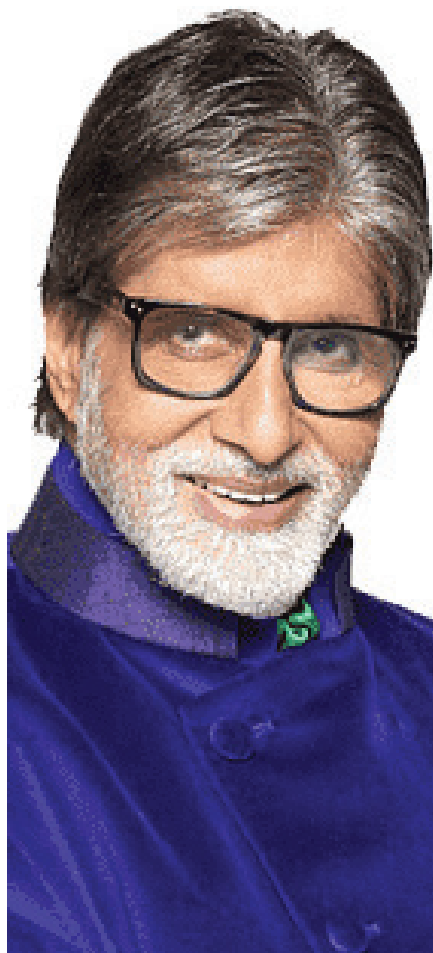
## When Salman Khan gave his co-star Bhumika Chawala valuable tips about industry

A video of actress Bhumika Chawla, who was last seen in the Hindi movie 'Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan', has resurfaced in which she was seen sharing her experience of shooting with Bollywood superstar Salman Khan for 'Tere Naam'. The archival video shared by Lehren, shows the actress talking about her trajectory, and how she had worked in Tamil and Telugu films before making her foray into the Hindi cinema. She



says, "Before 'Tere Naam', I had already done a few south projects in Tamil and Telugu. I have worked with producer Mr. Sunil Manchanda long back in ad films. Satish ji (Satish Kaushik) saw my film 'Khushi' and my performance and they got in touch with me and asked if you would like to work in 'Tere Naam' and I said of course, and it all just happened so organically and rest you know is a history". 'Tere Naam' is a remake of the Tamil film 'Sethu'.

# Amitabh Bachchan reveals how much he scored in BSc



Megastar Amitabh Bachchan has revealed how much he scored in BSc after failing it once. He also said that he realised his mistake after attending one lecture. Amitabh, who is a graduate from Kirori Mal College at the University of Delhi, revealed on "Kaun Banega Crorepati 16" that he only scored 42 percent. "BSc. kar liya hum bhi bina jaane ki kya hota Bsc. Science main ache number aaye toh hum apply kardiye. (I did BSc. without knowing what it was. I scored well in Science and hence applied for it.)" The thespian shared that in the first lecture he understood that

he made a mistake. "10 saal main humne seekha tha science main scope hai woh 45 minutes main khatam kardiya. (I had always heard that there is scope in science. In just 45 it changed everything)" He revealed that he failed the first time. "Paheli baar jab gaye toh fail hogaye... Firse jaakar diya jawaab toh badhi mushkil se 42 percent aaya humara. Bach gaye. (First time I failed... Then when I attempted with great difficulty I scored 42 per cent.)," said Amitabh, who graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1962. It was in 1969, when Amitabh made his film debut as a voice narrator in the National Award-winning film "Bhuvan Shome" by Mrinal Sen. He then featured in the film "Saat Hindustani"

in 1969 as an actor. The 81-year-old was then seen in "Anand", "Parwana", "Reshma Aur Shera", "Bawarchi", "Bombay To Goa", "Deewaar", "Sholay", "Kabhi Kabhie", "Hera Pheri", "Amar Akbar Anthony", "Trishul," "Don," "Muqaddar Ka Sikandar," "Suhaag", "Naseeb," "Laawaris," "Namak Halal," "Mard," "Sharaabi," "Shaan," "Yaarana," "Agneepath". He took a break from acting in the 1990s and then returned with "Mohabbatein", "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham..." "Aankhein", "Baghban", "Khakee," "Bunty Aur Babli," "Cheeni Kum," "Shootout At Lokhandwala," "Paa," "Piku," "Brahm?stra: Part One – Shiva" and his most recent work is in "Kalki 2898 AD."

