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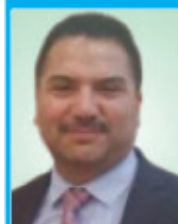


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Vol. 24

Issue 09

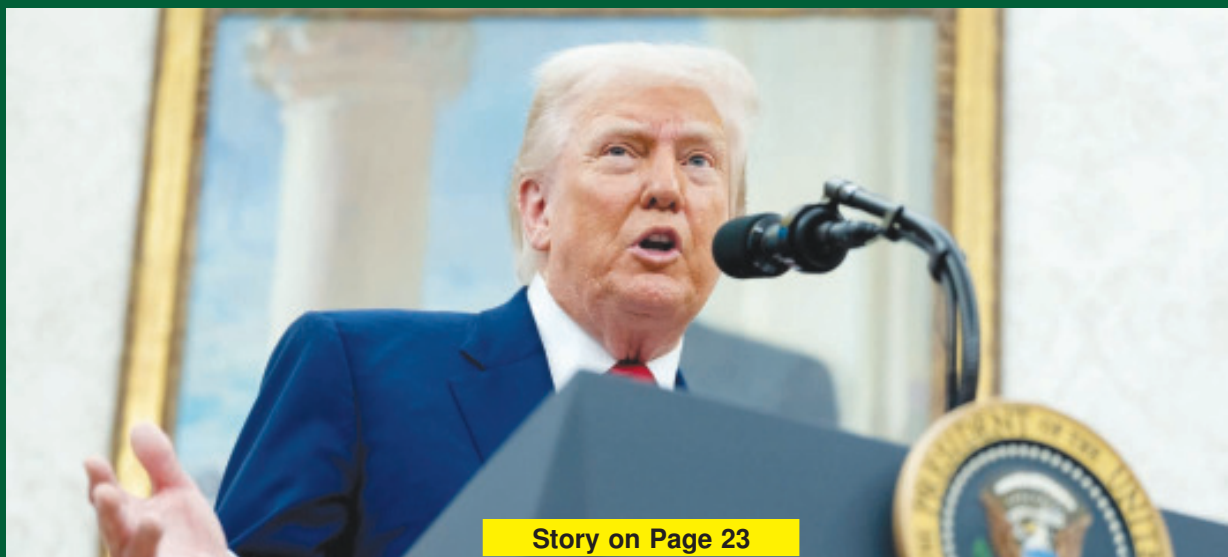
Friday 30 May to 5 June 2025

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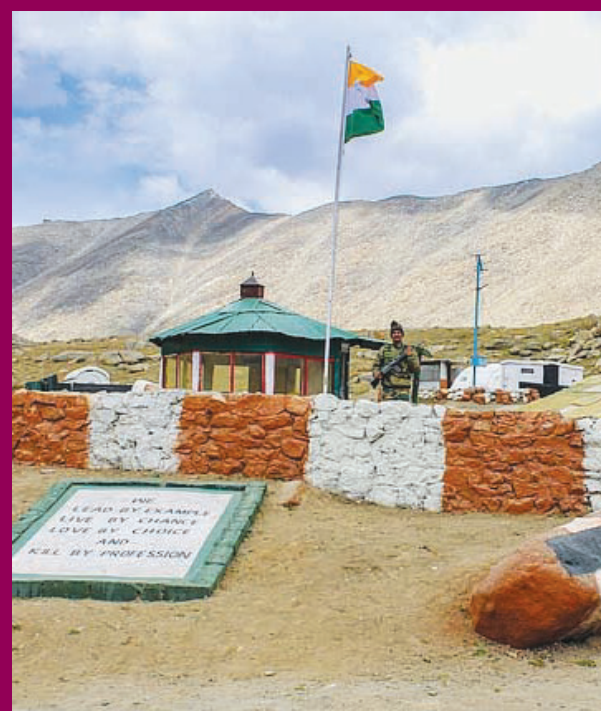
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One court ruling just ended the trade wars



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DIRTY JUDGE

Stack of cash, all unexplained
Calls for impeachment of Justice Varma



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What is social media vetting, the new hurdle for international students in US?

The move, a broader State Department plan to mandate social media vetting for all international students to study in America, could disrupt student visa processing and financially strain US universities.

(News Agency)- The Trump administration has been repeatedly issuing warnings to foreign students, blocked Harvard funding, and now it has paused the scheduling of all fresh visa interviews for foreign students. The fresh move comes as the US Department of State plans social media vetting before the visas are provided.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in an internal cable seen by Reuters that the department plans to issue updated guidance on social media vetting of student and exchange visitor applicants following a review and recommended consulates to pause the scheduling of such visa appointments.

The move, a broader State Department plan to mandate social media vetting for all international students to study in America, could disrupt student visa processing and financially strain US universities. But what is social media vetting?

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA VETTING?



Social media vetting involves scrutinising an applicant's online activity to assess their eligibility for entry. Officials will review the social media profiles of prospective students to determine whether they should be allowed to study at US institutions.

This includes screening of social media platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, TikTok among others. This initiative is seen as part of the Trump administration's wider crackdown on

international students following widespread pro-Palestine protests on American campuses last year.

This comes just days after the Trump administration sought the records of international students from Harvard University. The Donald Trump administration earlier imposed some social media screening requirements, but those were largely to check the

returning students.

WHAT WILL VETTING INCLUDE?

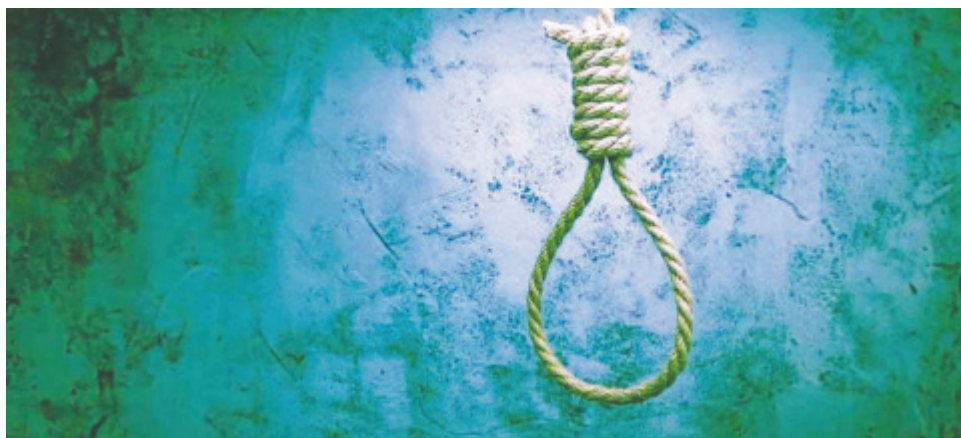
The State Department's directive did not elaborate on what type of extensive vetting the administration is planning, but it alluded to executive orders that are aimed at keeping out terrorists and battling antisemitism.

"It's unclear, for example, whether posting photos of a Palestinian flag on an X account could force a student to undergo additional scrutiny," a Politico report said.

Actions have previously been taken against students and even professors over social media posts.

In March, Brown University professor Dr Rasha Alawieh was deported after photos of Iran's supreme leader were found on her phone. She had also attended the funeral of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in February.

After Panchkula, tragedy in Kerala: Four of family die by suicide over 'mounting debt'



(By our staff reporter) New Delhi: A preliminary investigation suggests the family was overwhelmed by mounting financial liabilities.

In a chilling echo of the Panchkula mass suicide, a family of four was found dead at their home in Vakkom, Kerala, on Tuesday morning.

The deceased were identified as Anil Kumar (55), a senior clerk at Vakkom Service Cooperative Bank; his wife Sheeja (50), a daily-wage worker at the Kerala legislative assembly; and their two sons — Ashwin (25), a commerce graduate seeking employment and Akash (22), an engineering student. According to media reports, police confirmed that all four were found hanging using saris in different rooms of their home.

Local authorities suspect a suicide pact,

though no suicide note has been recovered. A preliminary investigation suggests the family was overwhelmed by mounting financial liabilities. Vakkom ward member Santhamma S was quoted by TOI as saying that the family had borrowed heavily to renovate their house and their economic troubles were compounded in 2019 after Ashwin met with a serious accident, leading to a six-month hospital stay and further medical bills. Santhamma said Sheeja confided in neighbors about their growing debt and added that the mother had visibly struggled to make ends meet through her daily-wage job. The tragedy was discovered on Tuesday morning after concerned neighbors noticed the family had not been seen outside and entered the house. Neighbors last saw the family around 5 pm on Monday, as per media reports.

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The ANI Vs YouTubers Dispute: Copyright, Claims And The Question Of Fair Use



(News Agency) - A video titled Dear ANI, released on May 26. In the 13-minute video, Mangal accused news agency ANI of exploiting YouTube's copyright enforcement mechanism to issue takedown notices against creators. Specifically, he alleged that ANI had issued two copyright strikes against his channel for using video clips lasting just 9 and 11 seconds, drawn from ANI footage related to the Kolkata rape case and Operation Sindoor. Mangal argued that these clips were used within the framework of commentary and analysis, qualifying as fair dealing under Indian copyright law. However, the more serious allegation was what followed. According to Mangal, legal representatives

The controversy began with YouTuber Mohak Mangal's

acting on ANI's behalf contacted him privately and demanded a payment between Rs 45-50 lakh to retract the copyright strikes. He claimed he was told that failure to comply would result in a third strike, which would trigger automatic deletion of his channel under YouTube's three-strike policy. Mangal's video quickly gained traction, prompting other creators to speak out. YouTuber Rajat Pawar alleged he had faced a similar situation. He said ANI had issued two strikes on his videos and then offered to remove them if he either paid a penalty or signed up for an annual licensing package worth Rs 18 lakh. Pawar claimed he was warned that failure to cooperate could also result in his channel being taken down.

Shortly after, popular comedian and content creator Thugesh said he too had been struck by ANI for a 2-second video snippet. In his case, he alleged that ANI representatives demanded Rs 15 lakh to lift the strike. Thugesh described the demand as excessive, especially given the negligible length of the clip and the broader context of

humour and commentary in which it was used.

What Is Fair Dealing Under Indian Law?

Under Section 52 of the Copyright Act, 1957, certain uses of copyrighted material are not considered infringement. These include:

Fair dealing for private or personal use, including research Criticism or review, whether of that work or of any other work Reporting of current events and affairs, including the publication in a newspaper or magazine or broadcast

Educational use, including classroom teaching

Fair dealing does not allow wholesale reproduction, but short clips used with commentary, critique, or for news purposes are widely accepted as non-infringing in India's legal framework. The creators argue that their use of ANI's footage was transformative and fell within these boundaries.

ANI Responds, PTI Offers Alternative

ANI has defended its actions in response to the allegations, stating that as the exclusive copyright holder of its content, it has the legal right to control

its distribution and licensing. In a statement to The Reporters' Collective, the agency said: "Enforcing these rights—through mechanisms like YouTube's copyright policy or legal action—is not extortion. It is the lawful protection of property, as guaranteed by copyright law. Anyone disputing our rights is free to seek legal recourse."

In a related development, ANI Editor-in-Chief Smita Prakash shared an opinion article titled "Piracy is not free speech: Why YouTubers must pay for ANI's content" on X, reinforcing the agency's position on intellectual property and licensing in the digital era.

Meanwhile, the Press Trust of India (PTI) addressed broader concerns faced by content creators. In a message directed at the YouTube creator community, PTI said it remains committed to credible journalism and ethical business practices. To support responsible content creation, it announced "highly affordable access" to its video footage for use on YouTube and other social media platforms.

'Not Turkey Or Azerbaijan': Marico Chief Mariwala Tells Which Country Is Greater Threat To India

Amid the India-Pakistan tension, Harsh Mariwala, chairman of Marico Limited, said that China poses a greater threat to India, compared to Turkey and Azerbaijan.

"The current situation between India and Pakistan has resulted in growing support for a boycott of goods and travel to Turkey and Azerbaijan. And rightly so," Mariwala said on X. Indian trade leaders and tourists have taken a stance against Turkey and Azerbaijan, taking note of their open support to Pakistan after India's Operation Sindoor on terror sites in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) in the aftermath of April 22 Pahalgam terror attack.

"It is also important that we maintain consistency and apply long-term thinking. However, we cannot be selective.



China's strong support of Pakistan is well documented, both economically as well as militarily, and will have far reaching consequences for India's security and sovereignty," he said on X. "This then, raises an extremely vital question – "Are we applying our boycotts equally across the board or being selective?" China poses a far greater and constant

threat to our country and therefore, must be viewed in the same, in fact, even stronger light than Turkey and Azerbaijan," said Mariwala.

THE BOYCOTT

Traders in India decided to boycott trade and tourism with Turkey and Azerbaijan in a meeting of the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) in New Delhi on May 16.

While India's trade ties with the two countries have already come under scrutiny, multiple educational institutions, including Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), have either suspended their collaboration with universities in Türkiye or are considering it. With the development, visits of Indian tourists, hosting of destination weddings and shooting of Indian films are also likely to significantly drop in Türkiye and Azerbaijan in the coming days as the government may discourage people from going to the two countries. Additionally, the Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) and All Indian Cine Workers Association (AICWA) on Wednesday appealed to Indian artists and producers to boycott Türkiye as a shooting destination for its pro-Pakistan

stance. According to estimates, about three lakh Indian tourists visited Türkiye in 2023 and over two lakh to Azerbaijan. India's exports to Türkiye stood at USD 5.2 billion during April-February 2024-25 as against USD 6.65 billion in 2023-24.

In response to Turkey's anti-India statements, the Indian government decided to revoke security clearance for Celebi Ground Handling India Private Limited, a Turkish firm operating at nine major airports, amid national security concerns. Trade leaders also welcomed the Indian government's recent decision to revoke security clearance for Celebi Ground Handling India Private Limited, a Turkish firm operating at nine major airports, citing national security concerns.

Congress upset with Shashi Tharoor's 'cover fire' to BJP post Op Sindoor: Sources

The Congress's stated position has been that six surgical strikes were conducted during the UPA regime, but those were never publicised.

(News Agency)-The tussle between the Congress and Shashi Tharoor escalated on Wednesday after the party leadership expressed displeasure over the MP's remark in Panama that the BJP government conducted the first cross-border surgical strike, sources said.

The Congress's stated position has been that six surgical strikes were conducted during the UPA regime, but those were never publicised. Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera also posted an old interview of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in which he said that many surgical strikes were conducted under the UPA. The top brass is miffed with Tharoor as there is a sense within the party that he is giving coverfire to the Narendra Modi



government post Operation Sindoor, where India destroyed terror camps and struck military sites in Pakistan.

The Congress believes that the government is on the backtrack following the sudden ceasefire and the issue should be raised.

The Thiruvananthapuram MP is presently leading one of India's multi-party delegations in Panama after completing their visit to the US.

Senior party leader Udit Raj also attacked Shashi Tharoor for praising the Narendra Modi government, calling him a "super BJP spokesperson".

Raj claimed that Tharoor was doing a better job of praising PM Modi than any BJP member, adding that the Centre is taking undue credit for the Army's actions.

"Congress MP Shashi Tharoor is the super spokesperson of the BJP, and what the BJP leaders

are not saying when it came to speaking in favour of PM Modi and the government, he is doing," Raj was quoted as telling news agency ANI. Udit Raj was reacting to Congress MP Shashi Tharoor's earlier remarks in Panama where he said that India's approach towards terrorism has changed and terrorists are now aware that they will be taken to task.

"Earlier governments were not like the current one. This government won't do anything, but they will still take credit for it," Raj told ANI.

Hailing 2016's surgical strike and 2019's Balakot strike, Tharoor said, "What has changed in recent years is that the terrorists have also realised they will have a price to pay; on that, let there be no doubt. When, for the first time, India

breached the Line of Control between India and Pakistan to conduct a surgical strike on a terror base, a launch pad -- the Uri strike in September 2016."

Tharoor pointed out that India did not cross the LoC during the Kargil War, adding that in 2019, India went a step further by crossing not only the LoC but even the International Border to avenge the deaths of Indian jawans in the Pulwama attacks. The all-party delegation led by Tharoor is in Panama now for a three-day state visit.

The delegation comprises other parliamentarians, including Sarfaraz Ahmed, G M Harish Balayogi, Shashank Mani Tripathi, Tejasvi Surya, Bhubaneswar Kalita, Mallikarjun Devda, Milind Deora and former Indian Ambassador to the US, Taranjit Singh Sandhu.

5-Year-Old Girl Raped Inside Temple In UP's Agra, Accused Arrested



(News Agency)-In a shocking incident, a five-year-old was raped inside a temple in Uttar Pradesh's Agra, following which the accused was apprehended. The incident took place on May 18, when the accused reportedly lured the girl playing near the shrine. According to several reports, the girl was playing near the temple close to her house

when her neighbour, identified as Pavitra, lured her inside and raped her. A CCTV footage of the incident has gone viral on social media. The accused fled the scene after the girl's screams alerted her family members, who then called the police. The accused reportedly pushed the victim's grandmother in an attempt to

escape, but she raised an alarm, after which locals arrived on the scene and thrashed the suspect. He was then handed over to the police.

However, it was later revealed that police had released the accused on the basis that he was mentally unstable, but he was re-arrested after a purported video of his heinous act went viral. The incident sparked outrage among the locals for the police's initial handling of the case. Police said the accused was let go after his family claimed he was mentally unstable, but he was taken into custody again after the shocking video came to light, and a case was registered against him based on the family's complaint.

As per reports, the accused works in a medical store. Police said his family had given false statements about his mental issues, and he was mentally sound. Meanwhile, the girl has undergone a medical examination and remains traumatised after the incident.

Bangladeshi Nationals Detained, Indian Brokers Suspected Of Aiding Them With Fake Aadhaar Cards



(News Agency)-A group of 18 to 20 Bangladeshi citizens were apprehended by vigilant locals in the Jalalpur area on Tuesday, May 27, after illegally crossing the Jessore-Benapole border into West Bengal. Authorities are investigating that the individuals obtained fraudulent Aadhaar cards with the assistance of Indian brokers before traveling to Ahmedabad in Gujarat.

The group was intercepted while attempting to return to Bangladesh, again with the suspected help of brokers. Five

auto-rickshaws believed to be involved in the operation were seized during the apprehension.

Initial statements from those arrested indicate that the owners of the seized vehicles reside in Bhangarpada. All individuals have been transferred to Gumra police station for further processing. They were subsequently moved to Silchar Sadar police station for overnight interrogation. The Assam Police are currently leading the ongoing investigation into the matter.

For Tej Pratap, Lalu Yadav and family have drawn a line in the sand

Tej Pratap's 'relationship reveal' on Saturday triggered a fracture in the Lalu Yadav family. Tej Pratap, born to RJD chief Lalu Yadav and Rabri Devi after the couple had six daughters, now finds himself exiled from the party and from the family.

(News Agency)-The Lalu Prasad family, which has seen two Chief Ministers, has seen many storms over the decades. But the one brewing now is deeply personal and painfully public. Tej Pratap Yadav, the elder male son and once seen as the flamboyant heir to the RJD throne, finds himself cast out of both party and family, after a dramatic confession of love on Facebook triggered chaos.

The drama unfolded last Saturday, when Tej Pratap shared a photo with a woman named Anushka Yadav. Alongside the cozy photograph, he declared on Facebook, "We have known each other for the last 12 years. We are in love." The internet erupted. And not with applause.

Many were quick to remind him



of his high-profile marriage to Aishwarya Roy in 2018, a wedding that had been projected as a grand political alliance in Bihar. Roy is the daughter of Chandrika Roy and granddaughter of Bihar's former Chief Minister, Daroga Prasad Roy. That marriage fell apart in a matter of months, ending in court battles, serious

allegations, and endless media scrutiny. So when Tej Pratap's post popped up, the timing couldn't have been worse — personally, legally, or politically. Tej Pratap is still legally married to Aishwarya Roy and Bihar elections are just a few months away.

A few hours later, the post vanished. Tej Pratap claimed

his Facebook account had been 'hacked', and that the viral post was a 'conspiracy to defame him and his family'. But the damage was done.

LALU SEVERES TIES

In a move no one saw coming, Lalu Prasad went public on Sunday with a message. He expelled his elder son from the Rashtriya Janata Dal for six years and, more shockingly, said Tej Pratap would have 'no role in the family' either. His words were blunt: "Disregard for moral values in personal life weakens our collective struggle to achieve social justice."

For a family known to protect its own, this was a turning point. And with Bihar heading to polls in a few months, the move is also seen as strategic.

RIFT IN YADAV FAMILY

This isn't the first time Tej Pratap has been at odds with his own family. From launching a parallel outfit called 'Lalu-Rabri Morcha' to occupying chairs meant for party seniors, Tej Pratap has often walked a rebellious line. But this time, the family, especially younger brother

Tejashwi Yadav, now the face of the RJD and INDIA bloc's chief coordinator in Bihar, isn't willing to accommodate the drama. When asked about his brother's expulsion, Tejashwi kept it civil but firm. "There are certain things we cannot tolerate," Tejashwi Yadav said.

As per a report by news agency PTI, party insiders say the final straw came when Tej Pratap hinted at contesting again from Mahua, a seat currently held by Tejashwi's close aide.

