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The China Angle

There Is A 'Third' Player In The India-Pakistan Conflict

**'Indian Threat',
'1962 War':
How Chinese
'Experts' Are
Batting For Pak
Over India**

Story on Page 18



**Baba and his legal
Troubles**

**Baba Ramdev: The
Yoga Guru And The
Court Scrapes Behind
His Business Empire**



Story on Page 19

**US straddling the
fence amid India-
Pakistan tensions post
Pahalgam attack?**



Story on Page 20

**Adani port in Communist
state triggers 3-cornered
credit fight**



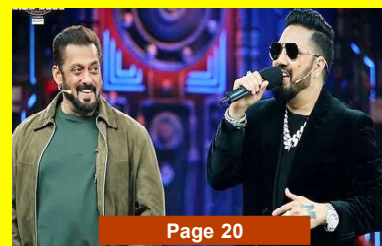
Story on Page 20

All The Money In The World



Story on Page 19

**Mika says Salman
is different person
after 2 drinks**



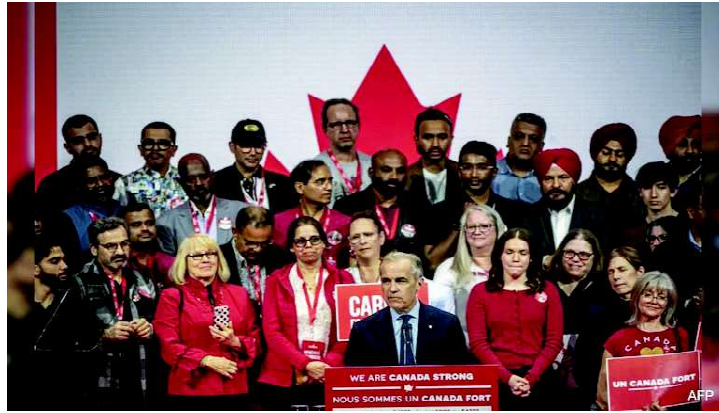
Page 20

Canada Election 2025: 22 Candidates Of Punjabi Descent Elected As Canadian MPs

The 2025 Canadian federal elections have marked a historic milestone for the Punjabi community, with a record 22 candidates of Punjabi origin securing seats in the House of Commons.

(Sai Bureau)- The 2025 Canadian federal elections have marked a historic milestone for the Punjabi community, with a record 22 candidates of Punjabi origin securing seats in the House of Commons. This impressive representation accounts for over 6% of Canada's parliament, showcasing the growing influence of the Punjabi diaspora in the country's politics.

In Brampton, a city known for its strong Punjabi presence, the election results were particularly noteworthy. Five constituencies in Brampton featured candidates with Punjabi names. Ruby Sahota, a Liberal, defeated Amandeep Judge, a Conservative, in Brampton North, while Maninder Siddhu, a Liberal, beat Bob Dosanjh, a Conservative, in Brampton East and Sonia Siddhu, a



Liberal defeated Sukhdeep Kang, a Conservative, in Brampton South. Beyond Brampton, other Punjabi Canadian politicians made significant wins. Anita Anand, a former innovation minister, retained her seat in Oakville

East, while Bardish Chagger, a veteran politician known for her work on diversity and inclusion, secured a win in Waterloo. Other Liberal winners included Anju Dhillon, Sukh Dhaliwal, Randeep Sarai, and Param Bains.

The Conservative Party also saw success with candidates of Punjabi origin, including Jasraj Hallan, Dalwinder Gill, Amanpreet Gill, Arpan Khanna, Tim Uppal, Parm Gill, Sukhman Gill, Jagsharan Singh Mahal and Harb Gill. However, not all prominent Punjabi politicians fared well. Jagmeet Singh, the leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP), lost his seat in Burnaby Central, finishing third and subsequently resigning as NDP president. This unexpected outcome has sent shockwaves through Canada's political landscape.

The success of Punjabi Canadians in the 2025 elections reflects the growing clout of the Indian diaspora, particularly the Punjabi Sikh community, in shaping policies in one of the world's most progressive democracies.

Opposition sails to victory in Trinidad and Tobago



By Vanessa Buschschlüter

The opposition in the Caribbean twin-island nation of Trinidad and Tobago has won a decisive victory in Monday's parliamentary election, preliminary results suggest. The win by the centrist United National Congress (UNC) party means that Kamla Persad-Bissessar will be appointed as the next prime minister. The 73-year-old already held the post once before, from 2010 to 2015, but her party was defeated in the last two elections by the centre-left People's National Movement (PNM). Preliminary results suggest the UNC, which campaigned on a promise to raise wages and create employment, managed to win a number of parliamentary seats

previously held by the PNM. PNM leader Keith Rowley conceded defeat late on Monday, saying that it had not been a good night for his party and that it was clear that it had lost the election. Rowley, 75, served as prime minister from 2015 to March of this year, when he announced he was stepping down and handing the reins of power to the 50-year-old energy minister, Stuart Young. But rather than serving out the remainder of Rowley's term, Young called a snap election just hours after being sworn in as prime minister. The move was widely seen as an attempt by Young to secure a stronger mandate amid criticism by the opposition that his elevation to prime minister was unconstitutional.

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Stopped People, Shouted For Help, Didn't Get Any: Woman Molested In Bengaluru

The woman asserted that she does not see herself or other women who have faced such situations as victims.

The woman who was molested by a man on a two-wheeler in a crowded IT park in Bengaluru has said respect for people's boundaries is "still a big loophole" in society.

Talking to NDTV on Friday, the woman said she came forward to speak about what had happened to her because she wanted to ensure that women, and people in general, raise their voice against such crimes so that criminals do not get a free pass.

Recalling the attack, the survivor said she was walking in Ecoworld in the Marathahalli area around 11.30 pm on Wednesday when she felt a "huge hit" on her back.

"I was perplexed. I thought maybe someone was riding a vehicle recklessly. The same thing happened again, though, and with greater intensity. Then I was sure someone was doing this deliberately," she said.

The woman said she shouted for



help, but got none.

"The third time... I could see the guy taking a U-turn and coming for me. I shouted for help, there were so many people, it is always a bustling area... I asked people for help, I stopped auto drivers, I stopped others... but no one came to my help, that's the most surprising thing," she said.

'More Alert'

The woman said she wanted to speak out about the incident because there is a stigma

attached to women who are

survivors of crimes like these. She said that after the incident, she went to the security booth at Ecoworld, where she got assistance. She approached the police on Thursday and a deputy commissioner of police and assistant commissioner of police looked into the case personally.

"The investigation is on. I am keeping my fingers crossed, hoping the man gets caught. This has happened to me, and if the man gets a free pass, he

can do this to others as well," she asserted.