## Varun Sood calls 'Call Me Bae' co-star Ananya Panday 'great team leader'

Model-actor Varun Sood, who shares screen space with Ananya Panday in her upcoming OTT show 'Call Me Bae', spoke to Media about his admiration for the latter. He also called her, a "great team leader" who brings an infectious energy to every project.



Ananya Panday will make her OTT debut with 'Call Me Bae'. Varun, who will share screen space with her for the first time, was all praise for the actor. Varun said that Ananya strikes a perfect balance between maintaining professionalism and keeping the atmosphere light, making even the most demanding shoots enjoyable. "It was a lot of fun. I think Ananya is a great team

leader because obviously, the show was on her and it is a responsibility. When you have to keep the cast together, the lead is the one who takes that initiative and Ananya did that beautifully. She's really fun, professional and kept the whole cast together. Everybody was looking forward to being on the set the very next day and was just happy being over there. I feel

Ananya had a major role to play in that," Varun told us. Recalling his first meeting with Ananya, Varun said, "We have met at parties, but the first proper meet I had with Ananya was at the reading of 'Call Me Bae'. She was very warm to everybody and because she was very warm to me also, I could crack jokes, make fun of things, and laugh around. It was just the vibe that

broke the ice. She didn't have to say anything much. It's just how she treated everybody and how she treated me was what broke the ice. It wasn't awkward at all, we just had too much fun on the sets." Further talking about his character, Varun shared, "In the series, I just went all out with the character that I am playing. I had experimented so much and it's probably one of the most fun

characters that I've played."

Apart from this, Varun stepped into the boots of a young, aspiring cadet in 'Naam Namak Nishan'. The series follows the journey of young cadets at the prestigious Officers Training Academy in Chennai, exploring themes of brotherhood, love for the nation, and the essence of genuine bonds. Speaking about the series Varun said, "My main factor for taking up this role was that it was very different. I had already finished 'Karma Calling' before this. I also finished 'Call Me Bae'. But when this role came up, it was poles apart from every other role I have done. The fact that I also wanted to join the Army when I was 19-20 years old; if not acting, I would have been in that particular Academy, planning to be an officer." He continued, "My grandfather and my father were in the army. It was like a legacy in my family that everybody joined the Indian Army. But this was a very different role and the fact that I could have been in a uniform and played that part of a cadet was special to me.



# The Taliban's three years in power and what lies ahead

By Vanda Felbab-Brown

Three years on, the Taliban regime remains firmly in power. Its supreme leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, has strengthened and centralized his rule by creating parallel institutions while formulating policies from his tightly-knit Kandahar office. The regime has become more exclusionary, privileging southern Pashtun Talibs. Despite massive economic challenges, including more than 90% of Afghans struggling with poverty and increasing food insecurity, the regime is not at immediate risk of an economic implosion.

Afghanistan's neighbors, as well as China and Russia, are intensifying their engagement with the Taliban regime. But Pakistan remains frustrated with the Taliban's meager actions against the terrorist group Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which has bases in eastern Afghanistan. Despite the Taliban's grave violations of human rights and women's rights, U.S. interests in Afghanistan—including counterterrorism—are for now best



served by maintaining a low-level equilibrium in engagement with the regime.

The Taliban's power and its structures

The Taliban leadership includes dogmatic ideologues such as Haibatullah, as well as relative pragmatists who are more restrained in their desire to implement extreme versions of Sharia and interested in engagement with the West. Yet the pragmatists have failed to moderate the amir's policies and have pulled back from challenging him.