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I agree...: After Shashi Tharoor's zealots jab, Pawan Khera's 2018 book reminder

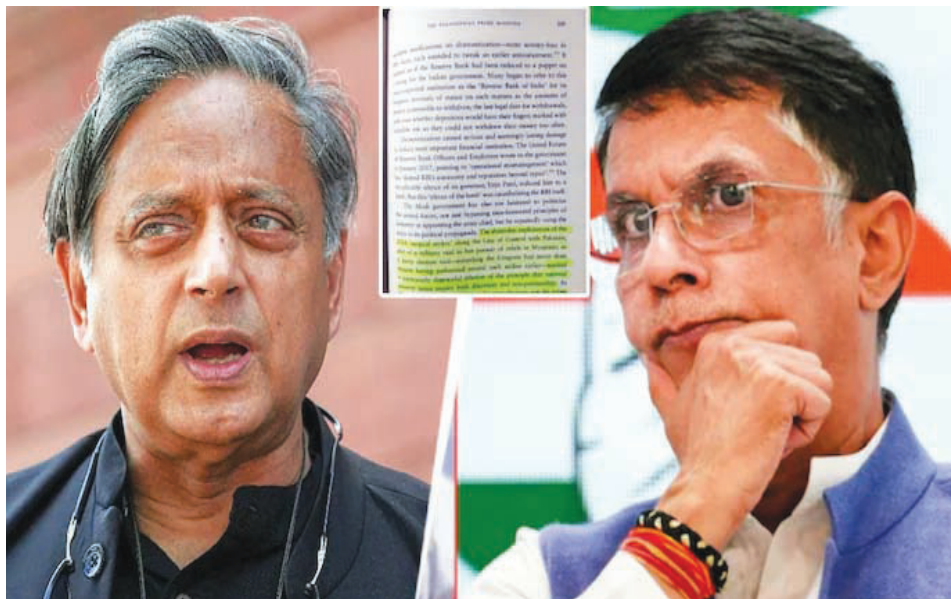
The war of words between Shashi Tharoor and his party has intensified, as senior Congress leader Pawan Khera shared an excerpt from the Lok Sabha MP's book *The Paradoxical Prime Minister*, in which he called the Modi government 'shameless' for publicising the 2016 surgical strikes for electoral gains.

(News Agency)-The war of words between Shashi Tharoor and his party has intensified, as senior Congress leader Pawan Khera shared an excerpt from the Lok Sabha MP's book *The Paradoxical Prime Minister*, in which he called the Modi government "shameless" for publicising the 2016 surgical strikes for electoral gains.

In the same paragraph from Tharoor's 2018 book, Khera highlighted the part where Tharoor had written that the Congress had never glorified such strikes, even though it had authorised them in the past.

The internal rift within the Congress has been split wide open as it targeted Tharoor over his remarks claiming that India had organised its first surgical strikes across the LoC under Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2016.

Following Shashi Tharoor's remarks, sources within the Congress revealed that the party leadership was



displeased with the Thiruvananthapuram Lok Sabha MP's praise of the Modi government in Panama.

Soon after Shashi Tharoor's remarks, the Congress expressed strong reservations and stated that six

surgical strikes were conducted under the UPA government but were never publicised.

Posting an old interview of Manmohan Singh, Pawan Khera highlighted the part where the former Prime Minister stated that India had conducted

several surgical strikes under his leadership.

Defending Shashi Tharoor, the BJP promptly came to his support, stating that it was India's official stance, while citing an RTI reply given by the Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) back in 2018.

"The Army does not have any data pertaining to surgical strikes, if any were carried out before September 29, 2016," the RTI reply read in response to a question asking whether any surgical strikes had been conducted during the UPA tenure from 2004 to 2014.

Amid rising criticism from within his party, Shashi Tharoor broke his silence today, saying, "For those zealots fulminating about my supposed ignorance of Indian valour across the LoC in the past."

Tharoor went on to slam "critics" and "trolls" for distorting his views, adding that he had "better things to do".

Hurts middle-class borrowers: MK Stalin opposes RBI's proposed gold loan rules

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin strongly opposed the Reserve Bank of India's proposed restrictions on gold loans, calling them a direct hit on the dignity and survival of poor and middle-class families.

In a post on X, Stalin said the move could strip people of their only shield during emergencies, gold they've painstakingly saved over time, not for luxury but for survival. "Our people are simple, dignified, and resilient. They save up bit by bit to buy a single gold bead—not for show, but as protection against life's uncertainties," he wrote.

He warned that tightening rules around gold loans would drive people further into the grip of loan sharks and exploitative loan apps.

"This is not merely a regulation. It is a blow to their dignity and survival," Stalin said, urging Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and the RBI Governor to ease the proposed rules. "Let our people pledge their hard-earned gold with dignity," he added. Tamil Nadu Finance Minister Thangam Thenarasu too called the RBI's move a "systemic injustice against the vulnerable," in a post on



X last week. He criticised the reduction of the loan-to-value ratio to 75 per cent and the added burden of excessive documentation, saying it severely impacts families who rely on gold loans during emergencies.

"At a time when people are still reeling from the earlier rule that disallows re-pledging until full repayment, the introduction of nine more rigid guidelines is deeply insensitive," he wrote, urging the RBI to adopt "compassionate, people-centric policies."

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Must apologise or face ban: Karnataka Minister on Kamal Haasan's Kannada remarks

Karnataka's Culture Minister has warned actor Kamal Haasan to apologise for allegedly insulting the Kannada language, or face a ban on his films being released in the state.



Karnataka's Minister for Kannada and Culture, Shivaraj S Tangadagi, wrote to the state Film Chamber of Commerce seeking a ban on the release of actor Kamal Haasan's films in the state if he does not issue an apology for his remarks on Kannada language.

In a statement, the Minister said the actor had "deeply hurt" the sentiments of Kannada-speaking people through the comments Haasan made at a recent film event. Tangadagi

was responding to the controversy created by Haasan by his remark "Kannada was born out of Tamil" at the audio launch of his upcoming film 'Thug Life'.

"When it comes to our language, land, and water, we will not tolerate anyone speaking against them, no matter how big the person is, even if it is Kamal Haasan," Tangadagi said.

"He must immediately apologise for his comments

about Kannada. He is a Kannada actor himself and has acted in Kannada movies. He should apologise to the people of Karnataka and Kannadigas, there are no two ways about it. Otherwise, I will write to the Film Chamber demanding a ban on the release of his movies or any of his work in the state," he said. Pro-Kannada group Karnataka Rakshana Vedike also staged a protest outside the Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce demanding that Kamal Haasan publicly apologise for his remarks.

Taking into consideration the controversy and the protests, the Karnataka Film Chamber has reportedly issued a 24-hour deadline to Kamal Haasan to apologise. Failing this, the film association has said it will support the pro-Kannada organisation's demand to ban the release of his upcoming film Thug Life in

the state.

In a formal letter addressed to the President of the Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce, Tangadagi reiterated his stand, stating: "Regardless of how prominent a person might be, no one can be allowed to make such statements regarding the land, water, or language of Karnataka."

"If Tamil actor Kamal Haasan fails to apologise to the people of the state and to the Kannadigas, I hereby state that a ban should be immediately imposed on the screening of his films in Karnataka," he wrote.

The pro-Kannada organisation, on Wednesday, also filed a police complaint against Haasan over his remarks. The group, Karnataka Rakshana Vedike, also staged a protest outside the Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce demanding that

Kamal Haasan publicly apologise for his remarks.

The Minister also acknowledged that Haasan's political party, Makkal Needhi Maiam, is allied with the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu. "DMK is our ally party and they are in alliance with another small party in Tamil Nadu, where an MLA has called for a ban on Kannada films. But we did not hurt any sentiments. DMK might be our friendly party, but when it comes to language and land, it comes first," he said. Meanwhile, a regional party from Tamil Nadu allied with the DMK has issued a counter-warning to Karnataka. Tamilaga Vazhuvirimai Katchi leader and MLA T Velmurugan, in a Facebook post, said, "If Kamal Haasan's Thug Life movie is not released in Karnataka, we issue a warning that none of the Karnataka movies will be released in Tamil Nadu."

Chandrababu Naidu urges Centre to cancel Rs 500, higher notes to curb corruption

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu renewed his appeal to the Centre to cancel Rs 500 and higher denomination notes to curb corruption at TDP's Mahanadu Sabha in YSR Kadapa district

(News Agency)-Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has called for the cancellation of Rs 500 and higher denomination currency notes, saying such a move would help curb corruption and boost transparency in financial transactions.

Addressing party cadres at the Telugu Desam Party's (TDP) annual Mahanadu Sabha, the party's annual three-day mega convention, in YSR Kadapa district, Naidu advocated the removal of larger currency notes such as Rs 500, Rs 1,000 and Rs 2,000 and called for stronger promotion of digital payments.

"When I gave the digital currency report to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, I requested him



only one thing, the need arises, stop printing Rs 500, Rs 1,000 and Rs 2,000 notes. Enable and

promote digital currency. Then, should there be any corruption, we can find it out easily. I suggest to

him so," Chief Minister Naidu said. He used the occasion to once again urge the Union Government

to act on this recommendation, noting that the world is now moving rapidly towards digital currency.

"Today from this Sabha I want to once again request, today is the world of digital currency. If someone had to give a donation for party activities then we had to go through a list, but now just by a QR code, cadres and the public can access giving donations. There is no need for distribution of Rs 500, Rs 1,000 and Rs 2,000 notes," he said. Calling for public backing on the proposal, Naidu sought a show of hands and applause from the assembled supporters in favour of cancelling higher denomination notes.

India isn't using Indus water—it can solve irrigation problems, generate hydropower

The Indian government put the Indus Waters Treaty in 'abeyance' following the horrendous Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 tourists. The perpetrators had links with Pakistan-based terror outfit, Lashkar-e-Taiba. India responded with Operation Sindoor, targeting nine terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

In this heated environment, statements about the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) flowed from both sides. "Blood and water can't flow together," said Prime Minister Narendra Modi—a remark similar to the one he made in the aftermath of the Uri attack. Pakistan responded with provocative statements.

"Any attempt to stop or divert water flows will be an act of war," Pakistan's National Security Council declared. "The Indus is ours and will remain ours. Either our water will flow through it, or their blood will," said Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari.

After India's declaration of holding the treaty in abeyance, many questioned its ability to follow through, as the IWT was mediated by the World Bank. But a recent comment by World Bank President Ajay Banga raised the speculation that it may be legally possible for New Delhi to act independently in managing the Indus River system. "We have no role to play beyond a facilitator," Banga said.

Legal and political considerations aside, it's worth examining what India can and should do from the perspective of river engineering and hydraulics. If New Delhi wants to use the Indus water as a strategic tool in the long run, it must take a pragmatic and realistic approach beyond the temporary jingoism.

There are two ways to use the Indus as a strategic tool: releasing excess water to cause an artificial flood or restricting water to cause scarcity.

Pertinent questions

Before discussing this further, it is important to shed some light on the IWT and its current status. As per the document signed in 1960, India has rights to three eastern rivers (Ravi, Sutlej, and Beas) of the Indus River system. The three western rivers (Indus, Chenab, and Jhelum) are allocated to Pakistan. India is allowed to use the waters of western rivers for limited irrigation (as mentioned in Annexure C), hydroelectric power generation (Annexure D), and storage (Annexure E). Similarly, Pakistan may use water from the tributaries of the Ravi River (Basantar, Bein, Tarnah, and Ujh) for agricultural purposes, restricted to a maximum of 44,400 acres annually (as mentioned in Annexure B).

With this context, some questions become pertinent. Is India currently using all the allocated water under the treaty? The answer is a resounding no—Pakistan

gets approximately 3.3 billion cubic metres of water from eastern rivers every year. Does India currently have the capacity to control the flow of the western rivers in terms of storage and infrastructure? It does not. Does it have the financial and engineering capabilities to build this infrastructure in the future? Yes, it does. Now, the critical question is this: If India, being the upper riparian, decides to control the waters of the Indus River system as a strategic tool, how can it do this? And what challenges is it likely to face? A question of capacity

On the eastern rivers, India currently has various projects and about 40 per cent storage capacity through large dams. This includes the Bhakra Dam on the Sutlej, Ranjit Sagar Dam on the Ravi, and Pong Dam on the Beas River. Water from these dams is diverted at barrages through canals. The Indira Gandhi Canal, one of India's largest, originates from Harike Pattan Barrage at the confluence of the Beas and Sutlej near the border.

On the western rivers, India has tried to tap the potential of hydroelectric power generation. This was done through run-of-the-river projects, where a small amount of storage is kept as dead storage, which is also permissible under the IWT. Projects such as Baglihar, Kishanganga, Ratle, Sawalkote, Kirthai-I, Kirthai-II, Dulhasti-II, Pakal Dul, Kiru, Kwar, and Sach Khas are major initiatives under this effort. Some of these are functional, some are under construction, and some are in the planning stage.

The average annual flow of western rivers is about 136 MAF (million acre-feet). To put this in perspective, the Bhakra Dam has a gross storage capacity of 7.5 MAF, including dead storage. With a permitted storage capacity of 3.6 MAF and an actual capacity of 0.7 MAF, India cannot stop the flow of western rivers without constructing large-sized dams or water diversion structures.

In these circumstances, India should create more storage capacity on eastern rivers or divert outgoing flow using its canal system. Storage capacity can be increased by constructing new dams and optimising existing structures. These decisions depend on the cost, feasibility, and other factors involved.

It is not an easy task to build a large dam in mountainous terrain. The exercise is costly and time-intensive, with a possible risk to the stability of the structure. It also involves a risk of flooding due to structural failure, triggered by seismic activity or geological instability. However, the Tehri Dam in Uttarakhand showcases India's capability in the domain.

By AKSHAY NAYAK
and
Vishal Mishra

Apple's India pivot is making China insecure. Baidu users call it a 'reluctant migration'

Apple's pivot to India has struck a nerve in China, prompting a flurry of sharp responses across state media and online forums. A supply chain adjustment is being reframed in Beijing as a cautionary tale about Western fickleness, India's limitations, and China's enduring industrial strength. Though Apple has been exploring manufacturing alternatives for a while, this latest shift has reignited the debate with fresh urgency. Chinese commentators have seized the moment, especially in light of American President Donald Trump's revived tariff threats on Apple products made outside the US – including in India – to issue broader warnings. The conversation has shifted beyond India's manufacturing capacity to the strategic risks of decoupling from China: Can 'Made in India' truly replace 'Made in China'? And can Apple replicate its China playbook elsewhere? For many in the country, the answer is a firm no.

Dismissive commentary

In Chinese discourse, Apple's so-called migration is being portrayed as reluctant and externally driven. The prevailing view is that India, beyond offering cheap labour, contributes little that is of strategic value. Most components are still sourced from China, with India's weaker infrastructure and higher operational costs making the shift more symbolic than substantive. This narrative reflects a broader tendency to downplay India's potential and emphasise its industrial shortcomings – low yield rates, fragmented supply chains, labour unrest, and persistent quality issues. Job creation aside, the argument goes, India risks remaining an assembly hub without deeper production capabilities. In contrast, China continues to dominate high-end manufacturing and core component production, reinforcing its

lead in innovation.

A Weibo post claims that Apple's continued reliance on China is not due to labour costs but due to a skilled talent pool and business-friendly policies. It dismisses India, and many countries in Southeast Asia and Africa, as lacking these core advantages. India, the Weibo user contends, is harder to navigate and less profitable. Some commentary veers into open hostility and racism: "Who dare use a curry-flavoured mobile phone?"

India: a backup plan- Apple's expansion into India is being seen less as a strategic realignment and more as a reluctant hedge – driven not by confidence in India's capabilities but by geopolitical anxiety. Prominent Chinese economist Fan Gang, president of the China Development Institute, attributes the United States' unease to China's continued rise. On platforms such as WeChat and Baidu, users frame the move as reactive. "Even Trump," one post notes, "wants jobs brought back to the US, not handed to India." The 'America First' agenda, they argue, undercuts offshoring to low-cost economies like India.

Chinese analysts highlight India's structural constraints: poor infrastructure, an underdeveloped industrial base, and continued dependence on Chinese components. Xiang Ligang, Director General of Beijing-based Information Consumption Alliance, notes that modern manufacturing depends less on wages and more on infrastructure and industrial integration – areas where India still falls short. Even those who recognise India's potential remain sceptical. Zhang Jiadong, associate research fellow at Fudan University, points to the positives: India's young population, vast labour pool, and improving industrial base.

By SANA HASHMI



ISSN No. 1554 06X

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Bangladesh On The Brink: As Chaos & China Loom Large, Modi Signals India's Resolve

By Sanbeer Singh Ranhotra

Bangladesh is in chaos. Muhammad Yunus has threatened to quit, but is yet to act on his threats. The Army chief, Waker-Uz-Zaman is growing restless. Bangladesh's constitution requires that national elections must be held within 90 days of government dissolution. So, elections should have ideally been conducted by November last year in Bangladesh. Yet, here we are in the May of 2025 – and there are still no signs of elections being imminent.

Instead of charting a course back to stability, Yunus and his "interim government" seem more focused on narrative control than crisis resolution, adopting a posture of victimhood while deflecting blame for a crisis that is largely self-inflicted. From making ill-informed and provocative statements, such as insinuating that India's Northeastern states are "landlocked" (a geographical absurdity seemingly designed to needle New Delhi), to recklessly inviting China to expand its strategic footprint into the Bay of Bengal via Bangladesh, Yunus's regime has systematically alienated its most crucial and historically supportive ally. Obviously, this has led to a remarkable deterioration in India-Bangladesh ties. Now, India is upping the ante and reminding Dhaka of its strategic



vulnerabilities. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to visit Alipurduar on Thursday, ostensibly to sound the BJP's poll bugle for the West Bengal assembly elections, which are now less than a year away. While that is true, one must also recognise that Alipurduar in North Bengal lies in close proximity to the "Chicken Neck" corridor.

The visit comes in the backdrop of India subtly reminding Bangladesh that it has its own "chicken necks" to worry about. Muhammad Yunus's brazen placation of both China and Pakistan has forced India to remind him of Bangladesh's vulnerable corridors.

First is the 80-kilometre long North Bangladesh Corridor – from Dakshin Dinajpur in India's West Bengal to South West Garo Hills in Meghalaya. This corridor is absolutely essential for Bangladesh to maintain effective administrative control, logistical supply lines, and economic connectivity with its entire northern Rangpur division. The Rangpur division, comprising eight districts, is a significant agricultural and population hub. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has declared on social media that "any disruption here can completely isolate the entire Rangpur division from the rest of Bangladesh."

India's capacity to exert pressure here is considerable. Were the Siliguri Corridor to face a tangible threat orchestrated or abetted by elements within Bangladesh, India could, with relative ease, severely constrict movement through this North Bangladesh Corridor.

The second critical pressure point is the Chittagong Corridor. This is an even narrower strip, approximately 28 kilometres wide, running from near Belonia in Tripura down to the Bay of Bengal. This corridor is the sole land-link connecting the vital port city of Chittagong and the entire Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region with the Bangladeshi mainland. Chittagong is not just Bangladesh's primary port, handling over 90 per cent of its international trade; it's the economic lifeblood of the nation. Any significant disruption to this slender corridor would have catastrophic consequences for Bangladesh's economy. Consider the implications: if India perceived a grave threat to its own strategic interests emanating from or facilitated by Bangladesh, particularly a threat that could sever its Northeast, then ensuring the functionality of the Chittagong Corridor for Dhaka would cease to be an Indian priority. Restricting access here could paralyse Bangladesh.

Trump's flattery and bullying of Putin have been equally ineffective – and it's obvious why

By Rajan Menon

Three-plus years into the war in Ukraine, much remains uncertain, including when the bloodshed will cease and on what terms. But we can be sure about one thing: although no one took seriously Donald Trump's boast that he would end the war within 24 hours – perhaps not even Trump himself – it's now evident that his efforts to stitch together a political settlement have failed. Last weekend's Russian drone and missile strikes against Ukraine, reportedly among the largest since the full-scale invasion began, show us that the conflict isn't likely to come to a sudden end.

That's because Vladimir Putin remains committed to his goal of conquering Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson provinces. So far, he controls virtually all of the first and most of the other three. A deal that gives him what he has now plus a guarantee that Ukraine will remain outside Nato won't satisfy him. He has said repeatedly that he wants all four of these provinces and a neutral Ukraine, with caps on the number of



soldiers and major armaments it can deploy. Trump's mistake has been to assume that his self-proclaimed deal-making genius, supposed rapport with Putin and massive leverage over Volodymyr Zelenskyy (the US has provided Ukraine with more weaponry than the other allies combined, though less total aid when humanitarian and other support is included) would together yield a diplomatic success, perhaps one

that would even land him a Nobel peace prize.

But with Russia targeting Ukraine, including Kyiv, with 367 drones and missiles over the past few days, this isn't merely a display of disdain by Putin for any political settlement that falls short of his goals, and a demonstration that he is committed to continuing the fight until he achieves his objectives. It also makes Trump seem weak.

Now Trump is outraged – Putin, he wrote on his social media platform, has "gone absolutely CRAZY" and is "needlessly killing a lot of people" – and, when asked whether he was thinking of tightening sanctions, replied: "Absolutely." But this isn't the first time Trump has warned Putin to cease targeting his missiles and drones on Ukraine (remember his "Vladimir, STOP!" post late last month?) or threatened additional sanctions.

This is an obvious trend in the relationship. Putin is still committed to his publicly stated goals, and rebuffs Trump's flattery and bullying in equal measure. Unsurprisingly, he showed no interest in Trump's proposal for a 30-day ceasefire, which Zelenskyy promptly accepted. Nor was Putin unnerved by Trump's threat, in late April, to impose secondary sanctions on Russia unless it stopped "shooting missiles into civilian areas, cities and towns". This warning came after Trump's meeting with Zelenskyy at Pope Francis's funeral and may have given the Ukrainian president hope, but it didn't rattle his Russian counterpart.

So, Why Has Apple Stuck To Its Chennai Plan Despite Trump's 'Warning'?

Tim Cook is likely bothered more about what shareholders and analysts think of the way he manages his company's huge cash pile - estimated at well over \$300 billion - than an oddball statement from Trump about moving all production to America.