To a question on whether she feels unsafe after what happened, the woman said she is more alert, but also knows how to deal with situations like this.

'Need For Change'

She said instead of just looking for someone to blame for such crimes, people also need to start taking responsibility at an individual level so that there is a change in society.

"If, tomorrow, I have a son, I know what I will be teaching him. There is a typical conditioning that has infiltrated society - that men get a free pass for so many behaviours. Even women, under the pretence of feminism, have started to take a free pass for so many things. So it's about knowing the laws and respecting them," she said, adding that such issues should also be part of the education system and should be taught in schools.

"The fact that this happened in

an area with so many surveillance cameras and security guards... That's the most surprising thing, and is testimony to the fact that no matter how many safety measures we have, there is a big loophole when it comes to how people are conditioned to look at each other and towards respecting each other's boundaries," she rued.

Not A Victim

The woman asserted that she does not see herself or other women who have faced such situations as victims.

"The person who did this is the victim. Imagine how messed up he would have to be to derive a sense of control by violating someone's boundaries to this extent. So my message to other women is: Don't victimise yourself... You don't need to hide behind the curtains... The person who is doing this is the one doing something wrong," she said.

Four dead, over 100 flights delayed: Why did it rain so heavily in Delhi-NCR?

(News Agency)- Four people were killed on Friday morning when a house collapsed in the national capital following heavy rains and strong winds that affected flight operations and disrupted traffic due to waterlogging in many parts of the city.

The weather department has issued a red alert for Delhi, urging people to remain extremely vigilant and take necessary precautions.

The IMD has predicted moderate to heavy rain, along with moderate to severe thunderstorms and wind speeds reaching 70-80 kmph in parts of Delhi-NCR. Light rain is likely in some other areas of the region. WHAT IS DRIVING DELHI'S THUNDEROUS RAIN?

The India Meteorological



Department (IMD) explained that this sudden weather change was due to a combination of factors involving moisture and wind patterns.

According to the IMD, moisture and wind convergence over the region came from both the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. This was supported by a highly favorable atmospheric pattern in the lower and middle

tropospheric levels of the atmosphere.

"This didn't happen suddenly. The weather system that caused the thunderstorm, hailstorm, and heavy rainfall was due to a Western Disturbance. We had already indicated the possibility of such a weather system for both mountainous and plain areas. We had also mentioned earlier that Delhi could see rain

and strong winds on May 1. Across India, conditions are currently favorable for such weather activity," Mrityunjay Mahapatra, Director General, IMD said.

He added that We observed this system on radar and then issued an alert. Even our five-day forecast had predicted rain and strong winds.

Two upper air cyclonic circulations played a key role: one over southwest Rajasthan and another over northeast Rajasthan and adjoining northwest Madhya Pradesh. Additionally, strong southeast winds reaching up to 50 kmph were blowing at lower levels over Delhi, intensifying the weather system. These conditions caused the warm, moist air to rise rapidly, creating instability in the atmosphere that

led to heavy rain, thunderstorms, lightning, and gusty winds across Delhi-NCR and parts of Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh.

The IMD issued orange and red alerts for these areas, warning people to stay indoors and avoid travel where possible. Flights at Delhi airport were delayed, and power outages were reported due to the strong winds. The thunderstorms also brought hail in some areas and dust storms in western Rajasthan. This weather pattern is typical for May, when thunderstorms often peak due to intense heat and moisture.

The IMD forecasts that such rainfall and storms will continue in northern and eastern India for the next few days, helping to break the ongoing heatwave.

Adani's nephew accused of insider trading by Sebi, seeks settlement: Report

The scrutiny is the latest challenge for the Adani group. US authorities last year indicted Gautam Adani and two Adani Green executives for allegedly paying bribes to secure Indian power supply contracts and misleading US investors. The group has denied the charges and called them "baseless".

(News Agency)-India's markets regulator has alleged Pranav Adani, director of several Adani Group companies and the nephew of the billionaire founder, shared price-sensitive information and breached regulations aimed at preventing insider trading, according to a document reviewed by Reuters. Pranav Adani, the nephew of Gautam Adani, was sent a notice by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) last year which alleged he shared information about Adani Green's 2021 acquisition of SoftBank-backed SB Energy Holdings with his brother-in-law before the deal was announced, according to a source and the document. The matter has not been previously reported.



In an e-mailed response sent to Reuters, Pranav Adani said he was seeking to settle the charges "to put an end to the matter, without admission or denial of the allegations" and that "he has not violated any securities law". Settlement terms were being discussed, said the source with direct knowledge of the matter, who declined to be named as the

matter is confidential.

The scrutiny is the latest challenge for the Adani group. US authorities last year indicted Gautam Adani and two Adani Green executives for allegedly paying bribes to secure Indian power supply contracts and misleading US investors. The group has denied the charges and called them "baseless". Pranav Adani "communicated

UPSI (unpublished price sensitive information) pertaining to the SB Energy acquisition" to his brother-in-law Kunal Shah and violated norms related to insider trading rules in 2021, said the SEBI document, which showed call records and trading patterns were reviewed in the investigation.

Kunal Shah and Nrupal Shah, his brother, then traded in shares of Adani Green and made "ill-gotten gains" of 9 million rupees (\$108,000), the document added.

The Shah brothers said in a statement sent by their law firm that the trades were not executed with the "knowledge of any unpublished price sensitive information nor with any mala fide intent."

"The information in question was already generally available in

the public domain," the statement said.

SEBI did not respond to Reuters requests for comment.

Adani Green's acquisition of SB energy on May 17, 2021 at an enterprise value of \$3.5 billion is the largest acquisition in the renewable energy sector in India so far.

Pranav Adani became aware of the impending acquisition two-three days prior to May 16, 2021, when the deal was finalised, SEBI said.

SEBI had proposed that Kunal and Nrupal Shah also settle, but the brothers chose to contest the allegations as they found the terms too onerous, the source added.

Pranav Adani's settlement plea would be taken up after SEBI's ongoing review of its settlement process is over.

Right to be heard: Court notice to Sonia Gandhi, Rahul in National Herald case

Delhi's Rouse Avenue Court on Thursday issued a notice to former Congress Chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and other proposed accused to be heard on the question of cognisance of the chargesheet filed against them in the National Herald case.

(News Agency)- Delhi's Rouse Avenue Court on Thursday issued a notice to former Congress Chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and other proposed accused to be heard on the question of cognisance of the chargesheet filed against them in the National Herald money laundering case.

The court held that the deficiencies in the chargesheet have been cured and the present issue is whether a notice under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) should be issued.

The judge said that Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi and others who have been named by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in its chargesheet have a



right to be heard at the time of cognisance. The case will be heard next on May 8.