Haibatullah is supported by a praetorian guard of powerful military commanders from Helmand and Kandahar, such as Abdul Qayyum Zakir. To counter rival leaders, such as Sirajuddin Haqqani and Mohammad Yaqub, Haibatullah has appointed his loyalists as deputy bosses across the regime's ministries and agencies.

The Taliban regime refuses to integrate into its structures Afghan warlords, politicians, and most other individuals associated with the defeated Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. It has removed from

office or demoted several non-Pashtun Taliban commanders. To monitor local actors, placate demands for inclusivity in policy decisions, and preserve its adroitness in resolving local disputes, the regime has established local religious ulama councils.

Human rights, such as freedom of expression, have been drastically weakened, with opposition actors and protesters arrested. In its gender apartheid—from the ban on girls' education beyond primary school to restrictions on women's travel and work—Haibatullah's dogma stands out, even among various authoritarian Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries. But Haibatullah is impervious to criticism from Afghan and other Islamic religious scholars, other Taliban leaders, and other countries.

Yet underneath, the implementation of his edicts, such as restrictions on women in public spaces, girls' education, and public executions, has been slow-walked, as local communities and Taliban officials

dislike many of Haibatullah's policies.

The regime's economic viability The shocks of Western sanctions, a profound liquidity crisis, and the collapse of Afghanistan's economic system linked to the Western war machine produced a staggering contraction of Afghan GDP between 2021 and 2023 by 20%-30%. The economy has stabilized but is stagnating. At least 23 million Afghans, over half of the population, need humanitarian support, even as international aid has declined precipitously because of competing global needs, Western distaste for the Taliban's repression, and Russia's and China's lack of interest in providing humanitarian assistance. The Taliban's effectiveness in reducing the immense corruption that characterized the republic boosted tax and revenue income. In 2023, Afghanistan benefited from brisk regional trade, including coal exports to Pakistan and exports of minerals across the region, amounting to \$1.9 billion in Afghan exports. But in 2024, exports shrank substantially.

## PM Modi's Independence Day Speech: A Missed Opportunity to Regain Lost Ground?

By: Pavan K Varma

Since August 15, 1947, when Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru addressed a newly independent nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort, it has become an annual tradition for every prime minister to follow. The entire nation eagerly awaits the PM's address, and for decades, the



speech has been broadcast live across the country. There is no prescribed format for the PM's speech. It can touch on any issue, any theme, and engage with the people on any subject or subjects, depending on the PM's choice. Nor is there a time limit for his speech. For the period that the PM is speaking, the nation is a captive audience, awaiting his or her message to the nation, as a guide, leader and mentor. Many prime ministers of different political parties have addressed the nation on this auspicious day.

Not all have been great speakers. Some, like Deve Gowda from the south, struggled with Hindi; others, such as Dr Manmohan Singh, were giant intellectuals but not mass leaders, and their speeches did not ignite the audience. Indira Gandhi spoke simple Hindi, or Hindustani, and held the attention of her audience. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, one of the greatest orators the country has seen, spoke extempore and effortlessly. Narendra Modi is also a very gifted speaker. His natural eloquence and richness of Hindi vocabulary have been great assets to him as a political leader. He also has an acute sense of knowing the pulse of the people, of responding to their emotional senses, and generally using language as a tool to shape public opinion. Why then was his speech at this year's

Independence Day from the Red Fort so lacklustre? Firstly, in my opinion, it was too long. He spoke for 98 minutes, the longest speech ever given by a PM from the Red Fort. A speech of this length begins to lose impact as the attention spans of the audience are shorter. The sultry, humid and hot weather did not help either. With live TV coverage of the event, the nation could see the audience growing restless—not only among the common people but also among the VIPs.



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# Four Reasons Reading Drives Us Mad - And Why We Still Keep At It

By Rohan Banerjee

To many, reading is a paragon of hobbies. If you take the wide spectrum of leisure activities that humans devote much of their lives to pursue, reading sits snugly in the Goldilocks zone: the sweet spot that defines the perfect avocation. Consider the evidence: an interest in philately, numismatics, or collecting trinkets of any kind really, marks you out as someone who spends their weekends caressing their collection albums and murmuring, 'My precious...'. Opting for a more energetic brand of recreation - like cycling or running, for instance - signals to society that if anyone makes the mistake of approaching you, they will hear about your training regimen in insufferable detail.