By Madhavan Narayanan

There is a Tamil idiom that comes in handy as we discuss US President Donald Trump and his engagement with a global technology giant like Apple: "Like trying to extricate a saree from a thorny shrub". Trump may be well-advised to consider the saying as we discuss Apple's manufacturing plans for its iconic iPhone or other products that spell brand value, utility, style, and cutting-edge innovation.

The decision by Foxconn, which makes iPhones for Apple Inc., to go ahead with a plan to manufacture components in Tamil Nadu does not surprise me, though I am mildly impressed by the timing of the news. But then, there is a lot more to this than Trump and Apple CEO Tim Cook that makes economics more important than politics.

Why Foxconn Didn't Hit Pause

Foxconn, Apple's top supplier, is moving ahead with its planned investment of \$1.5 billion at its factory near Chennai. News is not officially out on Foxconn's Tamil Nadu plans, but government officials have confirmed to London's Financial Times that a new plant to assemble display modules will come up next to an existing iPhone assembly unit at Oragadam, an emerging Chennai suburb.

For those of us used to Nehru-era licensing and socialist controls, it would seem logical for Apple to take a pause after Trump, in his sweeping style, said recently that he wanted Apple to

manufacture in the US and not India. That certainly raised eyebrows in India, which has been nurturing ambitious plans to shift global manufacturing units at least partially from China to India as part of a "China Plus One" strategy, under which manufacturers diversify facilities to reduce risks amid a trade war between China and the United States.

Trump almost sounded like a whimsical boss as he said on May 14, "I had a little problem with Tim Cook yesterday. I said to him, 'My friend, I treated you very good. You're coming here (to the US) with \$500 billion, but now I hear you're building all over India. I don't want you building in India.'"

Now, he has even threatened a 25% tariff if the phones sold in the US weren't made in the US. "I have long ago informed Tim Cook of Apple that I expect their iPhones that will be sold in the United States of America will be manufactured and built in the United States, not India, or anyplace else...If that is not the case, a Tariff of at least 25% must be paid by Apple to the US," Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

Trumpism Has Its Limits

We need a detailed context to understand how Trump's words make little sense.

First up, Trump is known to come with all guns blazing, whether it is illegal immigration, American jobs, his dubious role in India-Pakistan conflicts or, of late, a security crackdown on the

prestigious Harvard University to stop it from admitting international students. Trump likes to grab headlines, but the aftermath is not as easy. Court cases against his efforts stand testimony to that.

That takes us to the backdrop of both the American economy and its long-cherished gains (and advocacy) of globalisation, a term that gained ground after the 1980s. Technically, that refers to the interdependence of nations through the exchange of goods, services, information, and capital. For individual companies, however, globalisation is something that helps them make the best stuff at the most efficient costs anywhere possible on the planet, and sell it where they can get the most profits. This no-barrier approach to business has, over the decades, resulted in carefully-built supply chain networks that involve huge investments and giant factories, in which China, with its strong infrastructure, welcoming state policies, and low-cost skilled labour, has been a major gainer. Suddenly turning away from China because Trump wants it is difficult enough, like pulling off a saree from a thorny shrub. It is more complicated when cost differentials and government attitudes are conducive in India as an alternative base, not to speak of increasingly comparable cost advantages as wages rise in China.

Tim Has More Important Things To Care About

Equally, it is pertinent to think of Apple as a global (and not just American) company, as also as one whose stakeholders include worldwide employees and a vast tribe of shareholders, which includes the likes of legendary investor Warren Buffett, whose Berkshire Hathaway holds 300 million Apple Inc shares worth around \$60 billion; it remains the investment vehicle's biggest stock despite it having sold off the bulk of its holdings.

Activist shareholders and analysts are critical for Wall Street capitalism. Tim Cook is likely bothered more about what they think of the way he manages his company's huge cash pile (estimated at well over \$300 billion) than an oddball statement from Trump.

Relationships and ownerships form critical angles of the globalisation web. Apple proudly labels its products as "Designed by Apple in California" to highlight its business philosophy that runs on innovation and creativity. Partners like Foxconn have worked for long years to build layers of scale and efficiency, which rake in profits for Apple. Any future investment by Apple in the US - as envisaged by the Trump-Cook conversation - must likely focus on the future without compromising Apple's legendary emphasis on a fine mix of innovation and maddening efficiency. Last but not least, customer service is also important, for which Indian IT service companies are already helping Apple.

Too Big A Wall To Dismantle

One must also remember that Foxconn, though it has its tentacles spread into China, is effectively a Taiwanese company (Hon Hai Technology Group) and is the world's largest electronics manufacturer with 200 subsidiaries in 20 countries, including India. It owns more than 54,200 patents.

How can one possibly dismantle such a vast, intricately built network of innovation and efficiency spread across the planet just because a temporary incumbent at the White House wants it?

Manufacturing costs at American wages can be high, while everything from shipping costs to the availability of innovative manufacturing partners poses the challenge of keeping it all in the US, as Trump wants, which could be rather impossible. Political dreams sometimes simply do not make economic sense.

How PM Modi's Idea Of An All-Party Squad After Op Sindoor Works On Five Levels

By :Abhijit Majumder

Uddhav Sena called it a 'baraat' or wedding party. The Congress was upset that its own leader, Shashi Tharoor, was acting like the BJP's "super spokesman". Even a section of the BJP's own support base was unpleasantly surprised that the Narendra Modi government was using its own bitter opponents in an overseas mission. Some said it betrayed the BJP's weakness in setting the global narrative. But beyond what is immediately visible lies a masterclass in Modi's political manoeuvre. And it works at levels and over a length of time far beyond the obvious. Here are five ways in which the roping in of politicians from the most diverse ideologies helps the nation, the government, and the party.

The 59-member team visiting 32 countries and the European Union headquarters in Brussels includes Opposition leaders ranging from Shashi Tharoor of the Congress to Asaduddin Owaisi of AIMIM, Kanimozhi of the DMK to Supriya Sule of the NCP, Priyanka Chaturvedi of Uddhav Sena to John Brittas of the CPM.

First, it is one of India's strongest shows of bipartisan unity between the government and the Opposition in many



decades. There have been other occasions, for instance during the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965 or after the Pokhran nuclear tests, when various Opposition parties supported the government's war efforts. But this is the first time the Centre has so boldly adopted a Team India approach to diplomacy.

Second, the whole initiative serves to break down the walls around communication between the Central government and the Opposition. It also makes floor management easier in Parliament.

Third, raising a unified voice against terrorism and India's enemies like Pakistan gives the non-BJP leaders—who are sometimes accused of taking unpatriotic stands on internal and external security—a new goodwill among citizens. It incentivises nationalism for the Opposition. Love and service for the nation, in their unconditional form, are their own reward. But in politics, they incidentally also fetch votes.

Fourth, PM Modi's initiative has created a talent pool of national spokespersons from across party lines speaking beyond

party lines, exclusively for Bharat. It has added brilliant orators like Shashi Tharoor and Asaduddin Owaisi to the exceptional tradition of oratory which the BJP-RSS family brings. It deepens India's bench strength in setting the diplomatic and political narrative worldwide.

And fifth, in one stroke, PM Modi and his government have managed to marginalise grumpy and rabidly anti-Modi legacy leaders like Rahul Gandhi and Uddhav Thackeray, as well as the loony Left and Islamists. Even within their respective parties and voter bases, the united outreach shows these leaders as petty, narcissistic, and even inimical to India's interests. RaGa's rants and false accusations on Operation Sindoor are being discredited by Congress and Opposition representatives themselves in several world capitals.

The entire exercise brings a paradigm shift. It moves the middle ground of Indian politics quite a few feet towards the nationalist Right and away from the globalist Left. All these are happening quietly and simultaneously, leaving social media busy and confused about whom to side with, because the sides have blurred.

Protests, Pakistan, And A Yunus-Army Showdown: Why Bangladesh Is On Edge

By Tara Kartha

There are few leaders, non-elected or otherwise, who have a reputation as strange as Muhammad Yunus's, the Chief Advisor to the Bangladesh government. It's not just that he doesn't want to leave his comfortable perch as an unelected leader; that's no surprise in much of Asia, where politicians like to hang on by their teeth. It's that he's been playing with fire, slowly pushing his country towards grave danger. Bangladesh deserves better.

Public (Dis)order

First, public order has never been restored since the violence that preceded Yunus being 'air-dropped' into the country. As the police continue to remain 'in absentia', protest after protest is disrupting normal life. Recently, government employees at the Bangladesh Secretariat, essentially the heart of bureaucracy, took out protests against the proposed Government Service (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025, which will allow their dismissal within 14 days for rather vague offences, including



'inciting disobedience or disrupting discipline' or encouraging others to skip work or avoid responsibilities. In sum, it's meant to prevent thousands of disgruntled employees from participating in protests of any kind. Another set of protests was by employees of the Board of Revenue, who opposed splitting the organisation into two. A third is by teachers demanding changes in salary.

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Another Corona Vibrant Knocking at the Door: Is India Ready to Face the Challenge?

By JAG MOHAN THAKEN

After facing the shock of 5,33,666 deaths during the previous Covid-19, is India equipped to face the new wave of the pandemic? The new dinosaur of the wave is knocking at the door and presently there are 1010 active cases as on 26th May at 8.00 AM, the surge is rising up rapidly as there were 257 active corona cases as on 19th May as per Government of India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

New corona vibrant cases on 19th May were noticed in 11 states out of 28 states, now on 26th May it has spread its wings in 16 states and the states with top cases have seen an increase as – Kerla cases rose from 95 to 430, Maharashtra from 56 to 210, Gujrat from 7 to 83, and Delhi from 5 to 104.

India Today on 25th May reports that India records two new Covid variants, both under WHO monitoring. As of now, the World Health Organisation (WHO) classifies both LF.7 and NB.1.8 as Variants Under Monitoring, and not under Variants of Concern or Variants of Interest.

The Union Health Secretary, on Saturday, reviewed the national situation. It noticed that the cases have mainly been reported from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Karnataka. The ministry states that most of the cases are mild and under home care.



Seeing the new vibrant spread, some states have issued the guidelines to be ready to face the brunt. Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Kerla, Haryana and some others are the few to name included in the forerunners.

Punjab Health Minister in a message on 24th May stated, "No need to panic about COVID_19 in Punjab. The new variant is generally mild, and no new cases have been reported to date in Punjab. We are actively testing, and our healthcare system is fully prepared and equipped. Stay vigilant, stay safe."

As a sample, we are here analysing the management of the Haryana government

to face the new corona pandemic.

Haryana Health and Family Welfare Minister Arti Singh Rao on 22th May assured citizens that the state is fully prepared and there is no cause for worry. Speaking to the media on Thursday, the Minister emphasized that only four mild cases are currently active in Haryana—two in Gurugram and two in Faridabad. None of the cases have international travel history, and all patients are under home quarantine with stable health conditions.

Arti Singh Rao said, "The number of cases is low and rare, and there is no need to panic. Oxygen supplies and

hospital beds are available. The state is fully prepared to handle the situation. Just remember to follow basic precautions: wash your hands regularly and wear a mask when you're outdoors."

But on the contrary side, General Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee, former Union minister and a Member of Parliament from Haryana, Kumari Selja displaying the other side of the coin which reflects an alarming situation.

If we analyse and take the statement of the Kumari Selja as true and based on facts, then a terrible situation seems to be inevitable in the coming time and may deteriorate the position, which may become uncontrollable, if timely steps are not taken and remain assured only on claims being made by the health ministers.

What Kumari Selja Alleges?

The former union minister, Kumari Selja in a statement issued to media on 25th May, disclosing the alarming situation of health services in Haryana, said that the Health System has deteriorated in the state due to the negligence of the BJP government. Corona will become incurable, If the government does not become alert. She advised that the Government should understand its responsibility towards health services and take immediate corrective steps.

India's Digital Moment: Seizing The AI And Semiconductor Future



By :Prosenjit Nath

In May 2025, the quiet confidence in India's tech ambitions became deafening. As the world reeled from the shock of China's DeepSeek-V2, a large language model (LLM) reportedly trained on over two trillion tokens at a fraction of Western costs, India unveiled its counter: a domestically built sovereign AI programme, led by deep-tech startup Sarvam AI and a Rs 10,372 crore national AI mission. This move didn't just signal intent, it marked a new axis in global tech power.

The shockwaves from DeepSeek-V2 continue to ripple through Silicon Valley. Long considered the undisputed leader in

AI, the American tech establishment now faces a formidable challenge not only in innovation but also in cost efficiency. "DeepSeek is a wake-up call," conceded a senior executive at a top US AI lab. "Western dominance in AI can no longer be taken for granted." That admission underscores a global inflection point, and India is wasting no time in stepping up. FROM QUIET ASPIRANT TO AMBITIOUS ARCHITECT

For decades, India was seen as a back-office player in the global technology chain, strong in software services but lacking in foundational R&D and hardware manufacturing. That is changing rapidly and deliberately. The IndiaAI Mission is

the country's clearest signal yet that it intends to build not just applications, but the underlying models and infrastructure that define technological leadership.

Sarvam AI's mandate to develop India's first foundational LLM is not merely about keeping up—it's about leapfrogging. "This is not just a tech project, it's a nation-building initiative," said Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw. "AI must reflect Indian languages, Indian values, and Indian problems."

By focusing on models built for India, in Indian languages, and deployed on Indian servers, the country is asserting technological sovereignty in a digital age where language models are fast becoming instruments of soft power.

HARDWARE MEETS VISION: THE SEMICONDUCTOR BACKBONE

No AI ambition is complete without the chips to run it. And here too, India is moving with unprecedented urgency. The Rs 76,000 crore India Semiconductor Mission is already bearing fruit: Tata Electronics is building the country's first commercial chip fabrication facility in Dholera, while Micron is setting up a cutting-edge ATMP facility

in Sanand, Gujarat, set to go live by the end of 2025.

To further catalyse this ecosystem, the government announced a new Rs 22,919 crore Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for electronics manufacturing. The goal? To make India not just an assembly hub but a global centre for innovation in chip design, packaging, and testing.

"We are entering a phase where India will be a global destination for electronics innovation and production," said Minister of State for Electronics and IT, Jitin Prasada. The strategic alignment between AI and semiconductor missions reflects a rare coherence in policy that prioritises both digital intelligence and digital infrastructure.

THE CHINA QUESTION: COMPETE OR COLLABORATE?

While India surges ahead, it cannot ignore the lessons from China's AI playbook. DeepSeek-V2, developed by Chinese startup High-Flyer, demonstrates that cutting-edge models can be developed at significantly lower cost through smart engineering, tight integration of compute resources, and relentless optimisation.

Everything About India's New 5th-Generation Stealth Fighter

India's first fifth-gen fighter will be a single-seat twin-engine jet with advanced stealth coatings and internal weapons bays like those on the US-made F-22 and F-35.

By Chandrashekar Srinivasan

The runway has been cleared - for a homemade fifth-generation stealth fighter that can vault India into an elite club, one of a few nations that can design and build next-gen combat aircraft.

In fact, that list is uber-exclusive; as of May 2025, only three other nations have fifth-gen fighters. The United States has the F-22 and F-35, China the J-20, and Russia the Su-57. And on Tuesday India took the first step to join that club.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh approved the 'execution model' for the multirole Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft, or AMCA, to be developed by the Bengaluru-based Aeronautical Development Agency, in cooperation with global industry partners, for the Air Force and Navy.

The initial cost is expected to be over Rs 15,000 crore and delivery by 2035. So What Is The AMCA?

India's first fifth-gen fighter will be a single-seat twin-engine jet with advanced stealth coatings and internal weapons bays like those on US and Russian planes - the F-22, F-35, and Su-57.

It is expected to have an operational ceiling of 55,000 feet and carry 1,500kg in weapons in internal bays, with 5,500kg more externally. The AMCA will likely carry a further 6,500kg in fuel.

Reports indicate there will be two versions; the second will, India hopes, also have an indigenously developed engine, possibly more powerful than the US-made GE F414 in the first. Overall, this will be a supermanoeuvrable and stealthy multirole fighter jet.

What does that mean?

Well, supermanoeuvrable is the capacity of fighter jets to execute tactical movements.

These refer to changes in direction and angle-of-attack not possible with traditional aerodynamic techniques, i.e., ailerons, elevators, flaps, air brakes, rudders, etc.

Stealth is perhaps self-explanatory. It is basically the ability of the plane (or ship, submarine, or missile) relatively undetectable to radar or sonar or other detection methods.

And 'multirole' refers to the aircraft's ability to execute a variety of tactical mission parameters, including air superiority and ground strikes, and SEAD, or suppression of air defences.

But What Is A 5th-Gen Fighter?

There is no one definition, except to say it incorporates major tech developed in the first part of the 21st century and are,



without exception, the most advanced fighter jets in operation.

Key, though, is the use of superior battlefield software that gives the pilot detailed information about the battle space and enemy combatants, as well as anything to might give them an edge. Specifically, they have innovative avionics that can network with 'friendlies' for enhanced situational awareness and C3, or 'control, command, and communications' capabilities. Other examples of such technologies include low-probability-of-intercept radar, which can simultaneously mask the aircraft's position while tracking or locking on to enemy targets.

And there's more.

A fifth-gen fighter's need to be supermanoeuvrable also means it has specially designed airframes, which are superlight and superstrong since they need to withstand tremendous G-force during battle movements and also remain intact during sustained supersonic flight.

India's AMCA ticks all of these boxes.

Reports say it will also have an 'electronic pilot' powered by AI for real-time decision-making, and an Integrated Vehicle Health Management system for 'predictive maintenance'.

So What Are Other 5th-Gen Fighters? The US' F-22 and F-35, Russia's Su-57, and China's J-20.

Of these, the F-22, codenamed 'Raptor', was once seen as the 'ultimate killing machine'.

Conceived as the Cold War was winding down, it combines sustainable high speed, supermanoeuvrability and low-observable stealth, and is a fearsome rival to face.

Interestingly, the F-22 programme was almost cancelled.

The Barack Obama administration was reportedly on the verge of scrapping the initiative in 2008 since it was assumed that high-end, state-on-state conflicts

aircraft in its 66-year life cycle.

Perhaps because of that the US has offered the F-35 to India; in February, Donald Trump told reporters, "We're paving the way to ultimately provide India with F-35 stealth fighters..."

The Su-57 and J-20 are considered Russia and China's answers to these two jets. Like the F-35, the Su-57 has also been offered to India. There are whispers China has already developed a sixth-generation aircraft; in April NDTV reported Beijing seems to be testing two possible stealth fighters - the tailless, three-engine J-36 seen over Chengdu in December last year, and the J-50 with V-shaped wings and twin engines. Aviation combat analysts believe China fast-tracking its sixth-gen fighter is in response to the US awarding Boeing a contract to build the F-47, its next-gen air superiority fighter.

Behind India's AMCA Bet

The AMCA greenlight underlines India's push to modernise its military, including weapons and equipment upgrades, after recent military tension with nuclear-armed Pakistan and China.

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No, Sirs. South Africa Is Not 'Killing' Its Whites

The "white genocide" myth serves no one. It stokes fear among white South Africans, trivialises the pain of Black South Africans, and hands a loaded weapon to racists in America and Europe.

What was once a flood of unverified videos consumed on social media now appears to be making its way into the White House, gaining the legitimacy and official weight it often lacks. Last Wednesday, President Donald Trump brought this trend to a theatrical peak during South African President Cyril Ramaphosa's visit. Intended as a diplomatic reset after a rocky period in bilateral relations, the meeting quickly took an unexpected turn. In a live meeting, Trump caught Ramaphosa off guard by claiming that white farmers in South Africa were being "persecuted" and "killed." He even played a grainy video showing white crosses on a roadside - described solemnly and somewhat misleadingly, as the "graves" of murdered white farmers. When questioned about the origins of the footage, Trump admitted he didn't know exactly where in South Africa it had been filmed. Elon Musk, a South Africa-born tech mogul, added momentum to the narrative by tweeting a video of politician Julius Malema singing "Dubul' ibhunu" ("Shoot the Boer") - a liberation-era song that some interpret as incendiary. Both men, neither known for deep engagement with South African political history, helped amplify a narrative that many experts see as alarmist and misleading. Who Is A Refugee?

For the record, the video shown by Trump did not depict an actual cemetery but a 2020 protest installation in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, where demonstrators planted white crosses to symbolise farm-related killings over the years. It was a form of political expression, not forensic evidence. Yet when unverified content is echoed by the leader of the United States and one of the world's most influential tech voices, it inevitably gains traction (that it amounted to interference in South Africa's internal affairs did not bother anyone). Their claims have resonated in right-wing circles across the US, South Africa and parts of Europe, fuelling the belief that a "white genocide" is unfolding in South Africa. President Trump appears convinced - to the point of offering refugee status to white Afrikaner families seeking to relocate. Around 60 such families have already arrived in the US, where they have been welcomed not as asylum seekers but with the courtesies more often reserved for state guests. So, in the Trumpian world, if you are brown



and fleeing war, you are a security threat. But if you are white and fleeing a social media rumour, you are a refugee of conscience. Interestingly, Trump's ambush of a visiting guest did not extend to the two recent visits by Benjamin Netanyahu - under whose watch Gaza has been bombed back to medieval times.

Does Trump Even Know Enough?

In 2012, former President Jacob Zuma was compelled to admit that the economic power structures of apartheid largely survived South Africa's democratic transition. The African National Congress (ANC), he'd said, made calculated compromises in the early 1990s to maintain investor confidence - and left much of the apartheid economy intact.