The court noted that the case is at the stage of consideration. At this stage, the accused people have a special right to be heard before the court

decides whether to formally take up the case against them. This right comes from a specific proviso of Section 223, which gives a unique (or sui generis) legal protection to the accused at this early point in the process. It emphasized that this right is

not inconsistent with the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and should be read in favour of the accused. The court added that the right to be heard at any stage of proceedings breathes life into the right to a fair trial, and that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) does not suffer any detriment if the accused are heard at this stage. The Additional Solicitor General, representing the ED, submitted that the agency does

not oppose the issuance of such a notice, supporting the principle of a fair trial. NATIONAL HERALD MONEY LAUNDERING CASE

The ED has alleged that Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul orchestrated a "criminal conspiracy" to "usurp" properties of National Herald's publisher, Associated Journals Ltd (AJL), worth Rs 2,000 crore, by transferring 99% of the shares for just Rs 50 lakh. The assets were acquired by a private firm, Young Indian, which is controlled by Sonia Gandhi and Rahul.

The ED has named Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul, along with Congress leaders Sam Pitroda and Suman Dubey as accused in the National Herald money laundering case.

Delhi High Court Orders CBI Probe Into Extortion Racket In Tihar Jail

The bench directed Delhi government to hold a fact-finding inquiry and find out the officials responsible for the administrative and supervisory lapses in Tihar.

The Delhi High Court on Friday ordered the CBI to conduct a preliminary inquiry over allegations of an extortion racket being run inside Tihar Jail involving its officials.

A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela directed the principal secretary, Home Department, Delhi government to hold a fact-finding inquiry and find out the officials responsible for the administrative and supervisory lapses in Tihar.

"The petition highlights certain irregularities, illegalities, malpractices and misconduct not only on part of the jail authorities but also inmates. The allegations are as serious as that in connivance with jail authorities extortion racket was going on in jail premises for procuring certain facilities," the court observed.

The bench said a report of the inspecting judge, Central Jail 8 and Semi Open Prison, tendered to it in a sealed cover after a "thorough" inquiry, revealed "very disturbing facts"



indicating criminal activities and irregularities in functioning of Tihar Jail.

"For thoroughly conducting an inquiry into the matter, since the report (of inspecting judge) contained allegations of criminal activities, we deem it appropriate to require the CBI to conduct a preliminary enquiry into the matter," the court ordered.

The bench went on, "We also

deem it appropriate to direct principal secretary, Home, GNCTD to conduct an administrative inquiry to find out the officials/officers/authorities responsible for such administrative lapses and mishappenings in jail." The director general (DG) Delhi prisons should extend all cooperation to the principal secretary, it added.

The court asked the CBI and

the principal secretary to submit their reports before the next hearing on August 11.

The court was hearing a petition filed by a former inmate alleging extortion and pointing out safety and security of prisoners inside Tihar.

The court said the inspecting judge's report was based on several material, including certain call data record with respect to calls between

persons outside and inside the jail aside from the misuse of jail's official landline for "promoting nefarious activities". The report even doubted the conduct of the petitioner, the court said.

The CBI's preliminary enquiry would primarily proceed on the basis of the inspecting judge's report and the petitioner as well as the jail authorities could submit their evidence to the agency, it added.

Once the documents and material were received by CBI from the court, the petitioner and jail authorities, the agency was ordered to start its inquiry and prepare a report.

"The principal secretary, Home, GNCTD is also directed to conduct the administrative/fact-finding inquiry on the basis of the report. In the said inquiry, the DG Prisons shall extend all cooperation to him. The inquiry shall reflect on the various administrative lapses/supervisory lapses and shall clearly indicate officials in jail responsible for such lapses," it added.

Actor, Producer Charged By Mumbai Cops After Row Over 'Sex Positions' Clip



The producer and host of the reality show 'House Arrest' on the 'ULLU' streaming app have been charged under sections related to the indecent representation of women after a clip in which contestants were made to depict 'sex positions' went viral.

The clip shows the programme's host Ajaz Khan, who is a former

'Bigg Boss' contestant, putting pressure on contestants, including women, to act out intimate situations. Mr Khan also asks the participants some vulgar questions, persisting with his line of inquiry despite the participants being visibly uncomfortable.

Based on a complaint by an activist from the right-wing group Bajrang Dal, the police in

Mumbai's Amboli on Friday registered a First Information Report (FIR) against Mr Khan and the producer of 'House Arrest', Rajkumar Pandey.

The FIR has been registered under sections related to obscene acts in public places and others under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Information Technology Act and the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act.

Women's Panel's Action

The case was registered on a day that the show was taken off the app and the National Commission of Women took note of the controversy and summoned Mr Khan and the CEO of the Ullu app, Vibhu Agarwal. "NCW takes suo motu cognisance of obscene content

on Ullu App's show House Arrest. Viral clips show women being coerced into intimate acts on camera. NCW slams the platform for promoting vulgarity and violating consent. CEO and host summoned on May 9," the commission said in a post on X. On Thursday, Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi had objected to the clip and wondered why apps that stream such obscene content have not been banned. "I have raised this in the standing committee that apps such as this, namely, Ullu App and Alt Balaji have managed to escape the ban by I&B ministry on apps for obscene content. I am still awaiting their reply," Ms Chaturvedi, who is a Rajya Sabha MP and member of the

Standing Committee on Communications and IT, wrote on X.

"On March 14, 2024, the I&B Ministry had blocked 18 OTT platforms, which were found to be streaming obscene and pornographic content. The apps blocked by the government were primarily platforms distributing explicit material. The following 18 apps were banned... Surprisingly 2 of the biggest apps were kept out- Ullu and Alt Balaji, will I&B tell the country why they were left out from this ban," she said in another post, sharing the names of the 18 apps. The clip also caught the attention of BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, who shared a post complaining of obscenity "being served" through shows like 'House Arrest'.

Some stood on slope, few of them fell, others followed: What led to Goa stampede

Explaining what led to the stampede in Goa's Shirgao, a senior police official said nearly 30,000 to 40,000 devotees had gathered for the festival, with many standing on a slope near the temple.

At least seven people died and more than 80 were injured after a stampede broke out during a temple festival in North Goa's Shirgao village in the wee hours of Saturday. The incident took place at the Sree Lairai Devi temple.

Explaining what led to the stampede, a senior police official said nearly 30,000 to 40,000 devotees had gathered for the festival, with many standing on a slope near the temple. "A few people fell on the slope, causing others to fall on top of each other," Director General of Police Alok Kumar told PTI.

According to the police, about 40 to 50 people fell in the same area, triggering the stampede. The incident was confined to that particular spot.

Thousands of devotees from Goa, Maharashtra and Karnataka attend the annual



festival at the Sree Lairai Devi temple. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant visited the injured at the North Goa district hospital. Sawant, in a post on X, said he had received a call from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who

offered his full support.