Congratulations, You Are A 'Sophisticate' Now

On the other hand, reading - as a hobby - offers a number of benefits. You can win any debate so long as you preface your argument with the words, 'Well, I know that's what you heard on a podcast but I read in a book...'. When your friends are raving about a new movie, you can declare with a sniff, 'To be perfectly honest, the book is



much better...'. Surrounding yourself with books can earn you the admiration of your peers. You don't even need to have read them - merely possessing a well-stocked bookcase can make you a sophisticate (ask any interior designer). In these times of snappy reels, clickbait headlines, and dwindling attention spans, book readers are revered as 'Zen masters' who can ignore the lure of doomscrolling and immerse themselves in the textual world. It is no wonder then that so many parents hope

their children grow up to be readers, or that countless adults strive to adopt reading as a hobby. Yet, you rarely hear anyone talking about the undiagnosed emotional damage caused by books - anyone who has read *A Little Life* by Hanya Yanagihara will know what I mean - and the pernicious effects of reading in general. It is about time someone acted to remedy this grave oversight.

That Perpetual Despair...

Allowing yourself to be consumed by a love

for books can harm you, broadly speaking, in four significant ways. To begin with, it can cause you to be assailed by a sense of despair, a feeling of crushing hopelessness every time you enter a bookshop. As you browse the shelves and stack volumes in the crook of your arm, you realise you will never get around to reading all the books that call out to you. Some are able to make peace with this doleful reality.

Others, those of a more defiant disposition, refuse to be cowed. They redouble their efforts, but since reading capacity is constrained by physical limits, these efforts end up being channelled solely towards the acquisition of books. The Japanese have an elegant word to describe this condition: *tsundoku*. It means a penchant for stockpiling books with the genuine intention to read them all - subject only to the minor requirement of first attaining immortality. If you are also afflicted with this malady, do not be disheartened. Karl Lagerfeld is said to have owned over 3,00,000 books. At least, things are not as grim for you (I hope).

## Enter the expansive world of Indian cinema

By Sharmi Adhikary

Imagine walking into a large hall to discover memorabilia, photographs, posters, booklets, polaroids, paintings, merchandise and diverse physical as well as pictorial depictions representing Indian cinema right from the silent era to contemporary times that denotes the evolution of movies in this

preserving and transforming over 400,000 unique objects of the Indian and Asian fine and popular arts and craft, and the world cinemas, into a uniquely integrated knowledge base for India Studies.

Tuli's wider vision behind this showcase is of helping to create the first three-year undergraduate programme curricula for India

Studies. "Cinema as a knowledge base has been traditionally confined to the realms of film and cultural studies, but also holds untapped potential as a vast pedagogical resource beyond its conventional boundaries," says Tuli, adding: "This exhibition underscores the cultural, intellectual and

emotional journey of India, which cinema reveals, with an unparalleled power to capture minds, command attention and forge connections, uniting entertainment, art and education like few other cultural disciplines." However comprehensive an exhibition, it can only capture a minor fraction of its subject, in this case, the vast world of Indian cinema. Hence, the main objective, as per the master curator, is to capture the essence, its unique cinematic energy, its historical context, and most importantly the high aesthetic and intellectual standard of the art objects which make a film and its impact.



country. The interesting aspect becomes the documentation that no one even thought about maybe. It is to shed light on the famous, the not-so-known and even the forgotten aspects of Indian cinema that The Tuli Research Centre for India Studies (TRIS) is presenting a visionary exhibition, titled 'The World's Greatest Mela—Respecting India's Cinematic Heritage', curated by TRIS founder and president Neville Tuli. The show, on at the Visual Arts Gallery and Open Palm Court at New Delhi's India Habitat Centre till August 25, encapsulates three decades of Tuli's dedication to researching, archiving,

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