This uncomfortable truth was often buried beneath Western media's romanticisation of the "Mandela miracle" - a peaceful political transition, yes, but one that stopped short of dismantling the white monopoly on wealth. As seasoned journalist Martin Plaut put it, the post-apartheid deal handed political power to the Black majority but left economic power untouched.

Under Nelson Mandela's successor Thabo Mbeki, the ANC drifted even further from its redistributive promises. Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), intended as a tool for justice, morphed into a mechanism for co-opting a Black elite into a white-controlled economy. A few well-connected individuals grew fabulously wealthy. The majority stayed poor, and White capital smiled all the way to the bank.

Who Are The 'Persecuted'?

Today, white South Africans comprise just 7.7% of the population - about 4.7 million people - but continue to hold disproportionate control over land,

wealth and industry. Over 70% of arable land remains in white hands. The finance and agricultural sectors are still dominated by families whose fortunes were built on apartheid-era privilege. So you cannot call them a persecuted minority. This is a historically privileged one that still largely owns the country's economic engine. Yes, there have been attacks

on them, yes, a few murders have happened, yes, some of them live in fear, and yes, you see more Black South Africans representing their national cricket and rugby teams. But the official policy is not to displace them or seize their wealth and drive them out. And yet, Trump and Musk would have you believe that the oppressed have become the oppressors. The numbers betray them. Between October and December 2024, South Africa recorded 6,953 murders. Only 12 were linked to farm attacks. Just one victim was a white farmer. The country's judiciary has dismissed the idea of a white genocide, calling it "clearly imagined". Violent crime is tragically high in South Africa, but it affects all communities: Black, white, Indian and coloured. Indian shops and properties were looted freely in civil disturbances a few years ago, but they did not complain of discrimination or racism. They knew it was not the official policy.

On it.

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

What can you do to help?

- ☒ Educate yourself about the history of American racism, privilege and what it means to be anti-racist.
- ☒ Commit to actions that challenge injustice and make everyone feel like they belong, such as challenging biased or racist language when you hear it.
- ☒ Vote in national and local elections to ensure your elected officials share your vision of public safety.
- ☒ Donate to organizations, campaigns and initiatives who are committed to racial justice.



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



Kashmir Is Not Just a Destination, It Is A Responsibility

By :Adhik Kadam

A few weeks ago, I had an opportunity to walk through the narrow lanes of Pahalgam. While walking, I saw a group of schoolgirls trying to cross the road. A long line of tourist vehicles had jammed the area, and even a small medical emergency would have struggled to pass. One of the girls smiled and said to me in Kashmiri, "Sahab, Yem visitor cha yor aemet saaney khatre keine beere karen?" (Sir, are these tourists here for us or just to crowd us?)

That question stayed with me. Kashmir is healing. The scars of conflict still exist. Peace has begun to return to the Valley—not just in security reports. One finds it in the way people smile again, open their doors, and return to life.

But even healing requires balance. Today, the Valley is facing a silent threat—the weight of over-tourism.

THE VALLEY OVERWHELMED

More than 2 crore tourists visited Jammu & Kashmir in 2023. In peak season, some areas in the Valley receive over 30,000 visitors a day. On the surface, this sounds like economic revival—and in many ways, it is. Families in tourism, transport, handicrafts, and hospitality



have seen incomes rise. Young people in remote villages are now running homestays and travel apps. This is real—a welcome progress.

But I have also seen the other side.

In Sonamarg, I saw a woman carrying firewood forced to wait 20 minutes while an SUV convoy moved through.

In Gulmarg, the meadows that once echoed with birds now echo with honking. The chinar trees are still, but the air feels restless. The Valley is breathing faster than it should.

Kashmir is not an unlimited space. It is a living, breathing ecosystem—spiritual,

emotional, and environmental. And like every sacred space, it must not be entered unthinkingly.

WHY A CAP IS NECESSARY

1. ENVIRONMENTAL STRESS: The Dal Lake—once the jewel of Srinagar—is now shrinking, its water thickened with pollutants. Every plastic bottle thrown by a careless tourist, a local passerby, a houseboat owner, or a staff member at a hotel is a wound on Kashmir's body.

The trails in Yusmarg, Doodhpathri, and Bangus Valley are losing their green cover. What tourists see is

brehtaking—but what they leave behind could be suffocating.

2. SECURITY AND EMERGENCY CONCERNS: I still remember the Amarnath Yatra of 2000 when a sudden strike left thousands stranded. I was in Anantnag then. Even the army and medical teams took time to reach some locations. Now imagine such an unfortunate incident with ten times the number of tourists. Security management in a conflict-sensitive zone like Kashmir requires controlled variables, not chaos.

3. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPACT: Kashmiriyat is about warmth, respect, and balance. But when locals feel they are pushed off the road, priced out of markets, or ignored, helplessness can grow. Tourism must not make hosts feel like strangers in their own land.

4. PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING: Many of the children we care for in our homes at BWF have suffered trauma—losing parents to conflict or growing up in volatile environments. Overcrowded towns, traffic snarls, and loud urban behaviour make them anxious. There must be space for quiet, for children to heal, for people to walk, to breathe.

Why Trump Going After Harvard Is A Boon

By : Reshmi Dasgupta

With US President Donald Trump hellbent on bringing Harvard University to heel—as well as several other Ivy League and top schools—successive salvos continue to reveal interesting facts. On Monday, he ranted about 30 per cent of Harvard's student body being foreigners. Subsequent "fact-checking" showed that the actual figure was closer to 27 per cent—from 145 nations. Even so, it means well over a quarter of the student body of the best American university is not American.

Imagine if Indians woke up one day to find that one-fourth of those studying at IITs, IIMs, IISc, AIIMS, or any of the premier colleges are foreigners. What would be the consensus? Would there be pride in the fact that Indian universities are attracting the best brains from abroad, never mind if some Indians do not get a chance to benefit from the same facilities? Would Indians be overjoyed that those foreigners go on to bag the best jobs in the country too? What would be the



reaction of Indians if some very vocal foreign students also drove the agenda of the Indian universities, became the leaders of protests that stalled classes, and also openly indulged in politics, rather than stick to their academic goals? Would Indians be proud of the fact that foreign students were so involved in activities beyond what their visas envisaged? Would Indians be happy that the Indian education process was being regularly disrupted?

It is easy to be appalled at Trump's supposed xenophobic moves to "isolate" the US education system from the midstream of international talent.

After all, those universities have benefited not only from the intellectual capital of the world but also from their financial largesse. It seems suicidal to make the US jump off that gravy train. But there must be a significant latent groundswell of local resentment that Trump has sussed but opinion makers refuse to acknowledge.

Much like they refused to countenance that Trump could make a comeback after the defeat of 2020, the avalanche of court cases, and "shocking" revelations by former friends and disgruntled relatives. Whatever Trump does, as mad as most of his moves seem to the world

outside, there is a common thread: America First. If that means annoying friends—like India and Indians—so be it. And his campaign against Harvard and others is in that very same vein.

His dumping the DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) mantra was the definitive indication, though, that Indians there (or here) were not sad about Trump scrapping it. Indians did not qualify for it most of the time anyway because American-born desis are not seen as being disadvantaged, though they are in a minority, racially and numerically. But remember, India has quotas too. Imagine if foreigners were also deemed eligible for them under similar DEI-type principles! Which Indian politician would not have done exactly what Trump is doing now had he or she seen seats at the best universities and coveted jobs going to immigrants? It would be interesting to find out how many Americans who are not eligible for DEI or affirmative action have been unable to get into top universities in the past 50 years. Surely it cannot be that most

Americans who do not fall under any minority or special category have no scholastic talent? Some 71 per cent of all Nobel Prizes have been awarded to Americans—423 of them so far since 1901. An average of 35 per cent of American Nobel laureates in the sciences and economics are foreign-born, but that percentage is far higher if only the last two decades are considered. For instance, 4 out of 6 American Nobel laureates in medicine, chemistry, and physics in 2023 were immigrants. Surely it cannot be that US-born people have suddenly become less bright?

The inescapable conclusion is that the formidable resources of top US research institutions are being used to great effect by talented immigrants who arrived there via generous scholarships. But what happened to the American-born gene pool that had fuelled earlier scientific advances? Is this Nobel Prize skew a result of natural selection or affirmative action ensuring only a certain kind of talent makes it to the institutions that have the best resources?

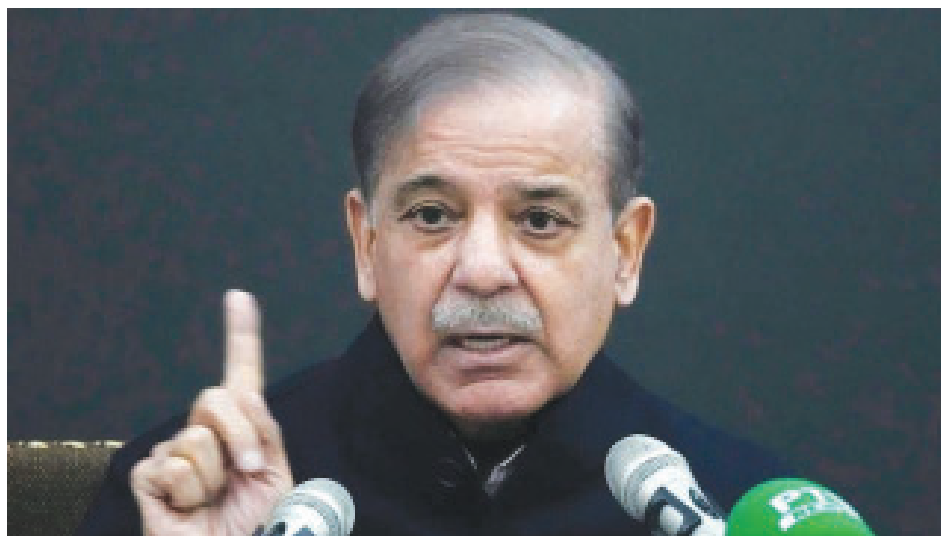
The Proxy Trap: How Pakistan's Deep State Undermines Peace With India

By : Arun Anand

A familiar and recurring pattern has once again unfolded in South Asia—every few years, as the region seems poised on the brink of enduring peace, destabilising forces with ties to Pakistan emerge to undermine such progress. Just as the Kashmir valley was settling into a climate of calm, order, and optimism for the future, terrorism resurfaced from obscurity. A firm and appropriate response was delivered. Yet, the attack fulfilled its intent: to derail the fragile prospects for harmony and collaboration between the neighbouring nations of India and Pakistan.

The roots of discord between the two nations predate their very existence. Within months of gaining independence, the neighbouring states engaged in war over the coveted region of Kashmir. Pakistan, unwilling to accept the decision of the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir decided to pursue an independent course, dispatched militias to seize control of the territory. In response, Maharaja Hari Singh appealed to Jawaharlal Nehru for assistance, offering accession to the newly established Indian Union.

The subsequent developments, including United Nations mediation, resulted in a provisional ceasefire line—later formalised in 1972 as the 'Line of Control' (LoC). Pakistan illegally occupied one-



third of Kashmir, a position it continues to hold. A further violent conflict broke out in 1965 when Pakistan initiated an incursion across the ceasefire line. The following year, Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and Pakistani President Ayub Khan agreed to cease hostilities and pursue peaceful avenues for resolving their disputes.

The 1970s began with a devastating setback for Pakistan, as its eastern region, oppressed under Islamabad's brutal governance, rose in rebellion to demand independence. India, motivated by both humanitarian concerns and strategic interests, supported the liberation movement, culminating in the creation of

Bangladesh in 1971. In the aftermath, recognising its significant lack of strategic depth and conventional military parity with India, the Pakistani establishment—particularly the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)—revised its security strategy. Pakistan's participation in equipping and training Afghan fighters during the US-led response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan provided it with the necessary framework to pursue this updated approach—proxy warfare. From the late 1980s onward, Pakistan's military and intelligence establishment fomented armed insurgency in Indian-administered Kashmir, resulting in prolonged cycles of violence and radicalisation.

Throughout this period, Pakistan leveraged its strategic use of proxy militant groups to retain a veil of plausible deniability. Meanwhile, the imbalance in civil-military relations ensured that any initiative by civilian governments to advance bilateral dialogue was systematically undermined by the military, keen to safeguard its dominant position in national affairs.

At a time when the world viewed India and Pakistan with concern over their newly acquired nuclear capabilities, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee met his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif to sign the historic 1999 Lahore Declaration. Both nations committed to confidence-building measures, multilateral cooperation, counter-terrorism efforts, nuclear and conventional security, and diplomatic dialogue concerning Kashmir. However, just months later, infiltrators supported by the Pakistani military occupied strategic positions in Kargil, Kashmir, sparking a limited conflict that resulted in the deaths of 527 Indian soldiers. Predictably, this severely undermined the diplomatic gains and intensified Indian distrust of Pakistan. Once again, India chose to overcome the hostilities and offer the prospect of improved neighbourly relations with Pakistan.

Muhammad Yunus On A Dangerous Path: Opposition Fades, Dissent Silenced

By : Pratim Ranjan Bose

In December 2023, just ahead of the January 2024 election, Prof. Ali Riaz wrote a piece titled "Bangladesh's Blueprint for Engineering an Election" in The Diplomat. It elaborated on how Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League created an environment of mock competition to legitimise their victory in the absence of the principal opposition, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

"The ruling party's strategy is comprised of three elements: first, keeping a united BNP out of the electoral process; second, peeling off leaders from the BNP into newly minted parties to create an impression that the BNP is fragmenting and its voters have an option in the election; and third, bringing in as many smaller parties as possible to the election," wrote the distinguished professor of political science at Illinois State University and a non-resident senior fellow of the Atlantic Council. Hasina was ousted from power in August 2024. Over the last nine months, the interim administration led by Dr Muhammad Yunus followed the same blueprint – and more. This time, Prof Riaz was part of the administration as vice-chairman of the National

Consensus Commission and head of the Bangladesh Constitutional Reforms Commission. The student leaders of the July uprising are now divided into at least three factions. They speak mostly in one tone. The largest among them, the National Citizen Party (NCP), is clearly an arm of the government – with part of their leadership in official positions and the rest holding portfolios in the party. There is no evidence of their popularity, but ample evidence of their ability to create mobs, apparently with support from sections of Islamist groups. Last week, when the world was anxiously watching the India-Pakistan conflict, the NCP and Hefazat-e-Islam – a non-political association of clerics and students from unregulated Qawmi madrasas – demanded a ban on the Awami League. Slogans were raised in support of the 1971 Liberation War criminals, right from the Shahbagh Square, which had once been a site of pro-Liberation movements. Muhammad Jasimuddin Rahmani, chief of the banned terrorist outfit Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), joined the demonstration. He had been released from jail during the Yunus regime.



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

The Pakistani Army will soon have a more pressing issue to deal with at its home front. Former Prime Minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief, Imran Khan, has called upon his party to gear up for a large-scale national agitation against the current hybrid regime of PM Shehbaz Sharif and Army Chief Asim Munir.

(News Agency)- While the Pakistani army is reeling from India's Operation Sindoor, it would now find itself entangled in a bigger crisis at home. Former Prime Minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief, Imran Khan, has called for a nationwide agitation, which will not be restricted to Islamabad. The proposed mass agitation follows several protests by PTI supporters seeking the release of Imran Khan, who has been in jail since August 2023.

The message, conveyed by Khan's sister Aleema Khan, made it clear. "Start preparing for a mass movement; I will not call people to Islamabad, but we will launch the movement across Pakistan", Pakistan Daily, The Express Tribune, quoted her as saying.

In a post on X, PTI Senator Ali Zafar, who went to meet Imran Khan on Monday, also shared that his party was planning a nationwide movement.

"Some very important matters were discussed. Amongst them was a countrywide movement for which the party should prepare and be well-organised," the senator wrote. **FIGHT AGAINST MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT IN PAK**

The fight is more against the military establishment headed by Field Marshal Asim Munir than against the civilian



government of PM Shehbaz Sharif, which has been propped up by the Rawalpindi deep state.

As seen in May 2023 PTI protests after Imran's arrest, it was the military that became the target of protesters. It is common knowledge that the Army schemed to bring down the Khan-led government, got the PTI banned, and cobbled up a coalition of the former cricketer's rivals.

With a Supreme Court decision opening the doors for PTI protesters to be tried in military courts, the party and its leadership are well aware who the real enemy is.

Munir, who has an axe to grind with Imran Khan, knows that very well too.

MASS MOVEMENT, NO SURRENDER: EX-PAK PM IMRAN KHAN

Khan's sister Aleema reiterated Khan's steadfastness in resisting any pressure, saying, "Imran Khan has made it clear that even if he spends his entire life behind bars, he will not surrender to pressure". She further revealed the former PM was being denied basic rights typically granted to regular inmates. Aleema highlighted Khan's commitment to the party's core values, quoting him: "No matter the extent of the torture, I will never accept

subjugation. I will not give in."

He also made clear there was no space in PTI for disloyal members, stating there is no place in the party for those who play on "both sides of the wicket."

Aleema also spoke about Khan's wife Bushra Bibi's imprisonment, describing it as a tactic to increase pressure on Imran.

"Even if I am kept in prison for life, I will not bow down," Khan reportedly stated.

WHY WAS EX-PAK PM IMRAN KHAN JAILED?

Khan was ousted from office through a parliamentary vote of no confidence in April 2022 and was later arrested in August 2023.

After Khan's arrest, for the Toshakhana case, where he was sentenced to 3 years and disqualified from office, widespread PTI-led protests erupted across Pakistan. Though his sentence was suspended on August 29, he was re-arrested in the cipher case. In January 2024, he received a 10-year sentence for leaking state secrets, which was overturned on June 3. He had blamed the Pakistani army for having a "personal grudge" against him. Since then, he has been vocal in his criticism of the Pakistani military establishment and the coalition government of PML(N), led by PM Sharif.

Is the future Qosh Tepa Canal in Afghanistan the final nail in Aral Sea's coffin?

(News Agency)- Afghanistan is building a 285-kilometre waterway at an accelerated pace to irrigate its drought-ridden northern regions. Central Asian states maintain that decisions regarding transboundary water use should be made collectively.

Afghanistan is rapidly constructing the Qosh Tepa Canal, a waterway meant to help irrigate more than 500,000 hectares of its arid northern regions, for which it will redirect 20-30% of the Amu Darya River flow.

Besides Afghanistan, the Amu Darya flows through Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, with the last two countries being downstream. The countries depend on the river to fuel their hydroelectric power plants and irrigate agricultural lands.

Redirecting the river to the canal will devastate Central Asia's water security, cutting Uzbekistan's water supply by 15% and Turkmenistan's by as much as 80%, as well as negatively affect employment and poverty levels, migration and cross-border conflicts.

At the same time, authorities in the



remaining two Central Asian states – Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan – seem to be less concerned with the issue because the Amu Darya does not pass through their territory.

Experts, however, warn that if Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan receive less water from the Amu Darya, to mitigate losses, they may start taking more water from the Syr Darya River, of which they are upstream. "These changes in the water balance will inevitably affect our country. The flow

from the Syr Darya River from Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan may reduce by 30-40%," said Azamatkhan Amirtayev, the leader of Kazakhstan's green party Baytaq.

Together, the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers feed the ecologically devastated Aral Sea.

"Qosh Tepa will finish off the Aral Sea basin, it will be the last nail in the coffin," said Bulat Yessekin, founder and coordinator of the Central Asian Water Resources Management and Climate

Change Platform. To preserve the ecosystem, he suggested that Central Asian states should share their energy and food resources with Afghanistan.

"They're building the canal to feed themselves. It's our fault they don't have water. We have the means to solve this problem, if only we take it seriously," highlighted Yessekin.

Other experts at the recent Water Security and Transboundary Water Use conference agreed that the construction of the Qosh Tepa Canal will undermine all the work on the restoration of the Aral Sea. Central Asia is already suffering from water shortage due to the changing climate and poor water management, and the new challenge may create irreversible damage to the countries' ecosystems.

Water regulation

Water use in Central Asia is regulated by the 1992 agreement on transboundary water use and protection, a descendant of the Soviet-era Protocol 566. The countries also abide by the UN Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

Ex-flight attendant allegedly caught with 101 pounds of synthetic drug in her suitcases at Sri Lanka airport, reports say

CRIME

Ex-flight attendant allegedly caught with 101 pounds of synthetic drug in her suitcases at Sri Lanka airport, reports say
chicago

Updated on: May 27, 2025 / 5:12 AM
CDT / CBS/AFP

Sri Lankan authorities have seized nearly 60 kilograms of potent synthetic cannabis that foreigners tried to smuggle in this month in three separate cases, a customs official said Saturday. The majority of the drugs were reportedly seized from a former flight attendant from England who authorities say had over 100 pounds of the drug in her suitcases.

The South Asian island has long been considered a transit point for international drug smugglers, and all three suspects — from Britain, India and Thailand — could face life imprisonment if convicted.

The 21-year-old British woman was arrested on May 12, with customs officers saying she was stopped with 46 kilograms (101 pounds) of kush — a synthetic drug containing powerful opioids — packed in two suitcases.



"This could be the biggest drug bust at the Colombo airport in recent times," said Customs Additional Director General Seevali Arukgoda.

British media, including the BBC, have identified the woman as Charlotte May Lee, a former cabin crew member from London, who had flown to Sri Lanka from Thailand. She is being held in detention at a prison near Colombo airport and is in contact with her family, her lawyer told the BBC.

The BBC reported that she denied knowledge of drugs in her luggage, and claimed they were planted at her hotel in Bangkok.

Her legal representative, Sampath Perera, told the BBC that his team was visiting her daily in prison to provide support and monitor her wellbeing.

"I had never seen them [the drugs] before. I didn't expect it all when they pulled me over at the airport. I thought it was going to be filled with all my stuff," Lee told the Daily Mail from prison.