The Goa Chief Minister also announced that an inquiry would be conducted into the temple stampede. Talking to reporters at the site, Sawant said, "I have asked for a detailed inquiry into

the incident. We will make the report public."

Goa Health Minister Vishwajit Rane said that as many as 80 people are injured and are being treated. "This is the most unfortunate incident. My whole

team has been active the whole night they have been working. 80 people have been injured and brought to hospital. The focus of the Health department is to save the lives of the critically injured, which are about 10. More than 6 to 7 people have lost their life. Government is doing the best to save the lives," the health minister said.

The Shri Lairai Zatra festival, which started on Friday, is a deeply revered annual festival celebrated at the Shri Lairai Devi Temple in Goa's Shirgao. Devotees from across the state and beyond gather to honour Goddess Lairai, believed to be a form of Goddess Parvati. The highlight of the festival is the traditional dhondachi zatra, during which thousands of devotees walk across burning embers barefoot.

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'Europe's problems...': Experts cite Jaishankar, pan EU's hypocrisy on Pahalgam

As the EU's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, urged India and Pakistan to exercise restraint, several experts went on an overdrive in slamming her for maintaining double standards.

The European Union has been called out by experts and on social media for its hypocrisy over its stand on the tensions between India and Pakistan as compared to how it reacted to the Ukraine-Russia war.

As the EU's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, urged both nations to exercise restraint, several experts went on an overdrive in slamming her for adopting an equidistant approach and recalling External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's 2022 remark on "Europe's problems". On Friday, Kallas held separate calls with Jaishankar and Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar amid escalating tensions between the two countries in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack, which left 26 dead. In a post on X, Kallas said the escalation of the situation helps "no one" without even remotely calling out Pakistan over its support for cross-border terrorism - of which India has been a victim for decades. "I urge both sides to show restraint and pursue dialogue to ease the situation. Escalation helps no one," Kallas, who is



the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, said on X. However, foreign policy experts and a section of social media users were quick to point out Kallas's double standards and dug out her old posts on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, where she said that "defence is not provocation" and it was important to "stop the aggressor". "I hope Europe learnt that appeasement only strengthens the aggressor. The aggressor will never stop unless he is stopped," Kallas

had posted while calling for action against Russia.

In another post, Kallas defended Europe's military backing of Ukraine, saying "defence is not provocation".

"Fear of escalation creates self-deterrence. As a result, some argue that helping Ukraine defend itself from aggression means to escalate. Defence is not provocation," she had said. **EXPERTS SLAM EUROPEAN**

UNION

Summing up the situation, a foreign policy lecturer tweeted, "To be clear, most Indians have rarely expected Europe to do much about Pakistan, considering its historical record." The EU is Pakistan's second most important trading partner and have maintained close ties over the years. Another foreign policy expert called Kallas's statement "purposeless" and "ineffectual". "Feels like a return of the hyphenated India-Pakistan era with this statement from Brussels," he said. A senior ORF fellow said the statement showed the EU's ignorance of the situation in the region as "dialogue and diplomacy" have done little to curb cross-border terror from Pakistan. "If you had any knowledge, you would know dialogue and diplomacy has been done to death (the death of Indians at the hands of Islamist Pakistani terrorists) and you have blithely turned a blind eye to the shenanigans of the Islamic State of Pakistan. Please do tell us what dialogue and diplomacy has achieved so far?" Sushant Sareen tweeted.

Congress MP questions surgical strikes, BJP says 'go to Pak with Rahul Gandhi'



Congress MP and former Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi has sparked a political row by questioning the Indian armed forces' 2019 surgical strikes across the border following the Pulwama terror attack, saying "no one saw them". His remarks drew sharp criticism from BJP leaders, who accused him of demoralising the armed forces. "Till date, I could not find where the (surgical) strike took place, where men were killed at that time, and where this happened in Pakistan. Nothing had happened. Nowhere was a surgical strike seen. Nobody came to know," Channi said speaking at a press conference. He added,

"I have always demanded (proof)."

Channi's remarks come even as the Congress party has publicly backed the government over the recent Pahalgam terror attack. "We demand that the government do something. Tell people who the perpetrators of the Pahalgam terrorist attack are and punish them," he said. He also criticised the delay in response to the incident, saying, "Ten days have passed since the Pahalgam attack but no action has been taken by the government. The entire country is waiting to see what action the government is going to take against Pakistan."

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War Game: Forward-looking India-Pakistan conflict scenario

In the aftermath of the terror attack in Pahalgam in Kashmir – blamed on Pakistan army proxies – New Delhi escalates beyond past templates (like the 2016 Uri raid or 2019 Balakot strike). India initially retaliated non-kinetically by suspending the Indus Waters Treaty and downgrading diplomatic ties with Pakistan, signalling resolve.

With these measures exhausting their impact, India's leadership decides on new, creative kinetic responses to punish the perpetrators while avoiding an all-out war. Indian strategic thought has long debated such options: limited yet decisive strikes that stay below Pakistan's nuclear threshold.

The Indian Army's Cold Start doctrine, for instance, envisions swift offensive operations "short of full-scale war", exploiting the "space for conventional conflict below the nuclear threshold". Pakistan, for its part, relies on a posture of "full spectrum deterrence" – including tactical nuclear weapons like the Nasr (Hatf-9) – to dissuade any Indian incursions.

Both nations thus believe they can calibrate escalation without crossing into nuclear catastrophe. According to wargame analyses, there remain "numerous escalatory steps available to both countries that have never been taken", offering room to innovate militarily while still avoiding nuclear red lines.

With this backdrop, the following 15-step Red (Pakistan) vs Blue (India) war game scenario unfolds over a short span, illustrating a forward-looking conflict sequence that feels both realistic and cinematic.

WAR GAME MOVE SEQUENCE

1) Blue 1 (India) STRIKE – The Indian Navy Western Fleet kick-starts kinetic retaliation. Under cover of darkness, an Indian Navy guided-missile destroyer in the Arabian Sea launches a volley of BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles at a terrorist training compound on Pakistan's coast, near Karachi.

This marks the first time India employs a naval standoff strike on Pakistani soil, catching Pakistani defences off-guard. The precision missiles obliterate the target with minimal collateral damage, delivering a loud message that New Delhi is willing to widen the conflict to new domains.

2) Red 1 (Pakistan) RESPONSE – Pakistan reels in initial confusion and scrambles defences. The Pakistan Navy and Air Force are caught by surprise by the sea-launched strike. Pakistani air defence batteries around Karachi hurriedly go on high alert as Navy frigates and maritime patrol aircraft comb the coast, unsure if a submarine

or ship might strike again.