On May 16, a 33-year-old Indian man was arrested at the northern seaport of Kankesanthurai.

Arukgoda said that he had been carrying four kilograms of kush.

He too has been handed over to the

anti-narcotics police for further investigations.

On May 18, a 21-year-old Thai man was stopped at Colombo airport. He is accused of attempting to smuggle in nearly eight kilograms of kush.

The drug has wreaked havoc in West African countries in recent years, especially in Sierra Leone, The Associated Press reported. In 2014, Sierra Leone President Julius Maada Bio declared a war on kush, calling it an epidemic and a national threat.

Sri Lankan authorities have previously seized large quantities of heroin off its shores, saying it suggested the island is being used as a transit hub for narcotics being reshipped onward.

In October, a Sri Lankan court sentenced 10 Iranian men to life imprisonment after they pleaded guilty to smuggling more than 111 kilograms of heroin.

The men were among 17 arrested in Sri Lankan waters in April 2016 while transporting narcotics aboard an Iranian trawler.

In 2023, nine Iranians received life sentences in a separate drug smuggling case.

Pakistan pitches 'responsible' image as diplomatic war with India heats up

(News Agency)- Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited Azerbaijan in February, and Türkiye only a month ago, in April. Yet, this week, he was back in both countries, as part of a five-day, four-nation diplomatic blitzkrieg also including stops in Iran and Tajikistan, where Sharif will hold talks on Thursday and Friday. And he isn't alone: Sharif is being accompanied by Army Chief Asim Munir — recently promoted to Pakistan's only second-ever field marshal — and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar.

Their destinations might be familiar, but the context has changed dramatically since Sharif's previous visits. More than two weeks after a four-day standoff between Pakistan and India — during which they exchanged missile and drone attacks — diplomacy has become the new battlefield between the South Asian neighbours. India has launched a global diplomatic campaign, sending delegations to more than 30 countries, accusing Pakistan of supporting "terrorist groups" responsible for attacks in India and Indian-administered Kashmir.

"We want to exhort the world to hold those responsible for cross-border terrorism accountable, those who have practiced this for 40 years against India, that is Pakistan. Their actions need to

be called out," said Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson for India's Ministry of External Affairs, last week.

"I have said in all humility that we want peace in the region, and that requires talks on the table on issues which need urgent attention and amicable resolution, that is the issue of Kashmir, according to the resolutions of the United Nations and the Security Council, and as per the aspirations of the people of Kashmir," he said.

Kashmir, a picturesque valley in the northeastern subcontinent, remains the root of conflict between the two nuclear-armed nations since their independence in 1947. A 1948 UN resolution called for a plebiscite to determine Kashmir's future, but eight decades later, it has yet to take place. On April 22, gunmen killed 26 people, most of them tourists, in Pahalgam, a hill resort in Indian-administered Kashmir, in the worst such attack on civilians in years. India blamed the killings on The Resistance Front (TRF), which it alleges is linked to Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), a Pakistan-based group designated as a "terrorist" entity by the United Nations. New Delhi accused Islamabad of complicity in the attacks. Pakistan denied the allegations, calling for a "transparent, credible, independent" investigation.

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Three Indians Go Missing In Iran, Embassy Says 'Strongly Taken Up This Matter' With Tehran



The Indian Embassy in Tehran on Wednesday said that three Indian nationals have gone missing in Iran after their families informed the Embassy about them.

The Embassy stated that it has taken up the matter with Iranian authorities and has

requested urgent efforts to trace the missing individuals and ensure their safety.

The statement was issued in an official post on social media platform X.

"Family members of 3 Indian citizens have informed the Embassy of India

that their relatives are missing after having traveled to Iran. The Embassy has strongly taken up this matter with the Iranian authorities, and requested that the missing Indians should be urgently traced and their safety should be ensured," the Embassy stated. "We are also keeping the family- members regularly updated of the efforts being made by the Embassy," the post added. Besides the notification, the Embassy did not provide details about the missing individuals or specify when and where they went missing in Iran.

However, according to a report by India Today, the missing men are from Punjab. They have been identified as Hushanpreet Singh from Sangrur, Jaspal Singh from SBS Nagar, and Amritpal Singh from Hoshiarpur. All three reportedly went missing on 1 May, shortly after arriving in Tehran.

Kidnapping allegations

The report further claimed that the

youths may have been kidnapped.

Hushanpreet's mother alleged that the men were promised work permits for Australia but were taken to Iran instead, under the pretext of a temporary stay. She also said that a travel agent, who took money from them, was involved in the plan. Shortly after their arrival in Iran on 1 May, they were reportedly kidnapped. According to the mother, the kidnappers demanded a ransom. She also said the family received a video showing the men tied with yellow ropes, with blood visible on their arms. The kidnappers allegedly threatened to kill them if the ransom was not paid. The victims were initially able to speak with their families using the kidnappers' phones, but contact was lost on 11 May. It has also come to light that the agent from Hoshiarpur who facilitated their travel is now absconding. The family has lodged a police complaint against him.

What is behind the political tension roiling Bangladesh?

(News Agency)- Bangladesh's interim government, led by Nobel peace laureate Muhammad Yunus, faces mounting discontent among citizens and discord among political parties over its plans for elections.

After deadly student-led protests forced long-time Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to flee to India last year, authorities face delays over promised reforms, growing protests, and political division, despite appealing for national unity. Here are the key issues fuelling the unrest and uncertainty:

ELECTION DISPUTES

The interim government has yet to set a firm election date, after Yunus said national elections would be held sometime between December and June of next year.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia wants polls held by December. Last week, it said it continued support for Yunus' government would be "difficult" without a firm election plan.

Army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman also piled on pressure last week, by calling for elections by year-end and airing dissatisfaction over the political situation.

The National Citizen Party, born out of last year's deadly student-led protests, insists elections must wait until key reforms are completed.

REFORM DEADLOCK

Progress has been slow on sweeping institutional reforms Yunus promised after Hasina's exit. His government set



up the National Consensus Commission (NCC), a panel of seven, to forge consensus on recommendations by six reform panel.

The NCC said its first round of dialogue with political parties showed broad support for some changes, such as restoring the caretaker government system and judicial independence.

But sharp disagreements cloud more complex proposals for constitutional reform, a two-chamber parliament, and decentralisation of the judiciary.

A second round of talks with political parties on reforms will begin in the first week of June.

LAW AND ORDER

Bangladesh's unstable law and order situation feeds people's anxiety, with growing street protests by civil servants,

weeks disrupting life in major cities, such as Dhaka, the capital.

The unrest worries citizens, who fear it could spiral out of control if a political consensus is not reached soon.

BAN ON HASINA'S PARTY

The Awami League's registration was suspended this month, effectively barring it from contesting future elections but redoubling concerns about inclusiveness when polls are next held. Yunus' press secretary, Shafiqul Alam, called for efforts to escape a war-like situation he said prevailed after the Awami League ban prompted attempts to destabilise the government.

In a Facebook post, Hasina's son, Sajeeb Wazed, blamed the crisis on what he called "Yunus' politics of vengeance".

teachers, and political activists in recent

Why summiting of Himalayan peak from Nepal stirred up a storm in Sikkim

(News Agency)-A recent expedition to Mount Kangchenjunga, the world's third-highest peak located on the border between India and Nepal, by a team of mountaineers from the Nepalese side has sparked outrage in Sikkim. Such intense has been the reaction that the Chief Minister of the state, Prem Singh Tamang, wrote to the Centre, seeking a prohibition of such expeditions from the Nepal side. There is a reason behind this outrage.

The 8,586-metre-high Himalayan peak, considered sacred by the Bhutia and Lepcha communities of Sikkim, has long been off-limits to climbers from the Indian

side. Expressing deep concern, CM Tamang wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, urging the Centre to take steps to prevent such expeditions in the future. Tamang's letter followed an outrage by the Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee (SIBLAC), which condemned the ascent, demanding stricter enforcement of the ban to protect Sikkim's cultural heritage. A joint team of mountaineers from Arunachal Pradesh's National Institute of Mountaineering and Adventure Sports (NIMAS), led by Colonel Ranveer Singh Jamwal, summited Mount Kangchenjunga, via the easier Nepal route on May 18.

Trump dangles Golden Dome for Canada: Join US, enter \$175B defense plan for free

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday invited Canada to join his proposed USD 175 billion 'Golden Dome' missile defence system for free -- on the condition that it becomes the 51st state of the United States.

(News Agency)-US President Donald Trump on Tuesday invited Canada to join his proposed USD 175 billion 'Golden Dome' missile defence system for free - on the condition that it becomes the 51st state of the United States.

"I told Canada, which very much wants to be part of our fabulous Golden Dome System, that it will cost \$61 Billion Dollars if they remain a separate, but unequal, Nation, but will cost ZERO DOLLARS if they become our cherished 51st State," Trump wrote on his Truth Social network. "They are considering the offer!" the president claimed in his post. Last week, President Donald Trump unveiled plans for the Golden Dome missile defence program -- a USD 175 billion, multilayered system that will put US weapons in space for the first time. Speaking from the Oval Office, Trump said he expects the system to be fully operational by 2029 and capable of intercepting missiles "even if they are launched from space."

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney



has acknowledged that his government is in talks with the US regarding participation in the Golden Dome program. "Is it a good idea for Canada? Yes, it is good to have protections in

place for Canadians," Carney said during a press conference last week. "We cooperate if necessary but not necessarily cooperate," he added. However, Canada has yet to officially

respond to the statehood claim. Earlier this month, Carney has made it clear in Trump's presence that Canada's sovereignty is "not for sale."

On May 6, Carney met Trump for the first time since being elected as Canada's Prime Minister. Their meeting in the Oval Office quickly took an unexpected turn when Trump reiterated his proposal for Canada to join the US as its 51st state. "It would really be a wonderful marriage," Trump said in the presence of reporters. In response, Carney promptly turned down Trump's offer and said, "It's not for sale, it won't be for sale - ever." "Never say never, never say never," Trump responded.

The Golden Dome missile defence system is designed to integrate ground- and space-based capabilities to counter missile threats at all four critical stages of an attack: preemptively neutralising missiles before launch, intercepting them in their early flight phase, disrupting them midcourse, and blocking them in the final moments before impact.

Ex-Russian President's World War III warning to Trump after his Putin criticism

The warning from Dmitry Medvedev comes after Donald Trump said that Putin was 'playing with fire' by refusing to engage in peace efforts with Ukraine.



(News Agency)-Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has warned Donald Trump of another World War breaking out after the US President said Vladimir Putin was "playing with fire" by refusing to engage in peace talks with

Ukraine.

In a stark warning to Trump, who has been projecting himself as a global peace messiah, Medvedev tweeted, "Regarding Trump's words about Putin 'playing with fire' and 'really bad things' happening to

Russia. I only know of one REALLY BAD thing - WWII. I hope Trump understands this!" The fresh exchange between the Cold War adversaries came amid Trump's growing frustration with Putin as Russia continued with its strikes on Ukraine, thumbing its nose at the US President's repeated calls to engage in ceasefire talks.

TRUMP'S STRING OF ATTACKS ON PUTIN

In his latest broadside, Trump accused Putin of "playing with fire" while emphasising that "really bad things would have already happened in Russia" without his intervention.

"What Vladimir Putin doesn't realise is that if it weren't for me, lots of really bad things would have already happened to Russia, and I mean REALLY BAD. He's playing with fire!" Trump posted on Truth Social on Tuesday.

However, Trump did not specify what the "really bad" things were. The scathing remarks come days after he called Putin "absolutely crazy" following Russia's drone attack on Ukraine's Kyiv over the weekend that left 13 dead. On Tuesday, Russian forces also captured a part of Ukraine's northeastern Sumy region.

"I have always had a very good relationship with Vladimir Putin of Russia, but something has happened to him. He has gone absolutely CRAZY!" Trump said on Sunday.

The string of harsh criticisms coincides with the Trump administration's apparent change in its outlook towards Russia.

Ukraine, its European allies and the US have all urged Putin to accept an immediate and unconditional ceasefire for at least 30 days. However, the Kremlin has kept the US and Ukraine waiting.

Need more plumbers, not LGBTQ graduates: White House doubles down on Harvard

The remarks by White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt come as the Donald Trump administration plans to cancel federal contracts with Harvard worth \$100 million.

Doubling down on its offensive against Harvard University, the White House has said taxpayers' money should go to vocational and trade schools that train plumbers and electricians instead of the Ivy League institution.

The remarks by White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt come as the Donald Trump administration plans to cancel federal contracts with Harvard worth \$100 million.

Trump has also indicated that he might redirect the \$3 billion in federal grants Harvard receives to trade schools nationwide. Such schools focus on imparting practical skills for specific trades or professions.

"The President is more interested in giving that taxpayer money to trade schools and programs and state schools where they are promoting American values but, most importantly, educating the next generation based on skills that we need in our economy and our society," Leavitt told Fox News. The press



secretary also questioned why a university "pushing anti-American values" with a \$53 billion endowment should receive taxpayer funds.

"Apprenticeships, electricians, plumbers - we need more of those in our country and less LGBTQ graduate majors from

Harvard University and that's what this administration's position is," Leavitt further said. The remark also brings into focus how Trump has moved swiftly to end policies protecting LGBTQ rights in his second term.

PRESS SECRETARY FACES FLAK

following her remarks, Leavitt was roasted on social media for her wild jab. "From now on, Trump can only hire plumbers and electricians to represent him in court," one user remarked. Another commented, "Those LGBTQ graduate majors run most of Wall Street." A third said, "Just wait till she finds out that electricians and plumbers can be GULP... GAY TOO".

The escalating tussle with Harvard comes as Trump has accused the university of being hotbeds of liberal bias and campus anti-Semitism.

In its latest move against Harvard, the Trump administration has directed all federal agencies to review and potentially terminate or reallocate their contracts with the university.

Last week, Harvard University was stripped of its ability to enrol foreign students, leaving thousands of Indian and foreign students in limbo. However, that order has been temporarily blocked by a Boston federal judge.

EU says Israeli strikes in Gaza 'go beyond what is necessary' to fight Hamas



The EU's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, has said that "Israeli strikes in Gaza go beyond what is necessary to fight Hamas" as the death toll there continues to mount.

Kallas also said that the EU did not support a new aid distribution model backed by the US and Israel which bypasses the UN and other humanitarian organisations.

"We don't support the privatisation of the distribution of humanitarian aid. Humanitarian aid can not be weaponised", she said.

Israeli air strikes and other military actions since it resumed the war in March following a ceasefire have killed 3,924 people, the Hamas-run health ministry says. Israel says it is acting to destroy Hamas and get back hostages the group holds. Recent Israel bombardments have killed large numbers of civilians. Last Friday an air strike in Khan Younis killed nine of a Palestinian doctor's 10 children. At least 35 people were killed in a school building sheltering displaced families in northern Gaza overnight into Monday. Kallas' remarks follows an intervention by

new German Chancellor Friedrich Merz who declared he "no longer understands" Israel's objectives in the besieged enclave.

"The way in which the civilian population has been affected... can no longer be justified by a fight against Hamas terrorism," he said.

The EU is one of the largest donors of humanitarian aid to Gaza, yet Kallas said most of it was currently unable to get to Palestinians who need it. Israel imposed a complete blockade on Gaza in March and only began allowing a trickle of aid in after 11 weeks.

"The majority of the aid to Gaza is provided by the EU but it's not reaching the people as it is blocked by Israel," Kallas said.

"The suffering of the people is untenable." EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen meanwhile described recent Israeli attacks on Gaza's civilian infrastructure as "abhorrent" and "disproportionate".

It also follows the strongest criticism yet by the UK, France and Canada, who demanded Israel end its military offensive in Gaza. The UK later said it was suspending trade talks with Israel.

The EU has launched a formal review of

its own trade agreement with Israel and Kallas said she would present "options" at the upcoming EU foreign ministers meeting in Brussels on 23 June. UN agencies have warned that Gaza's 2.1 million population is facing catastrophic levels of hunger after an almost three-month Israeli blockade that was eased last week.

Israel and the US are backing a new aid distribution system run by a controversial new group, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF).

The GHF's aid distribution system uses US security contractors and bypasses the UN, which has rejected it as unethical and unworkable. The US and Israeli governments have said it is preventing aid from being stolen by Hamas, which the armed group denies doing. Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated on Tuesday plans to relocate Gaza's entire population to a "sterile zone" in the south of the territory while Israeli troops continue fighting Hamas elsewhere. He also vowed to facilitate what he described as the "voluntary emigration" of much of Gaza's population to other countries - a plan many view as forcible expulsion.

How 'laughing gas' became a deadly - but legal-American addiction

Nitrous oxide – known colloquially as "laughing gas" – has many uses, from a painkiller during dental procedures to a whipping agent for canned whipped cream.

While its euphoric side effects have long been known, the rise of vaping has helped create a perfect delivery vehicle for the gas – and a perfect recipe for an addiction, experts warn.

Meg Caldwell's death wasn't inevitable. The horse rider from Florida had started using nitrous oxide recreationally in university eight years ago. But like many young people, she started to use more heavily during the pandemic.

The youngest of four sisters, she was "the light of our lives," her sister Kathleen Dial told the BBC.

But Ms Caldwell's use continued to escalate, to the point that her addiction "started ruining her life".

She temporarily lost use of her legs after an overdose, which also rendered her incontinent. Still, she continued to use, buying it in local smoke shops, inhaling it in the car park and then heading straight back into the shop to buy more.

She sometimes spent hundreds of dollars a day.

She died last November, in one of those car parks just outside a vape shop.

"She didn't think that it would hurt her because she was buying it in the smoke shop, so she thought she was using this substance legally," Ms Dial said.

The progression of Ms Caldwell's addiction – from youthful misuse to life-threatening compulsion – has become increasingly common. The Annual Report of America's Poison Centers found there was a 58% increase in reports of intentional exposure to nitrous oxide in the US between 2023-2024. In a worst-case scenario, inhalation of nitrous oxide can lead to hypoxia, where the brain does not get enough oxygen. This can result in death. Regular inhalation can also lead to a Vitamin B12 deficiency which can cause nerve damage, degradation of the spinal column and even paralysis. The number of deaths attributed to nitrous oxide poisonings rose by more than 110% between 2019 and 2023, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Possession of nitrous oxide was criminalised in the UK in 2023 after misuse among young people increased during the pandemic. But while many states have also outlawed the recreational use of the product in the US, it is still legal to sell as a culinary product. Only Louisiana has totally banned the retail sale of the gas.

Galaxy Gas, a major manufacturer,



even offers recipes for dishes, including Chicken Satay with Peanut Chili Foam and Watermelon Gazpacho on their website. With flavours like Blue Raspberry or Strawberries and Cream, experts warn this loophole – as well as major changes in packaging and retail – has contributed to the rise in misuse.

Until recently users would take single-use plain metal canisters weighing around 8g and inhale the gas using a balloon. But when usage spiked during the pandemic, nitrous oxide manufacturers began selling much larger canisters online – as large as 2kg – and, eventually, in shops selling electronic vapes and other smoking paraphernalia.

Companies also began to package the gas in bright colourful canisters with designs featuring characters from computer games and television series. Pat Aussem, of the Partnership to End Addiction, believes these developments are behind increased misuse:

"Even being called Galaxy Gas or Miami Magic is marketing," she said. "If you have large canisters, then it means that more people can try it and use it and that can lead to a lot of peer pressure." The BBC reached out for comment to both Galaxy Gas and Miami Magic but did not receive a response. Amazon, where the gas is sold online, has said they are aware of customers misusing nitrous oxide and that they are working to implement further safety measures. In a response to reporting from CBS News, the BBC's news partner in the US,

Galaxy Gas maintained that the gas was intended for culinary use and that they include a message on their sites warning against misuse.

Concern about nitrous oxide misuse increased last year, after several videos of people using the product went viral online.

On social media, videos of young people getting high on gas became a trend. A video uploaded in July 2024 by an Atlanta-based fast-food restaurant featured a young man inhaling Strawberries and Cream flavoured nitrous oxide saying "My name's Lil T, man", his voice made deeper by the gas. To date the clip has been viewed about 40 million times and spawned thousands of copies. Misuse also featured heavily in rap music videos and Twitch streaming. Guests tried it on the Joe Rogan Show and rappers including Ye (formerly Kanye West) spoke about abusing the substance publicly. Ye has since sued his dentist for "recklessly" supplying Ye with "dangerous amounts of nitrous oxide". In response to the trend, TikTok blocked searches for "galaxy gas," and redirected users to a message offering resources about substance use and addiction. Rapper SZA also alerted her social media followers about its harms and slammed it for "being MASS marketed to black children". In March, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued an official alert warning against inhaling the gas after it "observed an increase in reports of adverse events after inhalation of

nitrous oxide products".

The FDA told the BBC that it "continues to actively track adverse events related to nitrous oxide misuse and will take appropriate actions to protect the public health". But for some, these warnings came too late.

In 2023, the family of a 25-year-old woman, Marissa Politte successfully sued Nitrous Distributor United Brands for \$745m in damages after the radiology technician was killed by a driver high on nitrous oxide. The jury found the company responsible for selling the product in the knowledge that it would be misused.

"Marissa Politte's death shouldn't have happened in the first place, but my God, it should be the last," Johnny Simon, the Politte family's lawyer, said at the time. In the years since there have been several fatal traffic accidents involving the gas both in the US and the UK.

Meanwhile, Ms Caldwell's family have launched a class action lawsuit against manufacturers and distributors of nitrous oxide, hoping to remove the product from retail sales across the US for good. "The people who administer nitrous oxide in a dentist office now have to go through hours and hours of training, she said. "It just is crazy to me that the drug can be purchased in a smoke shop to anyone who goes in."

"Unfortunately, it's become very obvious that the manufacturers and the owners of the smoke shops are not going to do the moral thing and take this off the shelves themselves," Ms Dial said.



Trump's tariff house of cards collapses—one court ruling just ended the trade wars

BY : NICHOLAS CREEL

In a sweeping unanimous decision that landed like a constitutional earthquake, a three-judge panel at the U.S. Court of International Trade just delivered what may ultimately prove to be the most devastating blow to Donald Trump's presidency yet, by ruling that his sweeping tariffs exceed his statutory authority under federal law.

The court didn't just strike down specific tariffs, either; they demolished the entire legal foundation upon which Trump's trade war was built. The president's house of cards didn't just wobble with this loss — it has collapsed entirely.

Trump's entire negotiating philosophy was built on the premise that he could threaten economic chaos if other countries didn't bend to his will. The credibility behind those threats just evaporated entirely, because credible threats require actual authority to carry them out.

The timing couldn't be more politically devastating.

If Trump appeals to the Supreme Court, as he almost certainly will do, the most optimistic timeline has a ruling coming

down in late 2025 or early 2026. More realistically, we're looking at a final result being delayed until the summer of 2026. This means that Trump faces a choice between accepting defeat or spending the next year and a half as a raging lame duck on trade policy, totally unable to continue making credible threats while his international counterparts watch him flail helplessly through the courts. Even worse for Trump, the Supreme Court's recent jurisprudence on executive power suggests he faces an uphill battle. The court's development of the Major Questions Doctrine shows an increasing skepticism toward sweeping executive claims of authority, requiring Congress to speak very clearly when delegating powers of vast economic significance — like, for example, tariffs on almost all imported goods. Trump's appeal is a long shot at best.

Moreover, the political timeline puts Trump in an impossible position in that, even if he somehow wins at the Supreme Court, he can't credibly restart his tariff offensive in 2026 without looking economically reckless right before the midterm elections. The markets uniformly

tanked when he kicked off his trade war the first time. Threatening to restart that chaos just months before Americans head to the polls would be political suicide for his party, which already maintains bare majorities in both houses.

America's international trading partners are undoubtedly celebrating this decision, because they now hold all the cards. Every economic negotiation Trump enters will now be conducted from a position of obvious weakness. His counterparts know he can't escalate, can't credibly threaten retaliation, and is legally constrained from the heavy-handed tactics that defined his primary negotiating approach. The psychological impact of this loss cannot be overstated. For years, foreign leaders have had to calculate whether Trump's tariff threats were bluster or genuine policy. That uncertainty gave him leverage even when his legal authority was questionable. Now, every world leader knows he's been legally neutered on his signature issue. They can simply wait him out, knowing that any aggressive moves will likely be struck down by courts that have already declared his approach

unlawful. This constitutional straightjacket comes as Trump's broader economic strategy is already teetering on the edge of disaster. As I've previously documented, his fiscal policies are driving America toward a cliff at breakneck speed, with Treasury rates and dollar values diverging in ways that signal dangerous erosion of international confidence in American economic stewardship. The markets have been flashing red warning lights about unsustainable debt loads just as Republicans push forward with multitrillion-dollar tax cuts for the wealthy. With tariffs now off the table, Trump is left holding only the most fiscally destructive tools in his arsenal — the very deficit-exploding policies that are already spooking bond markets and driving up borrowing costs. In order to have a second-term accomplishment to hang his hat on, he's essentially been forced to double down on the economic suicide mission I've been warning about, at exactly the moment when fiscal prudence has become most critical.

Trending Now: Outrage As The Biggest Policy Driver

In today's attention-fractured society, policymaking is increasingly happening in the glare of trending hashtags and viral posts rather than in sober committee rooms. The global political arena has become a Twitter timeline and an Instagram feed, where the clamorous buzz of social media drowns out every sincere deliberation.

Across the world, leaders now scramble to respond to whatever is "trending" that morning. Indeed, "the power of a viral post, tweet or video can shift public opinion, drive movements and even shape policies". This dynamic is warping priorities and turning governance into reactive performance theatre guided more by optics than substance. Nuanced debates or long-term strategies do not set the agenda; instead, policies are increasingly decided by the viral mood of the nation. Social psychologist Jonathan Haidt observes that social media has morphed into an "outrage machine," spreading anger and toxicity — a machine that policymakers feel compelled to ride. The result? A shallow, short-attention-span approach to governing that prizes retweets, reposts over reason, and clicks over consensus, eroding the foundations of democratic decision-making. Shifting it to a social media mob that moves from outrage to outrage.

Trending Hashtags Set the Agenda

In an era of Twitter storms and Google trends, what gets attention dictates what gets acted upon. Elected officials and bureaucrats monitor social media as closely as opinion polls, ever wary of becoming the next target of an online uproar. In many democracies, a single viral hashtag can catapult an issue from obscurity to urgency overnight. A case in point: when the #MeToo movement swept across the U.S., India, and beyond, it didn't just raise awareness — it forced tangible responses. Bollywood moguls, politicians, and corporate leaders faced consequences as allegations surfaced in India's #MeToo wave, leading to resignations and even new workplace policies. A hashtag can indeed spark action.

Yet, policies don't always change just because a hashtag went viral. Without real-world follow-through, online outrage risks becoming mere "slacktivism" — feel-good clicking without impact. Tech critic Evgeny Morozov famously warned that "slacktivism is...

dedicated activists' energy wasted on approaches less effective than the alternatives". In other words, viral moments can be a catalyst, but they are no substitute for the grind of actual policymaking.

Nonetheless, governments can hardly ignore the sway of social media fury. A Twitter-driven movement distorted public policy in India during the 2020-21 farmers' protests. When foreign influencers pushed the farmers' grievances, with hashtags like #FarmersProtest trending worldwide, distorting the voices on the ground. A small set of farmers supported by Canadian and American lobbyists used live updates on Facebook and Instagram to go viral on social media platforms and were helped by global celebrity activists like Rihanna and Greta Thunberg, who pushed the agenda of global lobbyists. A social media mob pressured the government to repeal the farm laws, a stunning example of sustained global activism bringing down a reform process.

Policymaking as Theatrical Performance

Policy debates these days feel less like deliberations and more like theatre on a social media stage. In many countries, leaders have effectively become social media influencers, measuring success in likes, shares, and trend metrics. They craft pronouncements for maximum viral impact, tailoring soundbites to fit a 280-character tweet or a 15-second video. Governance is becoming a performance art.

No one epitomised this public policy via social media better than former reality TV star and now U.S. President Donald Trump, who has his own social media platform, Truth Social, where he has converted the Oval Office into a video studio. Where the signing of every Executive Order is televised, and he even uses video to castigate and cow down foreign heads of state, as was seen in his interaction with Ukraine's President Zelenskyy and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The Death of Nuance in Digital Debate

Perhaps the most tragic casualty of social media's policy dominance is nuance. Complex societal challenges — climate change, immigration, economic hollowing out — do not lend themselves to simplistic solutions, yet online platforms force simplification. Twitter's character limit and Instagram's blink-and-you-miss-it videos reward brevity

and bombast, not depth. As a result, policy discourse gets dumbed down into slogans and soundbites, stripped of context and complexity. Researchers note that the very "format of these platforms, characterised by brevity and visual punch, encourages bite-sized pieces of information, which are often oversimplified or sensationalized". In short, social media "distort[s] complex... issues, reducing them to digestible narratives that may not capture the nuance of real-world politics."

We see this play out daily. Online, a climate bill might get tagged as #GreenNewSteal or #ClimateHoax, labels that spread widely but shed little light. A nuanced policy proposal — a mixed approach to energy transition — is a tough sell when your opponent posts a viral 10-word rebuttal that frames it as an apocalypse or a utopia. Grey areas turn black-and-white on social media. There is little incentive to acknowledge trade-offs or uncertainties in a tweet when doing so will only dilute your message and cost you precious engagement. Consequently, policy arguments become simplistic morality plays: good vs evil, patriots vs traitors, nationalists vs anti-nationals, with no room for the painstaking work of consensus-building or the admission of shades of grey.

This erosion of nuance is compounded by the rise of rapid-response punditry on apps like Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp. In the past, a significant policy idea would be analysed by experts over time; now it is instant fodder for thousands of amateur commentators within minutes. The moment a new policy idea or court case hits the news, an army of self-appointed experts on social media begins opining — often without reading beyond the headline.

Accuracy sometimes takes a backseat in the race to get information out quickly. The first casualty is truth: misinformation and half-truths proliferate long before any fact-check can be issued. Studies show that initial false claims consistently outperform later corrections in reach and longevity on social platforms. By the time cooler heads attempt to clarify, the false narrative has hardened into received wisdom for a large swath of the public.

The WhatsApp "University" effect exemplifies this problem.

In India, WhatsApp group chats have become wildfire channels for propaganda, rumour, and lore — a parallel information universe where everyone is a professor and facts are often optional. Justice K.V. Viswanathan famously cautioned citizens, warning, "We should not get carried away by such messages. A lot of truth decay is happening." When a nation's highest jurist laments "truth decay," it underscores how badly nuanced, factual discourse has eroded. The judge's phrase is chillingly apt: truth itself is rotting away in our policy debates, as social media rewards whoever shouts the loudest, regardless of accuracy. Jonathan Haidt observed that Americans "are cut off from one another and the past... unable to recognise the same truth" in this fractured digital landscape. In such a climate, forging nuanced policy—or even agreeing on basic facts—becomes nearly impossible. From Outrage to Action — and Back Again

Around the world, the loop between social media outrage and policymaker reaction has become almost instantaneous — and perilous. Public officials now feel they must respond to viral sentiment immediately, lest they appear out of touch or unresponsive. This often leads to policy knee-jerks: hurried bans, sudden U-turns, or symbolic gestures drafted on the fly to placate the online masses. When a horrifying video of police brutality trends in America, city councils rush to propose police reform bills — some thoughtful, others performative — within days. When outraged tweets accused a Brazilian official of corruption, investigations were announced by that afternoon, guilt or innocence aside. The timeline of deliberation has collapsed to match the Twitter news cycle. The problem is that governing by viral outrage is not governance at all — it's crisis management as a permanent state of affairs. It prizes immediacy over effectiveness and urgency over importance. Consider the cycle: a shocking incident occurs, social media explodes with anger and demands, officials scramble to appease the anger, a hastily crafted policy patch is thrown over the problem, and the online crowd moves on to the next outrage. Little attention is given to follow-through or long-term consequences; what mattered

was projecting the appearance of decisive action in the moment. The tail wags the dog: policy becomes a popularity contest, with leaders pandering to their most vocal online constituencies and demonizing the rest.

This dynamic is corrosive to democracy. Tristan Harris, a former Silicon Valley insider turned critic, has warned that today's attention economy profits from stoking division and knee-jerk reactions. "Tech companies are distracting, dividing, and outraging citizens to the point where there is little basis for common ground. This is a direct threat to democracy," Harris says bluntly. When every policy debate gets reduced to a flame war between tribes in their respective echo chambers, the space for compromise or evidence-based discussion disappears.

The political centre erodes, while extremes thrive on the algorithmic amplifiers that reward emotional, divisive content. Harris's point about loss of common ground is key: effective policymaking requires shared reality and mutual trust in institutions or facts. Social media, however, often delivers the opposite: a Babel of clashing narratives where each faction lives in its own "truth." While two-thirds of Americans believe social media has generally been bad for democracy, they still return to it for information and news. Meanwhile, those tasked with making policy face an unenviable dilemma. Do they engage in the social media fray, trying to correct falsehoods and inject nuance, at risk of being drowned out or dragged into endless online spats? Or do they ignore the social media universe and risk seeming aloof and unresponsive to public sentiment? Increasingly, officials choose to engage, but on social media's terms, simplifying their messages and hardening their rhetoric to fit the medium. It's a devil's bargain: to be heard, they must play the outrage game, further degrading the quality of discourse. Academic research terms this phenomenon "discursive governance," where leadership is exercised through controlling narratives and symbols in media space rather than through institutional processes. In practice, it often means governing by tweets and trends, instead of by research, discussion, and consensus.

India Caught Between A Rogue State And A Bully Nation

By Rahul Batra

Ever since the formation of human communities and societies in the history of civilisation and statecraft, the notion of “patriotism” arose out of the awareness that armed forces were necessary to protect a certain way of life. On the back of the recent India-Pakistan conflict, where both sides came close to a dangerous escalation, the former Indian Army Chief General Manoj Naravane made a poignant speech which went viral. He said, “War is not romantic. It is not your Bollywood movie. It is very serious business,” referring to the national hysteria that had developed around the military exchanges, especially online and on many mainstream television news channels?backing our government and the armed forces to go out for an “all-out” war and “finish Pakistan once and for all”. A worrisome sentiment for Kashmir and its people?caught in the line-of-fire?who once again stood to lose their fragile peace and signs of prosperity.

The fact that a ceasefire was called within four days of India’s unprecedented decision to conduct devastating precision strikes on nine terror camps within Pakistan, left many Indians disheartened and disillusioned. In the midst of this ludicrous hysteria, pacifist liberals and peace activists were seen campaigning against “warmongering” and calling the government to “de-escalate”. Given the significantly polarised global consciousness and disruptive geopolitics of recent years?wherein the rules-based order (RBO), also known as the liberal international order (LBO), being labelled the “changing world order” (CWO) since COVID-19, is already getting re-christened as the “new international order” (NIO) in 2025?the need of the hour for India’s national consciousness lies somewhere in between.

India Faces A Two-Front Threat

War is real, and it is here to stay. In a country of India’s size, a population as diverse, and a federal-democratic governance structure as layered and spread out?moments of undivided national attention, let alone patriotic fervour, can be hard to come by. Most of its middle-aged citizens witnessed India giving a befittingly and powerful response to Pakistan’s infiltration deep within our territory during the Kargil conflict of 1999 on television, and well before today’s overwhelming social media landscape. Under the unflinching stewardship of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee?who had extended the hand of friendship and peace to Pakistan only a few months prior?many Indians formed a personal connection with soldiers who had laid down their lives for the country back then, including the “bravest of the brave”, Param Vir Chakra awardee and martyr, the late Captain Vikram Batra, who went on to become a national icon. Then came the gruesome Mumbai attack of 2008, in which almost 170 Indians are believed to have lost their lives. How many more such instances of betrayal did India need to



contend with?In 2014, the then newly-elected Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited his Pakistani counterpart, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, to his swearing-in ceremony as a gesture of goodwill. In 2015, Modi even visited Lahore. In 2016, Pakistan-backed terror groups attacked an Indian Army camp in Uri, Kashmir, killing 19 Indian soldiers in a brutal betrayal once again. Yet, India gave the adversary the benefit of the doubt and unprecedented access during investigations. From there on, a more defiant Indian counter-terrorism doctrine has taken shape?crossing conventional boundaries and expectations.

In 2017, through the offensive melee with China (in Bhutan’s Doklam) via Operation Juniper, and then in 2020, though a more pronounced military standoff in Galwan, India has built upon its more muscular and direct approach to sovereign threats in border territories. Further, in the aftermath of both incidents, India has employed a host of strong diplomatic and economic measures like renewing its engagement with the “China weary” QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) grouping and becoming the first country in the world to completely ban the controversial Chinese social media platform TikTok. As Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said in an interview during the latest cross-border conflict, “Geopolitically, India is a status-quo power and wants to focus on the progress of its own citizens through development, technology, and nation-building.

Pakistan is a Revisionist State, however, and seeks to disrupt India via its long-held strategy of a ‘death by a thousand cuts’, aiming to capture more Indian territory on the basis of a shared religion with our northernmost state; having already claimed a part of post-partition Kashmir, today known as Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir.” China is well-known across geopolitics as the world’s foremost Revisionist State in that sense. Not only is it disrupting the US’ monopoly as the undisputed global superpower, it also wishes to be the sole major power in Asia, which puts it at loggerheads with its immediate civilisational, billion-strong

neighbour?India. Strategic affairs experts have long identified this as India’s two-front security challenge. It’s what keeps security and foreign policy stakeholders in New Delhi on their toes.

India-Pakistan: Old Scars, New Doctrines

Indian strategic affairs experts maintain that India must stay open to dialogue with Pakistan (and China), given the ensuing global flux. Unlike an increasing number of Indian nationalists, who wish Pakistan becomes a ‘failed state’, these experts (identifying with “patriotism”), have wished for its stability; even prosperity?keeping in mind that its failure as a neighbour only heightens the historical “security dilemma” that exists between the two nations?across both factors?expansionist greed and inherent insecurity.

However, in April 2025, came a vitriolic anti-Hindu/pro-Muslim speech from a dictatorial-theological Pakistan’s Army Chief, General Asim Munir, clearly targeting the democratic and pluralist idea of India. He was only trying to sow discord among India’s vulnerable Hindu-Muslim dynamic, besides distracting attention from his own domestic unpopularity. Days later, 25 Indian civilians?many of them targeted for being Hindus?and a foreigner (Nepali) were gunned down in the gruesome terror attack in Pahalgam by operatives of a Kashmiri insurgent group called The Resistance Front (TRF), known to be an off-shoot of the Pakistan-based terrorist organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Surely, India could not let this pass. Besides responding with immediate non-kinetic measures like putting the long-standing, strategically sacrosanct Indus Waters Treaty “in abeyance”, its kinetic response, Operation Sindoor, was responsible, calculated, and yet, stronger than ever before. It included using deep, precision air-to-ground strikes causing significant damage to 11 Pakistan military bases, sending a clear message to the adversary (and to the world)?that India will not hold back in defending its national security, sovereign integrity, and the

safety and peace of its citizens. The Pakistani Army’s vicious grip on their nation may or may not continue to hold, but as Modi made it clear in his speech to the nation on May 12 that its designs on India will be dismantled unfalteringly. Even with its larger and stronger eastern-neighbour, China, shrewdly supplying high-grade weapons to Pakistan on the one hand, keeping India militarily stretched in Ladakh on the other, and continuing to distract it with unconventional interference in its northeastern states.

In this mission, India will need all 1.4 billion of its citizens to develop a stronger personal (and in many cases professional) commitment to national security, a deeper sensibility towards its ever-committed armed forces, and unite behind their government of the day. Setting aside everyday differences across political ideology, religious beliefs, and socio-economic divides. The old adage from Russian political theorist, Leon Trotsky, “You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you” has never been more applicable in the Indian context.

Early signs suggest a growing awareness of this need. India’s parliamentary Opposition helped the Union government take a firm stand against the US President’s implied interference and (suggested “trade deal” related) trivialisation of the core tenets of Indian national interest expressed during the ongoing Operation Sindoor. The Indian government immediately backed that up with an announcement to send an “all-party” delegation comprising esteemed Indian Members of Parliament, joined by distinguished former diplomats, on a diplomatic mission to 33 major cities across the world?carrying India’s strategic message against terrorism, reiterating its long-standing commitment to regional stability, and amplifying its growing role in global security.

(As seen on outlookindia.com)

The author currently works at the intersection of digital technology, global affairs, and democratic systems

Money is coming to Elon Musk's X and here is everything we know about it

Elon Musk's X (formerly known as Twitter) is gearing up to launch its first-ever digital payment service, X Money, later this year. In a post, Musk confirmed that this service will be out in the best phase first, but with limited access. The service has been in the pipeline for several years, with Tesla and SpaceX chief Elon Musk dropping hints about its development since acquiring the platform. Although Musk has yet to confirm an official launch date, he recently revealed that X Money's underlying infrastructure is close to being ready for limited beta trials. These early tests will be a key step before the feature becomes available to the wider public. Here is everything we know about the upcoming

X Money is coming soon: Here is everything we know

The introduction of a native

payments system forms a central part of Musk's broader ambition to evolve X into an "everything app" — a multifunctional platform that goes beyond social media to encompass messaging, commerce, and financial services. With X Money, users are expected to gain access to a user-friendly way to send and receive funds directly within the app, aligning the platform more closely with popular apps, like WhatsApp.

While full details about the service remain under wraps, the planned beta phase suggests development is progressing steadily, bringing Musk one step closer to his goal of turning X into a digital hub for everyday life. On Monday, a post by @teslaownerssv on X claimed that X Money would launch soon and introduce a suite of payments and banking features. In response, Musk cautioned that the initial release

would be highly restricted, adding, "When people's savings are involved, extreme care must be taken." X Money is expected to support cryptocurrency payments, with Bitcoin being a key player in the rollout. According to reports, Musk is also collaborating with financial services giant Visa to enable seamless transactions through the upcoming platform. The official X handle for the payments service confirms that a public launch is scheduled for 2025.

Since acquiring the platform in October 2022, Musk has introduced several changes, including a subscription-based verification system and increased monetisation options for content creators. Several reports have highlighted that Musk aims to secure approval across all 50 US states before the full-scale launch of X Money early next year. If

successful, the service could significantly alter how users interact on the platform, potentially allowing them to send, receive, and manage funds without leaving the app.

Musk's commitment to the project appears to be intense. In a recent post on X, he wrote, "Back to spending 24/7 at work and sleeping in conference/server/factory rooms," underscoring the demands of his current workload. He also mentioned the need to focus on several high-priority ventures, including X, xAI, Tesla, and an upcoming Starship launch, indicating a temporary retreat from his political activities.

With payments, banking, and crypto integration on the horizon, X Money could mark a pivotal shift in Musk's ambition to reimagine the social platform as a central hub for communication, finance, and digital services.