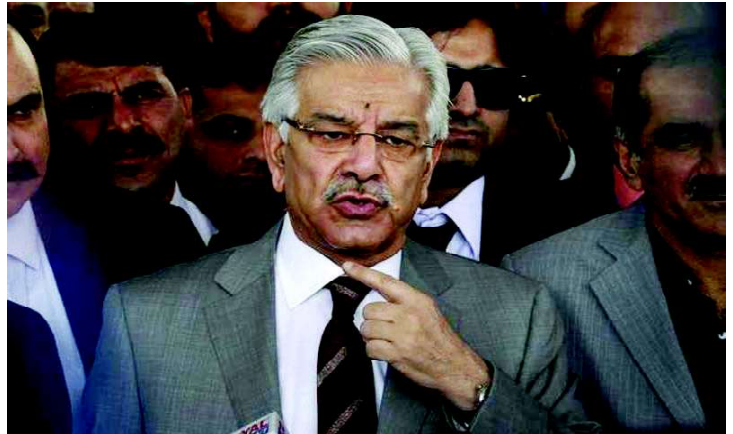
The Pakistani military refrains from an immediate counterattack while it assesses the damage, but it puts fighter squadrons on combat air patrol over major cities and activates air raid sirens in Karachi to reassure the public. Islamabad's leadership convenes an emergency meeting, shocked at India's unconventional opening gambit and weighing a response that won't invite further devastation.

3) Blue 2 (India) ATTACK – India unleashes cyber warfare and space-based jamming. Even as Pakistan is still reacting, Indian agencies execute a massive cyber offensive against Pakistani military command networks and critical infrastructure. Indian malware knocks out portions of Pakistan's power grid and disrupts railway signalling, causing blackouts in Rawalpindi and paralysing communications for several hours.

At the same time, India's Defence Space Agency employs electronic warfare satellites to jam Pakistan's military satellite communications, blinding radar and communication links along the front. This coordinated cyber-space attack sows confusion in the Pakistani ranks without drawing blood, demonstrating India's technological edge in modern warfare domains. The move is deliberately kept non-lethal and deniable, calibrating escalation while signalling that India can cripple Pakistan's systems.

4) Red 2 (Pakistan) RESPONSE – Pakistan struggles to restore control and retaliates in cyberspace. Pakistani engineers and CERT teams rush to get grids and comms back online, gradually restoring power and military networks by rerouting systems to backup links. Islamabad publicly decries India's cyber strikes as "unprovoked aggression in cyberspace", and, in retaliation, Pakistani-aligned hackers deface several Indian government websites and attempt to spread disinformation on Indian social media. There are also brief cyber incursions into Indian banking systems, causing some ATM outages, but Pakistan's cyber counterstrike remains limited in impact. Diplomatically, Pakistan contacts China and the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) to highlight India's escalatory tactics, urging international condemnation of India's cyber warfare. These moves signal Pakistan's resolve, yet the government also carefully emphasises to global audiences that it is Pakistan that is acting with restraint so far, in hopes of gaining diplomatic support.

Raising the N-bogie Pak ministers add fuel to the fire



THE recklessness of Pakistan's ministers knows no bounds. Two of them have raised the spectre of a nuclear conflict amid heightened cross-border tensions after the Pahalgam terror attack. Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said that his country would use nuclear weapons only if "there is a direct threat to our existence", while Railway Minister Hanif Abbasi has warned that Pakistan's arsenal – including Ghori, Shaheen and Ghaznavi missiles along with 130 nuclear warheads – has been kept "only for India". Abbasi has claimed that the N-weapons are installed at secret locations and would be unleashed if India goes ahead with drastic steps such as stopping water supply to Pakistan. The message to New Delhi is clear: Pull back or be ready to face the consequences. The threat is also aimed at drawing international attention – the N-bogie is expected to prod one superpower or the other to persuade India to scale down retaliatory measures.

The sabre-rattling comes amid the release of an annual report by a

renowned Swedish think tank, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). It says that India's military spending last year was nearly nine times that of Pakistan. Another key takeaway is that India has 172 nuclear warheads, slightly higher than Pakistan (170), even as both nations have continued to develop new types of nuclear systems. Ideally, such competition is considered good for deterrence, but the Pahalgam massacre has upset the equations.

India's nuclear doctrine, adopted in 2003, has two main components: Building and maintaining a credible minimum deterrence; and a 'no first use' (NFU) policy under which nuclear weapons will only be used in retaliation to a nuclear attack on Indian territory or on Indian forces anywhere. However, Pakistan does not adhere to the NFU policy, making it a dangerous player in the subcontinent and beyond. Its ministers would be well advised to avoid irresponsible statements that may bring the two neighbours closer to the much-dreaded nuclear threshold.

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China's calculated neutrality on Pahalgam

By JABIN T JACOB

CHINA has issued a series of statements in the wake of the terrorist attack in Pahalgam. How do we interpret these and what do they tell us about how it views India and Pakistan?

The first report of the attack by Chinese state-run Xinhua on April 22 did not refer to it as a terrorist attack but as "tourists killed", and an "ambush" in "Indian-controlled Kashmir." The report was largely matter-of-fact even if both Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and "the region's incumbent Chief Minister" Omar Abdullah were quoted as condemning it. It concludes noting: "A guerilla war has been going on between militants and Indian troops stationed in the region since 1989."

It is only subsequently that the headlines and text change, with "UN Security Council condemns terror attack in Indian-controlled Kashmir" in the headline,



"terrorist attack in Kashmir", and "terrorism and extremism." But even so, these are not the same thing as saying that China holds Pakistan responsible. In fact, China consistently attempts to portray a picture of neutrality, saying it "hopes India and Pakistan will exercise restraint, work in the same direction, handle relevant differences properly through dialogue and consultation, and jointly uphold peace and stability in the region." This 'neutrality',

however, does two things with respect to India.

One, it hyphenates India and Pakistan in status as the Chinese — and Pakistanis — have always wished the rest of the world would. China does not see India as its equal or a competing power while Pakistan sees itself as India's equal. New Delhi's own difference in responses to provocations by China and Pakistan, in fact, tends to reinforce this perception. India had a rather weak-kneed military

response following the Galwan incident in 2020. By contrast, it has been relatively more ready for kinetic responses to go with its rhetoric when Pakistan has been the aggressor. China has also used foreign interlocutors to highlight this hyphenation, referring, for example, to the Egyptian Foreign Minister calling for "calm and self-restraint" in phone calls with his Indian and Pakistani counterparts.

Two, Beijing is also shifting responsibility to India by urging "restraint" and asking both countries to "jointly uphold peace and stability in the region." By calling for an "impartial investigation", China is making clear that it does not buy India's version of events. And nor can it, given that its rivalry with India is structural.