Dubai govt gifting free ChatGPT Plus to everyone? Is it real, what is the truth, and where is the catch

Yes, it is real. If you live in Dubai or any place else in the UAE, you'll soon get free access to ChatGPT Plus — the premium version of OpenAI's popular chatbot. This move makes the UAE the first country in the world to offer ChatGPT Plus — which usually costs \$20 (roughly Rs 1,700) a month — to its entire population at no cost. The plan is part of a major agreement between OpenAI and the UAE government, under a programme called OpenAI for Countries. This programme is not just about free AI tools — the bigger goal is to help countries build local AI infrastructure while staying in line with US regulations and global partnerships. So, what's the truth behind this? The deal is a big one. As part of the partnership, OpenAI and several global tech companies — including Oracle, Nvidia, Cisco, SoftBank and G42 — are coming together to build a massive AI computing centre in Abu Dhabi. It's called Stargate UAE, and the first phase of the project — around 200 megawatts — is expected to be ready by next year. In total, the facility is planned to reach one gigawatt of computing power, which is huge. OpenAI's CEO, Sam Altman, says the idea is to spread the benefits of AI — like improved healthcare, cleaner energy, and better education — to more people around the world.

Now, what about the catch? Honestly, there doesn't seem to be one — at least,

not for the public. If you live in the UAE, you'll be able to use ChatGPT Plus for free, whether it's for writing, coding, studying, or simply getting answers to everyday questions. This version includes OpenAI's most advanced tools and models. For the general public, it's a win. But the real investment is happening behind the scenes.

According to a report by The New York

Times, the partnership includes a huge financial commitment: for every dollar spent by the UAE on local AI development, the same amount will be invested in US-based AI infrastructure. That figure could reach up to \$20 billion in total. So, while people in the UAE get free access to advanced AI, the broader plan is to grow OpenAI's influence and ensure US-aligned AI systems become

the global standard. And while the UAE appears to be leading the charge, this could just be the beginning. OpenAI says its Chief Strategy Officer, Jason Kwon, will be visiting other Asia Pacific nations to explore similar deals. If things go well, more countries may get access to ChatGPT and localised AI tools, customised to their languages, cultures and regulations.

1.5 feet cash stacks, all unexplained: Justice Varma probe calls for impeachment

The inquiry report into Justice Yashwant Varma, from whose residence a huge sum of burnt cash was recovered, said he failed to provide an explanation of the source of the money and the allegations of misconduct were serious enough to seek his impeachment.

WHAT IS THE CASE?

The report of the Supreme Court-appointed committee, details of which were accessed by India Today, said several stacks of burnt notes, reportedly as high as 1.5 feet, were found scattered across the storeroom of Justice Varma's Delhi residence.

The cash pile was discovered at the judge's official residence when a fire broke out there on March 14. Justice Varma was not at his residence then. Subsequently, the Supreme Court transferred him from the Delhi High Court to the Allahabad High Court, but he has not been assigned work.

The report comes at a time when the Centre is weighing the option of bringing in Parliament an impeachment motion against Justice Varma.

JUDGE FAILED TO PROVIDE SOURCE OF CASH

The committee said in its report that the source of the money could not be accounted for by Justice Varma, and he only gave a "flat denial" and alleged conspiracy against him.

"The factum of the burnt cash having been found in the store room was undeniably established and, therefore, the burden shifted upon Justice Varma to account for the said cash by giving a plausible explanation which he failed to do except projecting a case of flat denial and raising a plea of conspiracy," the report said.

THE STOREROOM MUDDLE

The report said 17 people, including the judge's daughter, were present at his 30-Tughlak Crescent residence on the night of March 14-15 when the blaze erupted. The storeroom, where the cash was found, was in "covert" and "active" control of Justice Varma and his family, the report said.

On the judge's conspiracy charge, the panel concluded that no outsider could have entered the store room as it was kept locked and was only accessible by Justice Varma and his family. The report also mentioned the presence of a liquor cabinet close to the switchboard intensified the blaze. The probe found that after the fire, the judge's staff attempted to remove the burnt cash from the store room. "The SHO of the Tughlaq Nagar Police Station said in his statement that the stack of burnt currency lying on the floor was about 1.5 feet in height. The stack of half-burnt currency notes on the ledge was also 1.5 feet in height."

How gardening can help you live better for longer

Research shows gardening preserves cognitive function, helping you live well for longer. Now, dementia patients are reaping the benefits with "care farms" prescriptions.

Marianne Rogstad, a retired grandmother from Norway, is a lifelong learner. She worked as a hotel clerk in Switzerland for five decades, where she spent her days immersed in new languages and cultures.

But when Rogstad returned to Norway, she was diagnosed with dementia. She soon became isolated and lost those sources of stimulation. That was until she joined Impulssenter – a small "care farm" outside of Oslo. The care farm borrows its name from the way it serves people's impulses to work and connect with others, says Henreitte Bringsjord, whose parents founded the farm. My mum and dad loved farm work, and they thought about how hard it is for people with dementia to stop working and lose their social life. So, they wanted to help people with dementia become a part of life again," says Bringsjord, who now co-manages the farm.

In 2015, Norway became one of the first countries to create a national dementia care plan, which includes government-offered daycare services such as Inn på tunet – translated as "into the yard" – or care farms. Now, as researchers recognise the vast cognitive benefits of working on the land, more communities are integrating gardening into healthcare – treating all kinds of health needs through socially-prescribed activities in nature, or green prescriptions. "Nature prescriptions can increase physical activity and social con-



nection while reducing stress, which have multiple positive knock-on effects for blood pressure, blood sugar control and healthy weight, reducing the risk of diseases that can lead to dementia," says Melissa Lem, a family physician based in Vancouver and researcher at the University of British Columbia, Canada – where she examines the opportunities and barriers around nature-based prescriptions. "We all know that more physical activity improves mental and physical health, but gardening supercharges those benefits," she says.

New data sheds light on the advantages of spending time gardening. In a first-of-its-kind study, researchers from the University of Edinburgh investigated if there might be a link between gardening and changes in intelligence over lifetimes. The study compared the intelligence test

scores of participants at age 11 and age 79. The results showed those who spent time gardening showed greater lifetime improvement in their cognitive ability than those who never or rarely did.

"Engaging in gardening projects, learning about plants and general garden upkeep involves complex cognitive processes such as memory and executive function," said Janie Corley, the study's lead researcher, in a press release. Corley says some of those benefits may come from the "use it or lose it" cognitive framework, a theory that suggests the strength of our mental abilities in older adulthood depend on how frequently we use them. When we neglect to perform tasks that stimulate certain parts of our brain, those parts of our brain begin to lose their functionality, but regularly engaging in these activities –

such as problem solving, learning a new skill or being creative – in older adulthood can have the opposite effect.

One 2002 study of more than 800 nuns in the United States found that frequently participating in cognitively stimulating activities reduced their risk of Alzheimer's disease. A more recent study of older adults in Japan found participation in meaningful activities could protect against declines in memory function. Meanwhile, other research has found that people who received an intervention of cognitively stimulating activities, typically in a social setting, saw improvements in cognition, mood, communication and social interaction. And gardening appears to have specific cognitive benefits. For one thing, gardeners seem to experience gains in the nerve levels of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a protein that plays an important role in the growth and survival of neurons. They also receive boosts to their vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF), a protein associated with improving cognitive functioning.

One 2006 study from the University of New South Wales, which followed Australian men and women throughout their sixties, found that those who gardened on a daily basis had a 36% lower risk of developing dementia than those who didn't. Gardening has also been shown to improve attention, lessen stress, reduce falls and lower reliance on medications.

Systems are crumbling – but daily life continues. The dissonance is real

In January, the comedian Ashley Bez posted an Instagram video of herself, trying to describe a heavy mood in the air. "How come everything feels all ...?" she says, trailing off and grimacing exaggeratedly into the camera. Digital anthropologist Rahaf Harfoush saw the video, and got it immediately.

"Welcome to the hypernormalization club," Harfoush said in a response video. "I'm so sorry that you're here."

"Hypernormalization" is a heady, \$10 word, but it captures the weird, dire atmosphere of the US in 2025.

First articulated in 2005 by scholar Alexei Yurchak to describe the civilian experience in Soviet Russia, hypernormalization describes life in a society where two main things are happening.

The first is people seeing that governing systems and institutions are broken. And the second is that, for reasons including a lack of effective leadership and an inability to imagine how to disrupt the status quo, people carry on with their lives as normal despite systemic dysfunction – give or take a heavy load of fear, dread, denial and dissociation.

"What you are feeling is the disconnect between seeing that systems are failing, that things aren't working ... and yet the institutions and the people in

power just are, like, ignoring it and pretending everything is going to go on the way that it has," Harfoush says in her video.

Within 48 hours, Harfoush's video accrued millions of views. (It currently has slightly fewer than 9m.) It spread in "mom groups, friend chat circles, political subreddits, coupon communities, and even dog-walking groups", Harfoush tells me, along with variations of: "Oh, so that's what I've been feeling!" and "people tagging their friends with notes like: 'We were just talking about this!'" Why hypernormalization is relevant in the US

The increasing instability of the US's democratic norms has prompted these references to hypernormalization.

Donald Trump is dismantling government checks and balances in an apparent advance toward a "unitary executive" doctrine that would grant him near-unlimited authority, driving the US toward autocracy. Billionaire tech moguls like Elon Musk are helping the government consolidate power and aggressively reduce the federal workforce. Institutions like the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration, which help keep Americans healthy and informed, are being haphazardly diminished.



Who Is Vikram Singh Mehta, New Chairman Of IndiGo?



IndiGo, India's largest airline, on Wednesday appointed Vikram Singh Mehta as the new chairman of its parent company, InterGlobe Aviation Ltd. Mehta takes over the reins from Venkataramani Sumantran, who stepped down after completing his five-year term as a board member.

Sumantran had served as chairman since May 2022 and played a pivotal role in steering IndiGo's post-COVID recovery and subsequent growth phase.

Who Is Vikram Singh Mehta?

Mehta is not new to IndiGo — he has been serving as a Board Member since May 2022. His elevation to Chairman marks a

continuation of strategic leadership at a time when the airline is witnessing strong growth and expanding its global footprint.

A former Indian Administrative Services (IAS) officer, Mehta brings decades of experience across sectors. He notably served as the Chairman of

the Shell Group of Companies in India, and held key leadership roles as CEO of Shell Markets and Shell Chemicals in Egypt. His corporate governance credentials are further strengthened by his presence on the boards of several prominent Indian companies.

Vikram Singh Mehta is academically accomplished. He holds a Mathematics degree from St. Stephen's College, Delhi University, a master's in Politics and Economics from Oxford University, and a master's in Energy Economics from Tufts University. His deep understanding of global economics and energy markets adds strategic value to IndiGo's leadership team. With Mehta stepping in as Chairman, IndiGo's board now includes seven members, among them co-founder Rahul Bhatia. The leadership change comes at a time when promoter Rakesh Gangwal and his family trust recently offloaded a 5.72% stake in the airline, raising Rs 11,564 crore through open market transactions. Mehta's appointment signals continuity and a seasoned hand at the helm, as IndiGo charts its path through an increasingly competitive and global aviation landscape.

Why the world's ultra-rich are looking for a Monaco address



Monaco's name comes from the ancient Greek word Monokos, meaning "the Unique." Fitting, isn't it? With more millionaires per square metre than anywhere else on Earth, and a coastline that looks like a scene from a Bond movie, Monaco has truly lived up to its ancient title.

More and more of the world's richest people are looking to move to Monaco or at least have an address there. But why is this tiny country, smaller than many cities, drawing so much interest from the ultra-rich?

With its location on the French Riviera, its luxury lifestyle, and some

very relaxed tax rules, Monaco has become a top choice for millionaires and billionaires from around the world.

MILLIONAIRES IN EVERY CORNER Monaco's sun-drenched harbour is lined with luxury yachts that look more like floating mansions, while Lamborghinis, Rolls-Royces, and other supercars roam the streets.

It may be the second-smallest country in the world, just after Vatican City, but it holds a very big place in the world of wealth. According to the World Bank, Monaco has a GDP per capita of \$256,580.5 and a total GDP of just under \$10 billion. This is far more than countries with much larger populations.

Soon, every Indian address may get a unique Digital ID



After introducing Aadhaar for identity and UPI for digital payments, the Indian government is now planning a new step — a digital ID for every address. This will help locate homes and places more accurately and quickly, especially while delivering government services or packages.

WHAT'S THE IDEA?

The Centre wants to bring addresses under India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) matrix. Right now, there is no proper system or rule to manage address details in the country. Many companies collect people's address data and may even pass it on without asking. To stop this, the government wants to make sure people's address information is shared only after their clear consent.

WHY NOW?

With online shopping, courier services, and food deliveries booming, correct address details have become very important. But many Indian addresses are written in unclear or incomplete ways — often using nearby landmarks or non-standard formats. This causes confusion and delays. Studies show such poor address systems cost the country nearly \$10–14 billion every year, that's about 0.5% of India's GDP.

WHAT WILL CHANGE?

A new framework called the 'Digital Address' system is being prepared. It will have clear standards for writing and sharing addresses safely. It will also allow digital platforms to access addresses in a secure way but only with the person's permission.



The Overseas Highway: The US' 'floating' highway

As many Americans hit the road this weekend to kick off the unofficial start of summer in the US, we're revisiting one of our favourite road trip stories about an engineering marvel stretching 113 miles into the ocean that forever changed Florida.

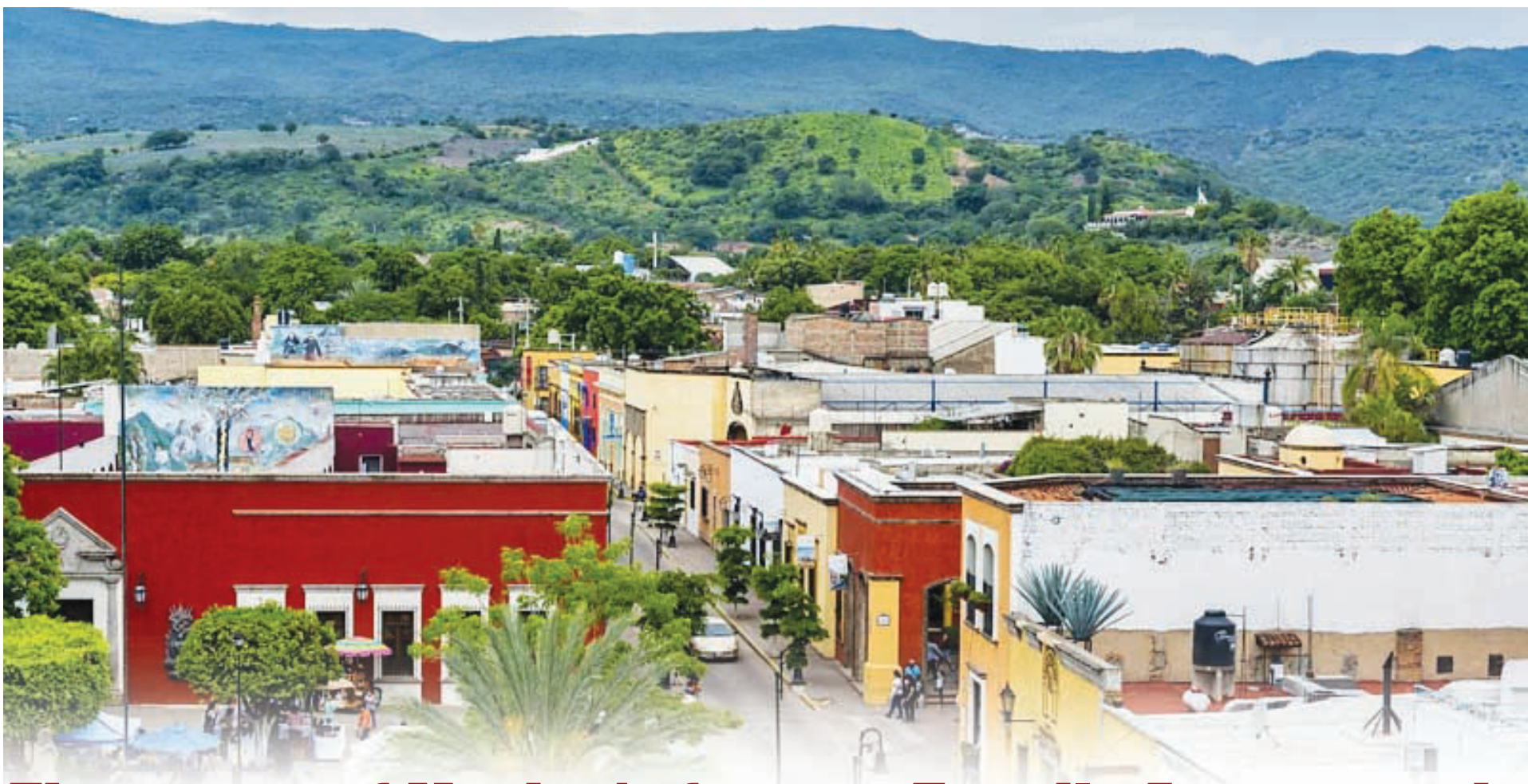
Seagulls cried overhead as I glided across miles of glistening waters somewhere between the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. The sky melted into the teal sea, which turned turquoise as it shallowed into channels between the coral and limestone islands. It was a tableau of blue, extending as far as I could see. As I adjusted my sunglasses, I glimpsed a blur of movement from the corner of my eye. A bottlenose dolphin! It had friends, and soon the pod performed an aquatic ballet, leaping in graceful arcs before plunging back into the waves. Fishing boats bobbed lazily around me, and I had an urge to cast a line, but it would have been hard to do while driving at 50mph along a highway. Travelling from Miami to the island of Key West, Florida, hasn't always been the carefree drive it is today. In the early part of the 20th Century, the only way to make the journey to the southernmost point in the continental US was a day-long boat ride, and that was dependent on weather and tides. But thanks to a stunning engineering marvel known as the Overseas Highway that stretches 113 miles from the mainland's southern tip across 44 tropical islands on 42 bridges, I was seemingly floating across a necklace of mangrove forests and cays as I drove to a place where North America and the Caribbean meet. The Overseas Highway actually started as

the Over-Sea Railroad, and it was the brainchild of visionary developer Henry Morrison Flagler (known as "The Father of Modern Florida"). In 1870, Flagler co-founded the Standard Oil Company alongside business magnate John D Rockefeller, and it became one of the world's largest and most powerful corporations at the beginning of the 20th Century. After visiting Florida and recognising "The Sunshine State's" tourism potential, Flagler poured much of his wealth into the region, building luxury resorts that transformed one of the US' poorest states into a winter paradise for Gilded-Age travellers from the Northeast US. Yet, there was no way for guests to get to Flagler's opulent-but-remote resorts. So in 1885, Flagler connected a series of disjointed railroads along Florida's Atlantic Coast from Jacksonville, at Florida's northern end, to Miami, near the state's southern tip. Miami should have been the end of the line, but when the US began construction on the Panama Canal in 1904, Flagler saw tremendous potential for Key West – the US' closest piece of land to the Canal and the deepest port in the Southeast US. The bustling hub was already flourishing thanks to the cigar, sponging and fishing industries (Key West was Florida's largest city until 1900), but the island's remote location made it difficult and expensive to move goods north.



Therefore, Flagler decided to extend his track 156 miles south to Key West, mostly over open sea. This so-called Key West Extension was considered impossible by many of his contemporaries, and his vision was labelled "Flagler's Folly" by his critics. Between 1905 and 1912, three hurricanes battered the construction site, killing more than 100 workers. Undeterred, Flagler pushed ahead. It took seven years; \$50m (\$1.56bn today); and 4,000 African American, Bahamian and European immigrants to build the railroad – all of whom had to contend with alligators, scorpions and snakes as they toiled in harsh conditions. When the railroad was finally completed in 1912, it was called "the eighth wonder of the world". On the train's inaugural run, a wood-burning locomotive arrived at Key West from Miami carrying the then-82-year-old Flagler, who stepped out of his private luxury carriage car (which is on view at the Flagler Museum in Palm Beach) and

allegedly whispered to a friend, "Now I can die happy. My dream is fulfilled." "The fact that Flagler funded [more than \$30m of this] out of his own pocket back in the day was pretty remarkable," said Florida historian Brad Bertelli. "Jeff Bezos or Bill Gates might be able to do it today. Elon Musk with his SpaceX might be the best modern comparison." The railroad operated until 1935, when the deadliest hurricane in a century swept away miles of tracks. Instead of being rebuilt, Flagler's masterwork was reincarnated to accommodate Americans' newfound love of automobiles. In 1938, the US government set out to construct one of the longest overwater roads in the world by relying on Flagler's seemingly indestructible bridges, which could withstand 200mph winds. Crews paved over the rails to accommodate cars, and the newly opened Overseas Highway forever transformed the far-flung Florida Keys into the thriving tourist destination they are today.



The return of Mexico's famous Tequila Express train

With "tequila tourism" gaining popularity in Mexico, a train taking tourists to the home of the spirit has re-launched after nine years away. The Tequila Express offers a gateway to an intriguing culture, alongside impressive on-board cocktails.

As I boarded the Tequila Express at Guadalajara railway station, a tour guide with curly gelled hair was holding court in a bar carriage. Holding a gold-coloured microphone and a bottle of tequila, he spoke enthusiastically to a group of Mexican tourists about their country's famous spirit. At 10:30, when the train left the station, he handed out shot glasses. From Nuremberg's Techno Train to the late-night London to Margate Train, I've witnessed many chaotic alcohol-soaked railway adventures. I wondered if the long-awaited return of the Tequila Express, the tourist train running between the city of Guadalajara and the town of Tequila in Mexico's Jalisco state, would signal a similar experience.

The Tequila Express launched in 1997 to serve the nascent "tequila tourism" industry in Tequila, its namesake city, which now has a population of around 45,000 and is the epicentre of the tequila industry, home to around 25 distilleries. Knocking back tequila on the two-hour, 65km ride across Jalisco's cactus- and agave plant-lined landscape proved popular, and, in 2012, the Jose Cuervo tequila company launched a rival – and much more expensive – tourist train on the same route.

The original Tequila Express stopped running in 2015; in 2017, the train was used for a tourist service in collabora-



tion with the Herradura tequila brand. In 2020, the Herradura service was also shuttered, as Covid decimated tourism. The Tequila Express finally returned in September 2024. Mexico's tourism industry was healthy again, and by 2023, Tequila was attracting 1.2 million visitors a year, with more distilleries offering tours. Government authorities and tourism companies reportedly invested around 170 million pesos (£7m) to get one of the world's most unique short-distance tourist trains, which offers a trip directly to the heart of the culture behind Mexico's most famous export, back on track. Carriages were refurbished for the relaunch, to the degree that my jour-

ney felt more boutique hotel than party train. I'm teetotal, so at a marble-topped bar I ordered Almave, a non-alcoholic spirit made from the same agave plants used for tequila. Piped mariachi music was constant, and tasteful low-light lamps were attached to wood-panelled walls. TV screens showed distilleries and tacos: pleasures awaiting us in Tequila. Onboard, I chatted to Antonio Cabrera from northern Mexico, who told me he was 55, but only now taking his first Mexican train journey. With Mexico currently lacking a country-wide passenger rail network, its best-known trains are arguably tourist routes such as the Tequila Express, the controversial new

Tren Maya, and the Chepe Express Copper Canyon train. There were a few European backpacker types dotted throughout the carriages, but most passengers were well-dressed middle-aged Mexicans, like Cabrera. As a bartender stirred a creamy cocktail, carefully placing herb sprigs on its textured glass, Cabrera and I happily agreed that there seemed little sign of the trip getting messy, at least before we got to Tequila. The mic-wielding guide explained flavour notes as tourists gently sipped. Cabrera himself was drinking Corona. "I'm from the border area; tequila is not that popular there," he said. "But I want to try tequila later."

ASK NAPCA : Medicaid Versus Medicare



When people turn 65, many face a shift in their health insurance coverage. Some may feel unsettled or frustrated to find out that their Medicaid coverage ends. In this month's column, we will explain why this happens and what options may still be available.

<Q1> Why did I lose Medicaid after enrolling in Medicare at 65, even though my income hasn't changed?

When you turn 65 and enroll in Medicare, your eligibility for Medicaid may change—even if your income stays the same. This is due to how Medicaid rules differ for

people under and over the age of 65.

If you were previously covered under Expanded Medicaid—available in states that cover low-income adults under 65 earning up to 138% of the federal poverty level (FPL)—you may lose eligibility once you turn 65. In 2025, that limit is a monthly income of \$1,800 for an individual or \$2,432.25 for a couple.

Once you turn 65, you are evaluated under Medicaid for seniors, which uses stricter criteria. In addition to income, this program considers your assets (e.g., savings accounts, retirement funds). So even if

your income hasn't changed, having too much in assets can disqualify you from Medicaid.

It's also important to note that Medicaid eligibility rules and limits for seniors vary by state and are updated annually.

<Q2> Can I keep my Medicaid after enrolling in Medicare at age 65?

Yes—if you meet your state's income and asset limits for seniors, you can still receive Medicaid alongside Medicare, making you a "dual eligible."

If you receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), you generally qualify for full Medicaid benefits. In 2025, the federal SSI limit is:

Individual: Monthly income under \$967 and assets under \$2,000

Couple: Monthly income under \$1,450 and assets under \$3,000

Some states offer State Supplementary Payments (SSP) or have higher income limits. For example:

California: A couple may qualify with income up to \$2,432.25/month, and California does not count assets.

Washington State: Limits match federal SSI—\$1,450/month income and less than \$3,000 in assets for a couple.

If you qualify, Medicaid can help pay for:

Medicare Part A and B premiums
Deductibles and co-pays

Additional services not covered by Medicare, such as dental, vision, and long-term care

You may also qualify for Extra Help, a program that lowers prescription drug costs under Medicare Part D. In many states, enrollment in Extra Help is automatic if you have Medicaid for seniors, but some states require a separate application.

<Q3> If I no longer qualify for full Medicaid coverage with Medicare, what other programs or assistance might be available to me?

If you're not eligible for full Medicaid, you may still qualify for the Medicare Savings Program (MSP). This program helps pay for:

Medicare Part B premiums
Part A premiums (if applicable)
Sometimes other out-of-pocket costs
Enrollment in MSPs also makes you automatically eligible for Extra Help with Part D costs.

There are three types of MSPs, based on income level, and eligibility varies by state. Even if you don't qualify for an MSP, you may still be eligible for Extra Help on its

World's Top Polluters: Where Does India Stand?

By :Parishmita Saikia

The primary global concern regarding climate change at the moment is minimising carbon emissions. Notably, the top three countries making significant efforts in this regard are China, the United States of America, and India. Global efforts are underway to address this issue.

Top Carbon Emitting Countries

Let us first look at the countries emitting the most carbon and the quantities they are emitting as of 2023. The data is provided in million tonnes of CO₂ per year (MtCO₂/yr), sourced from the Global Carbon Project, IEA, and EDGAR.

China: Responsible for 30% of the world's total CO₂ emissions, primarily due to heavy reliance on coal. However, China is investing in solar and wind energy, aiming for carbon neutrality by 2060. Current emissions are 12,400 MtCO₂. Energy sources: Coal (55%), Oil (20%) and Gas (10%).

The United States of America: Accounts for 14% of global emissions. The USA is transitioning towards natural gas and renewable energy, though progress may be affected by political changes. Current emissions are 5,100 MtCO₂. Energy sources: Oil (45%), Gas (33%) and Coal (12%).

India: Contributes 7% of global emissions.

India is heavily dependent on coal but is working towards reducing this through renewable energy, with a goal of net zero by 2070. Current emissions are 3,400 MtCO₂. Energy sources: Coal (70%) and Oil (25%). Russia: Emits 5% of global carbon emissions, focusing on natural gas exports but lagging in renewable energy advancement.

Japan: Accounts for 3% of global emissions and is promoting nuclear energy and investing in hydrogen technology to reduce carbon emissions.

Effects On Climate

Global Warming: Earth's temperature is rising due to CO₂ and other greenhouse gases, currently 1.2°C higher than pre-industrial levels.

Extreme Weather Events: Increased frequency of floods, droughts, and storms worldwide.

Rising Sea Levels: Glaciers are melting, threatening coastal cities; many coastal cities in countries like Bangladesh and the Maldives risk submersion.

Loss of Biodiversity: Adverse impacts on various ecosystems.

Measures To Reduce Carbon Emissions
Transition to Renewable Energy: Emphasising solar, wind, and hydropower.
Carbon Pricing: Implementing carbon taxes or cap-and-trade systems, as seen in Europe.



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Akash System, AI Drones, And Why India Can't 'Outsource' Security

By Aditya Sinha

Strategic autonomy remains an illusion in the absence of technological sovereignty. A nation that lacks the capacity to manufacture its own armaments finds itself vulnerable to the whims of key defence exporting countries. Its military strategies are contingent upon supply chains beyond its influence, and its ability to deter adversaries is compromised by reliance on others. Theoretical frameworks derived from realist international relations, especially structural realism, indicate that in an anarchic world system, the primary imperative for the state is survival. Survival is an endeavour that cannot be delegated to others. When the integrity of national security relies on external validation, even the most formidable diplomatic efforts become ineffective against embargoes, export restrictions, or the unpredictable nature of geopolitical dynamics.

Learning From The Past History presents stark



reminders. In 1965, India's military endeavours were significantly hindered by a US arms embargo. In 1991, amidst the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia, despite possessing an abundance of Western armaments, depended wholly on the United States for the protection of its oil fields. In stark contrast, Israel has not only endured but flourished, and through strategic alliances and a steadfast commitment has developed its own capabilities. Therefore, countries that delegate their defence industrial capabilities relinquish control over their strategic destiny. Atmanirbharta, or self-reliance, in defence transcends mere

rhetoric.

This strategic realisation is beginning to pay dividends for India. Despite still being the world's second-largest arms importer, accounting for 8.3% of global imports, just behind Ukraine's 8.4% according to SIPRI, India has shifted course since 2014. The focus has moved beyond mere procurement towards co-development, co-production, and indigenous innovation. The aim is no longer just to acquire weapons but to build the capacity to design and produce them domestically. Initiatives such as the Defence Industrial Corridors in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, the corporatisation of the Ordnance

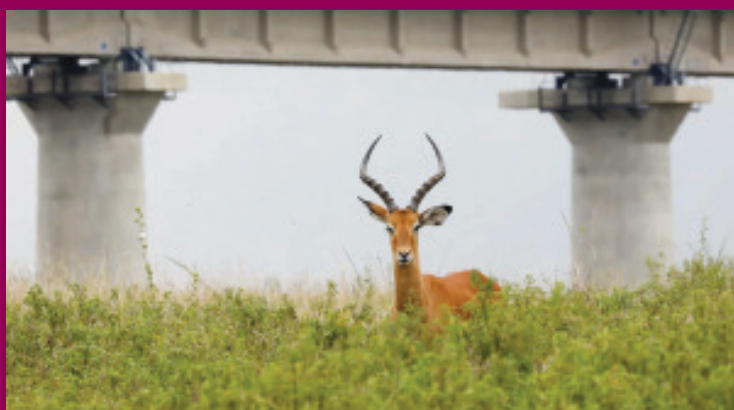
Factory Board, and the launch of Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) signal a structural push towards developing in-house defence R&D. Successes like the Tejas fighter jet, the DRDO-developed anti-satellite missile (ASAT), and the Agni-V intercontinental ballistic missile are no longer isolated achievements, they reflect the emergence of a broader, self-sustaining military-industrial ecosystem. Simultaneously, technology transfer agreements and licensed production under the Strategic Partnership Model are enabling Indian firms to move up the value chain. India is no longer content being a passive buyer, it is steadily becoming a sovereign producer. Atmanirbharta in defence is not a distant goal. It is fast becoming the country's strategic posture.

All That Was Used In Op Sindoor

Operation Sindoor has given us the clearest evidence of how far India has come as far as innovation in defence tech is concerned. The mission, launched in retaliation to the

April 2025 Pahalgam terror attack, was conducted entirely without crossing the Line of Control, relying on high-precision, domestically engineered strike and surveillance systems. Among the most crucial was the Akash Surface-to-Air Missile System, which provided short-range protection against incoming aerial threats. Backed by the Akashteer Air Defence Control and Reporting System, Indian forces intercepted all hostile drones and missiles with 100% success, demonstrating real-time net-centric warfare capabilities powered by domestic radar, telemetry, and sensor integration. The Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS) served as the backbone of coordination, linking airbases, radar units, and weapon platforms across the services under a single digital command structure. For offensive capabilities, SkyStriker loitering munitions, manufactured domestically under technology transfer from Israel's Elbit Systems, enabled deep penetration and destruction of enemy radar and missile installations.

Poorest 75 nations face 'tidal wave' of debt repayments to China in 2025, study warns



By Helen Davidson

The most vulnerable nations on Earth are facing a "tidal wave" of debt repayments as a Chinese lending boom starts to be called in, a new report has warned. The analysis, published on Tuesday by Australian foreign policy thinktank the Lowy Institute, said that in 2025 the poorest 75 countries were on

the hook for record high debt repayments US\$22bn to China. The 75 nations' debt formed the bulk of the total \$35bn calculated by Lowy for 2025. "Now, and for the rest of this decade, China will be more debt collector than banker to the developing world," the report said. The pressure to repay was putting strain on local funding for health and education as well as

climate change mitigation. "China's lending has collapsed exactly when it is needed most, instead creating large net financial outflows when countries are already under intense economic pressure," it said. The loans were largely issued under President Xi Jinping's signature belt and road initiative (BRI), a state-backed global infrastructure investment programme which has underwritten national projects from schools, bridges and hospitals to major roads and shipping and air ports. The lending spree turned China into the largest supplier of bilateral loans, peaking with a total of more than \$50bn in 2016 – more than all western creditors combined. The BRI focused primarily in developing nations, where governments struggled to

access private or other state-backed investment. But the practice has raised concerns about Chinese influence and control and drawn accusations that Beijing was seeking to entrap recipient nations with unserviceable debt. Last month another analysis by the Lowy Institute found that Laos was now trapped in a severe debt crisis, in part because of over-investment in the domestic energy sector, mostly financed by China. China's government denies accusations it deliberately creates debt traps, and recipient nations have also pushed back, saying China was a more reliable partner and offered crucial loans when others refused. But the Lowy report said the record high debt now due to China could be used for "political leverage", noting that it comes

amid huge cuts to foreign aid by the Trump administration. The report also highlighted new large-scale loans given to Honduras, Nicaragua, Solomon Islands, Burkina Faso and the Dominican Republic, all within 18 months of those countries switching diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to Beijing. China also continues to finance some strategic partners, including Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Laos and Mongolia, as well as countries that produce critical minerals and metals, such as Argentina, Brazil and Indonesia. But the situation also put China in a bind, pulled between diplomatic pressure to restructure unsustainable debt in vulnerable nations and domestic pressure to recall loans amid China's own economic downturn.

The Story Of Turkey-Pakistan 'Brotherhood' And Why It Runs Deep



By Lt Gen (Retd) Bhopinder Singh

That the Turkey-Pakistan brotherhood runs deep is a fact amply underlined by the Turkish response to the recent military tensions between India and Pakistan. But what makes this alliance so strong is not just diplomacy, but history and tradition. Not only had the waning Ottoman Khilafat (or Caliphate) movement influenced the formation of Pakistan, but the shared tradition of the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam, culturality, and moderate Sufism is such that the two countries often fondly call each other 'Kardeslers', meaning "brothers" in Turkish. The fact that both Turkey and Pakistan were also in the same 'blocs' during the Cold War era - the Baghdad Pact (later Regional Cooperation for Development, and then Economic Cooperation Organisation), the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO), or even Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) and D-8 being examples - helped them geopolitically cement their underlying religio-cultural-historical connection.

The 1965 And 1971 Wars
In 1951, Turkey and Pakistan signed the Treaty of Eternal Friendship. That led to Ankara

progressively upping its support to Pakistan in all its wars with India. If the 1965 war saw Turkey supporting Pakistan diplomatically, by 1971, that had turned into material support as well in the form of aircraft assistance. Now, in the latest four-day conflict between the two countries, Turkey is believed to have supplied over 350 drones to Pakistan, along with military advisors and operatives to use the same. The mysterious landing of a Turkish C-130, followed by a visit by Lt Gen Yasar Kadioglu (Chief of Turkish Intelligence) in Pakistan days before Operation Sindoor, also raised suspicions. All this is in addition to the already signed deal to allow for upgrading of Pakistani F-16s at Turkish facilities and supply four stealth corvettes, 30 T129 ATAK helicopters, Kemankes cruise missiles, etc. The Pakistani Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, has personally thanked the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, for his "strong support and unwavering solidarity" during the Indo-Pak conflict.

A Very Close Association

For the two countries, their once-rhetorical support for each other has now decidedly turned into a more strategic

one. Just as Islamabad readily concurs with Ankara on Northern Cyprus and refuses to recognise the Armenian genocide, Ankara backs Islamabad on the plebiscite line on Kashmir as well as its bid to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group. But this is not a new shift by any measure. In his memoir, *In the Line of Fire*, former Pakistani President and dictator Pervez Musharaff fondly recounted how he spent his childhood in Ankara and "their [the people's] very visible love and affection for Pakistan and Pakistanis". It's also worth noting how the Indian Embassy road in Ankara has been renamed Cinnah Caddesi, meaning Jinnah Avenue.

A Simultaneous Slide

It was Turkey's oscillating and contradictory relationship of the 'state' with Islam that had inspired Muhammad Ali Jinnah - and Pervez Musharaff, decades later - to view the country as a model nation that Pakistan must emulate. However, both countries' regressive slide towards puritanism has occurred almost in tandem - in Turkey with the rise of Recep Erdogan, and in Pakistan with the tightening of the vice-like grip of religious narratives. If a more secularist

and progressive Kemal Mustapha Atatürk had inspired Pakistani leaders like Jinnah, Ayub, Yahya or even Musharaff, religious hardliners like Erdogan, who rail brazenly at the "West", are the latest poster boys in Pakistan today.

Surely, the bitterly contested domestic politics of Turkey, with the Progressives in the opposition and the religious conservatives under Erdogan, has a role to play too. Both benefit much more from batting on behalf of a "brother muslim nation" like Pakistan. The sheer distance and relatively lower commercial angularities with India are not enough for it to prefer Delhi over Islamabad. **A Rival To Sheikhdoms**

Bonhomie with Pakistan is also rooted in Turkey's own ambition to emerge as a leader within the Ummah, or the Islamic World, which is hitherto dominated by Saudi-led Sheikhdoms. Given how India has built stable relations with such Sheikhdoms, the non-Arab majors like Turkey and Pakistan, which were historically treated as "lessers" within the Ummah, are now seeking to stitch a rival "bloc" involving other non-Arab nations, such as Malaysia, Iran and the perennially contrarian but

Arab, Qatar. The deliberate exposé of the Khashoggi murder by the Turkish authorities was designed to embarrass the Saudis, underlining the internal rift within the Ummah. Also, with the US, India and Sheikhdoms working conjointly on many fronts, Pakistan is left with only Turkey, along with China, to afford it some bragging rights. By standing up for Pakistan, Erdogan wants to project the imperialist grandeur of "Pasha" - the highest ranking official harking back to the Ottoman era - something the Turkish President desperately seeks to revive.

The Indian Approach

However, for India, Turkey's indulgence of Pakistan has resulted in Delhi asserting its own anti-Turkey view on Northern Cyprus, conducting naval exercises with Turkey's rival, Greece, and even becoming Armenia's largest arms supplier. The Indian reaction is a more recent phenomenon and a fallout of the Erdogan era. The Turkey-less India-Middle East-Europe-Economic Corridor, aimed at countering Ankara's rival geostrategic initiative of 'Iraq Development Road', which shortchanges India, is part of New Delhi's approach. In a way, Erdogan's own electoral considerations, the solidification of India's relations with Arab Sheikhdoms, Afghanistan (increasingly a pain point with Pakistan now), the US and the forever sectarian Iran, will ensure that Turkey and Pakistan continue to deepen their jointmanship, something that is bound to irk Delhi.

As of now, the overwhelming nationalistic fervour in India has resulted in calls to deprioritise Turkey as a destination for tourism and other exchanges. But that's barely enough to push Turkey to revisit its stance. Supporting Pakistan makes more sense to the calculative and ambitious Erdogan. The dearth of 'Turkish Delight' for India ought not to surprise anyone.

Rachel Gupta resigns as Miss Grand International 2024. Organisers say no, terminated

Model Rachel Gupta announced on social media on Wednesday that she has resigned from her Miss Grand International 2024 title. However, a controversy ensued after the organisers claimed she had been officially terminated.

In a post on Instagram, Gupta, 21, claimed she had been subjected to a toxic environment and repeated unkept promises. According to her, the decision to step down was difficult but necessary.

"Being crowned was one of the most cherished dreams of my life, but the months following my crowning have been marked by broken promises, mistreatment, and a toxic environment I can no longer endure in silence," she wrote.

Gupta said she would share her full side of the story in a video soon, adding in her caption: "The truth will come out very soon."

"To all my supporters around the world: I'm truly sorry if this news has disappointed you. Please know this wasn't an easy decision, but it was the right one for me," she said. While Gupta pointed to a toxic environment, the Miss Grand International (MGI) Organisation painted a different picture.

In a statement posted on social media, MGI confirmed that Gupta had been officially terminated from her position.

The organisation accused Gupta of failing to honour her duties, pursuing unauthorised external projects, and refusing to attend an official trip to Guatemala.

"The Miss Grand International Organisation hereby announces the termination of Miss Rachel Gupta's title as Miss Grand International 2024, effective immediately," the statement reads. They also asked that she return the crown to the MGI Head Office within 30



Different screen, different climax: Housefull 5 to have multiple twisted endings

'Housefull 5' producer Sajid Nadiadwala promised multiple climaxes for the film at the trailer launch on Tuesday. He explained that the audience is going to have an experience of a lifetime while watching the film which will have a different climax on a different screen.

Nadiadwala, who has also written the screenplay, shared with the media that the climax would change with the screen. "So if you watch it at Gaiety, it'll have one killer. If you watch it at Galaxy, there'll be somebody else. On



PVR screen number 4, you'll see a different killer, and on PVR screen number 5, yet another one. It's like every time you watch the film, you'll get a different ending,"

he explained.

At the trailer launch of the film, Kumar talked about returning to the screens with a slapstick comedy after doing a lot of

content-driven films. He shared that it's difficult for any actor to perform physical comedy, and that's what they had to do in 'Housefull 5'. He also said he is a big fan of legendary comedian Charlie Chaplin, and he tried to emote comedy with his 'actions' in the film.

'Housefull 5' is a murder mystery comedy, starring Akshay Kumar, Abhishek Bachchan and Riteish Deshmukh in the lead. The story is set on a luxury cruise, where the three leading men

turn suspects after a billionaire is found murdered.

This is the fifth instalment in the popular 'Housefull' franchise. The film also stars Jacqueline Fernandez, Nargis Fakhri, Sonam Bajwa, Chitrangada Singh, Jackie Shroff, Sanjay Dutt, Nana Patekar, Soundarya Sharma and Johny Lever, among others. The whodunnit is full of funny one-liners and self-deprecating humour. At least the trailer suggests the same. It is scheduled to hit the screens on June 6.