Once again, Indian rhetoric and domestic politics involving Pakistan offer opportunities to China to exploit the India-Pakistan divide and to keep India

off balance.

There is a third effect that Chinese neutrality has, but this time with respect to Pakistan. While it is easy enough to conclude that India is the target, Beijing is also conveying a message to Pakistan by not wholeheartedly supporting the latter either.

For long now, Chinese support to Pakistan on political and foreign policy issues has been largely rhetorical. While Beijing has blocked Indian attempts to get Pakistan-based terrorists sanctioned at the UN, it has also used such support to put pressure on Islamabad and Rawalpindi to address China's own concerns on what it perceives to be terrorism by Uyghurs from its Xinjiang region as well as attacks against Chinese workers in Pakistan. In other words, Chinese support for Pakistan is increasingly part of a transactional approach. This should not be surprising.

How Trump helped redraw Canada's electoral map to Mark Carney's advantage

By Vivek Mishra

Within months, the political fortunes of both Canada's Liberal Party and its leading candidate, Mark Carney, have seen a marked reversal. In the just-concluded national elections, it became the single largest party with 169 seats, just four seats shy of a majority. The Conservative Party came second with 144 seats, followed by the Bloc Quebecois in the third spot.

The Liberal Party and a shrinking New Democratic Party will likely come together to form the next government in Canada. The Conservative Party of Canada and the Bloc Quebecois could also ally. But they would still fall short of the required majority. Perhaps never before has an external factor weighed so heavily in shaping Canadian elections. Donald Trump remained the largest factor behind the Liberal Party's consolidation this time. The party had lost support in the months leading up to former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's resignation. Besides, Carney's candidature was abetted by his



stature as a political novice, a reform central banker, and an economist who put the country back on track in the face of dire economic straits in the past.

The Trump factor

Trump's persistent targeting of Canada became a political boomerang. Referring to Canada as a potential 51st state of the US, targeting it through high tariffs, and holding it responsible for illegal fentanyl flow in the US through the northern border galvanised Canadian sentiments like never before.

Much of this consolidation happened around the Liberal Party, even as the Conservative Party saw a gradual loss in support, a trend that has acutely intensified since Trump's inauguration and the tariff war against Canada. Even though the Conservative Party's vote share grew by more than seven per cent since the last elections in 2021, the Liberal Party's gains outweigh that by over three percentage points.

While Trump remained the largest looming factor over the Canadian elections, two

externalities rapidly shifted the domestic narrative: trade and sovereignty. Trade became a point of frontal attack on Canada — and the world — for Donald Trump. And as Canada is the second-largest exporter to the US (with \$410 billion worth of goods in 2023), any tweaking of trade and tariffs was bound to impact Canadian sentiments.

The Trump tariffs were sold as backstabbing during the election campaigns in Canada. After all, Donald Trump had signed the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement during his first term. Trump's pursuit of a "trade balance" with Ottawa rapidly escalated into a trade war, disrupting supply chains on both sides of the border. Businesses on both sides were impacted, particularly the aluminium, steel, lumber, and automobile sectors. The onus lay on Washington, DC.

A fallout of Trump repeatedly referring to Justin Trudeau as a "governor" of America's "51st state" was a wave of political mobilisation within Canada. This

rhetoric reignited national debates around sovereignty, which the Liberal Party skillfully framed as a rallying cry in defence of Canadian autonomy. The emergence of a new political figure in Mark Carney, coupled with Trudeau's strategic decision to take a step back, also worked in the Liberals' favour.

Initially, many dismissed Trump's comments about potential claims over Canada as unserious, especially given the stark ideological divide between his Republican base and Canadian political sensibilities. However, as Trump began to adopt a more aggressive stance on sovereignty issues globally, anxieties began to surge within Canada. This was further exacerbated by symbolic moves such as US troop deployments near the Panama Canal and Vice President JD Vance's high-profile trip to Greenland, which lent some credibility and seriousness to Trump's ambitions and geopolitical posturing.

BJP's caste census strike: Why did Modi government make a U-turn?

By Amitabh Tiwari

In a move that has stunned the Opposition and political pundits, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Centre announced it will conduct a caste census. The Congress party, of course, is taking credit for the move, saying that the saffron party conceded to relentless pressure from Rahul Gandhi. BJP supporters, on the other hand, are calling this move a masterstroke, claiming it has taken the sting out of the Opposition's main poll plank ahead of the Bihar Assembly polls.

Regardless, the move came as a surprise as the BJP has long been non-committal about it. It has consolidated a Hindu-majority vote bank on the lines of Hindutva and nationalism, and exhorted voters to rise above caste. It has been successful to a large extent with massive victories in the 2014 and 2019 general elections and many state elections. So, what made the BJP, which once called the demand for a caste census divisive, take a U-turn?

1) Congress push for social justice: The Congress party guaranteed a nationwide caste census if it came to power. In two of the three states where it is in power, the party has followed through on this promise, indicating this isn't just a gimmick.

It has also promised to pass a constitutional amendment to raise the Supreme Court-mandated 50 per cent cap on reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. Since OBC reservations currently stand at 27 per cent, and SC-STs enjoy almost a 100 per cent reservation vis-a-vis their population, raising the cap is likely to benefit OBCs. The Congress hopes to break the BJP's hold on the OBC vote bloc, making social justice its main plank in the plenary session held in Gujarat. The Congress has realised that without this, it can't stop the saffron party juggernaut in any upcoming election.

2) Setback in 2024 Lok Sabha polls: The BJP shied away from conducting a caste census as it was able to consolidate the support of OBCs over the years, doubling from 22 per cent in 2009 to 44 per cent in 2019. And for good reason. The prime minister and many BJP chief ministers are OBC. The party has given OBC leaders a lot of representation through election tickets and central and state cabinet roles. This is how it wooed OBCs from the Congress and regional parties.

In the 2024 general elections, however, the BJP did not perform as expected,



falling short of a simple majority. The National Democratic Alliance couldn't even cross 300 seats against the party's declaration of "char sau paar". According to CSDS data, the NDA lost four per cent of the Hindu Upper-OBC support while the INDIA bloc gained 11 per cent support from Upper-OBCs and seven per cent from Lower-OBCs. These seemingly small figures for the NDA mask a significant realignment, especially in the Hindi heartland. In Bihar, while the NDA won 30 out of the 40 seats, it lost nine seats compared to 2019. While the NDA recorded a 12 per cent drop in Kurmi-Koeri support and a dramatic 24 per cent decline among Other-OBC votes, the INDIA bloc gained nine and just over one per cent respectively. In Uttar Pradesh, the NDA won just 36 of the 80 seats, a loss of 28 compared to 2019, as Akhilesh Yadav's Pichade (Backward classes), Dalit, and Alpsankhyak (Minorities) formula (also called PDA) trumped Hindutva. The loss of support was even more striking: 19 per cent amongst Kurmi-Koeri and 13 per cent amongst Other-OBCs.

3) Upcoming Bihar and UP elections: Caste is cast in stone in Indian politics, with 55 per cent of voters preferring leaders of their caste as per a 2018 Aziz Premji Institute study. As Bihar gears up for another electoral battle, the contest is expected to be tight, given Nitish Kumar's declining health and the burden of a 20-year anti-incumbency. The BJP-led NDA coalition, once considered invincible in its ability to forge social coalitions, appears to be facing a growing challenge from the Opposition's renewed focus on caste calculations and attempts to expand its vote base beyond Muslims and Yadavs.

This isn't a sudden development. In the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections, when Nitish Kumar was still firmly in the NDA camp, the coalition had already lost 10 per cent of OBC/EBC support while the

breach the 50 per cent reservation ceiling established by the Supreme Court. Nitish Kumar's government had even raised the reservation cap to 65 per cent in Bihar, a move eventually struck down by the courts as unconstitutional. Yet the political messaging was clear: the Janata Dal (United) leader understands the power of caste arithmetic in Bihar's complex social landscape. Meanwhile, the NDA remained conspicuously non-committal on this controversial issue.

In UP, where polls are due in 2027, the BJP needs to puncture Akhilesh Yadav's PDA formula. Though in by-polls, the BJP emerged victorious, it knows very well that incumbents hold an edge as voters lose interest. The Samajwadi Party marched ahead of the BJP in grabbing the non-Jatav votes, 56 per cent versus 29 per cent. And if it succeeds in pulling the Jatav votes from the Bahujan Samaj party, whose 13 per cent vote share will be up for grabs, it'll be bad news for the BJP.

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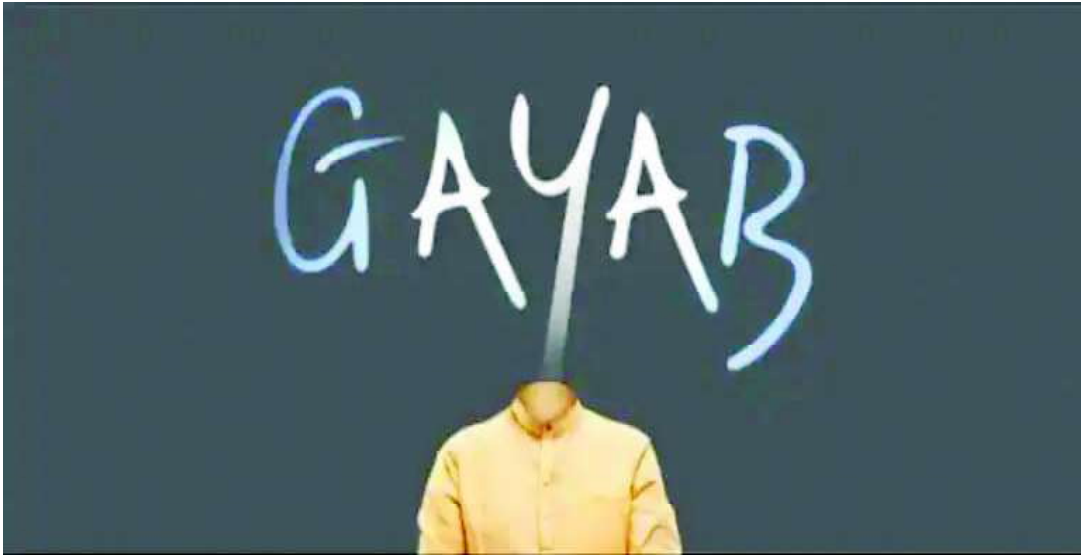
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Congress' Social Media Misstep: A Self-Inflicted Wound on National Security Perception



By Sanjay Singh

Congress's social media strategists likely believed they had crafted a masterstroke-sharply derisive, attention-grabbing, and instantly shareable content. The post featured a headless portrait of Prime Minister, accompanied by the catchline "Jimmedari ke samay - GAYAB", without explicitly naming him.

While it did capture attention, it also provided ammunition for influential figures in Pakistan, who seized the opportunity to mock Modi and push their false narratives. The post's amplification by forces hostile to India's interests handed the BJP an opportunity to strike back.

Roughly 24 hours later-after internal deliberations, it seems-the Congress deleted the post. But by then, the damage was done. The BJP linked Modi's headless depiction to the radical Islamist slogan "Sar Tan Se Juda". Adding to the controversy, several Congress leaders made questionable remarks - raising doubts about potential Indian military action against Pakistan and contradicting eyewitness accounts of recent terror attack victims, reportedly targeted based on religion. The backlash prompted Congress to issue an advisory urging its leaders to refrain from commenting on such sensitive matters. But when senior AICC officials or Karnataka's Chief Minister speak out of turn, the issue transcends communication - it points to deeper structural flaws within the party. This episode is yet another reminder of Congress's habit of self-inflicted damage, particularly on national security issues. Over time, the party has developed a reputation - whether inadvertently or otherwise - of being perceived as misaligned with public

sentiment on national interests.

Consider the recent Pahalgam terror attack, where 25 tourists and a local pony handler were killed. Eyewitnesses reported that the victims were specifically targeted after being identified as Hindus. Yet, some senior Congress leaders floated alternative narratives that, suspiciously, echoed Pakistan's version of events.

The Congress must confront a difficult question: How did it allow a perception of weakness - or even hostility - on national security to take root in the minds of many Indians? This is especially perplexing given that, despite the UPA government's failure to take decisive action after the 2008 Mumbai attacks, public support for Congress remained intact.

Perhaps Congress's misreading of public sentiment persisted even as attitudes evolved under Modi's leadership after 2014. Rahul Gandhi's visit to JNU in 2016 - to support students protesting disciplinary action, some of whom were accused of chanting "Azadi" and "Bharat Tere Tukde Honge" - did not go unnoticed. Earlier, Congress backed the "Award Wapsi" campaign, which many saw as politically motivated.

After the 2016 surgical strikes on terror camps in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, Rahul Gandhi accused Modi of "khooon ki dalali" (trading in soldiers' blood). Following the 2019 Balakot airstrike, he demanded proof that the strikes occurred-claims eagerly amplified by Pakistani media. In both cases, Gandhi's statements, aimed at Modi, seemingly undermined the armed forces - crossing a red line on national security.

Congress's official statements and

remarks by its leaders during such incidents have repeatedly appeared out of sync with national sentiment. One senior Congress leader even used derogatory remarks about then-Army Chief General Bipin Rawat, a remark later retracted after widespread condemnation.

In 2017, a Chinese embassy bulletin revealed that Rahul Gandhi met the Chinese Ambassador. Congress initially denied the meeting but later admitted it, calling it routine diplomatic engagement. However, questions arose over why it wasn't coordinated with the Indian government. Notably, the Chinese embassy later deleted the statement from its website.

Rahul Gandhi's forceful-but often speculative-remarks about Chinese incursions in Ladakh, including graphic descriptions of Indian soldiers being beaten, were interpreted by many as aligning more with Chinese propaganda than Indian interests.

The BJP's claim that Congress's "headless Modi" post resembled radical slogans like "Sar Tan Se Juda" gained traction largely because this wasn't an isolated incident.

Viewed collectively, these instances reinforce the perception that Congress consistently misreads national sentiment-particularly on security issues-frequently finding itself on the wrong side of public opinion.

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BJP stole Rahul's thunder with caste census. But there are other advantages too

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw's casual announcement at the end of a Cabinet briefing that the upcoming census would include an enumeration of different castes across the country took the Opposition completely off guard.

The National Democratic Alliance government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi appears to have stolen the thunder of principal Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi ahead of the crucial Bihar Assembly elections by announcing the first nationwide caste census in about 100 years.

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw's casual announcement at the end of a Cabinet briefing that the upcoming census would include an enumeration of different castes across the country took the Opposition completely off guard. Many, however, were quick to claim credit for "forcing" the Modi government to agree to accept



and implement their demand. Claims aplenty Even as Samajwadi Party supremo Akhilesh Yadav insisted that it was a "100 per cent victory for PDA" — an abbreviation that the party uses for OBCs, Dalits, and minorities — as the Bharatiya Janata Party yielded to its pressure on caste census. Rahul Gandhi at a

special presser said plainly: "It is our vision which they have adopted." While there is no denying that Rahul Gandhi has been most vocal in the last two years demanding a caste census, even brazenly advocating, "jitni aabadi, utna haq", the ruling BJP taunted him, saying that his party, from the time of his great-grandfather

Jawaharlal Nehru's prime ministership, had opposed reservation and "deprived" the poor and marginalised sections of society of any sort of benefits. Modi followed Nehru, partly BJP spokespersons often quote Nehru's unequivocal statement from 1961: "If we go for reservation on a communal or caste basis, we swamp the bright and able citizens from government service and will remain a second-rate or third-rate country." It is difficult to argue with Nehru's modernist viewpoint, and perhaps, until recently, Modi too shared similar sentiments. During the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, he repeatedly mocked the demand for a caste census, saying he only recognised "four castes, that of

the poor, women, youth and the farmers," indicating that he was against going back in time. But, after the unexpected setback of returning to power in 2024 without a clear majority, he appears to have become more conscious of present-day realpolitik and the need to address the aspirations of the common man across the caste spectrum. Notably, Modi held a two-hour-long meeting with Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh supremo Mohan Bhagwat on Tuesday, as part of their newfound bonhomie, before the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs met on Wednesday and decided on incorporating the caste enumeration in the census, likely to be held early next year.

Here are 8 kinetic options India can choose from to avenge Pahalgam

"April 22, 2025" will be forever etched in our national memory. The Rubicon was crossed when terrorists massacred innocent tourists in cold blood in Pahalgam, Kashmir. The initial anger and shock have dissipated. And in its place is now a steely resolve to teach the perpetrators a befitting lesson. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who cut short his visit to Saudi Arabia, has vowed to avenge the slain.

One thing is clear at this point: it was not a localised terrorist action, and even with the limited evidence available, Pakistan appears culpable. Diplomatic measures have already been announced against Pakistan after a Cabinet Committee of Security meeting on April 23, and more are likely to follow.

Speaking at a public rally in Madhubani, Bihar, on April 24 — the first time after the massacre — the PM assured the nation: "India will identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backers. We will pursue them to the ends



of the Earth."

Multiple options, both kinetic and non-kinetic, have been presented. Kinetic options are the active actions that mostly refer to military options. These range from small tactical team-level operations across the Line of Control to full-scale military operations.

Many have recommended a repeat of the Balakot air strike, which the Indian Air Force conducted to avenge the deadly Pulwama attack of February 14, 2019. But will it suffice this time? While each option appears appropriate in its own right, let us examine the range of kinetic

options at India's disposal.

Revoking ceasefire agreement: A ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan has been in place since 2021 and has largely been respected. In hindsight, however, it has been counterproductive for India. While it has ensured that people in Kashmir's border villages have been able to lead normal lives and the Indian Army has been able to concentrate on counterterrorism operations, it has allowed Pakistan to thin out forces from the LoC and divert them to the Afghanistan border and in the fight against Baloch insurgency.

Revoking the ceasefire agreement will force Pakistan to reinforce the LoC, imposing costs on it elsewhere.

Targeting terrorist camps: Indian intelligence, in every briefing, provides details of the number of terrorist camps and launch pads across the LoC. The time has now come to target them as they crop up. It will not only destabilise their strategies but also impose additional costs on them in terms of time and ease of infiltration.

Targeted assassinations: It is one of the oldest forms of revenge, mastered best by Israel. How Israel was able to assassinate Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, or Hezbollah chief Hasan Nasrallah, is now a well-established story. In Pakistan's case, however, key figures in the army and major terrorist groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed could be targeted and eliminated. With the advancement in surveillance technology and targeting systems, it may not even be necessary to have a physical

presence of an operative, once the initial work has been done.

Missile strikes: Many options exist. India has a range of ballistic missiles like the surface-to-surface missiles Prithvi and Agni, which can cover the entire Pakistani territory. With India's capability to launch these missiles from mobile land platforms, the element of surprise can be maintained. In addition, India has missiles that can be launched by air and sea, deep into Pakistani territory. Having developed hypersonic missiles that travel at Mach 5, India now has a missile capability that cannot be intercepted by any anti-missile defence.

Change in 'No First Use' policy: The current policy is, by nature, reactive. So, Pakistan knows it does not have to fear any preemptive nuclear strike. A mere change in this policy would add a big deterrence value, especially as India has completed its Nuclear TRIAD, i.e. the capability to launch nuclear missiles by air, land and sea.

A decade on, Chandrababu takes a second shot at Amaravati as Modi does a relaunch

By TS Sudhir

Baahubali. Baahubali 2.

Pushpa. Pushpa 2.

Amaravati. Amaravati 2.

The only difference between the first two and the third one is that while the sequels to Baahubali and Pushpa followed the stupendous success of the initial cinematic offering, Amaravati 2.0 has been necessitated because Amaravati 1.0, launched with great fanfare in October 2015, never quite took off. It ran into rough weather after a change of regime in 2019.

Amaravati 2.0 - The Relaunch, therefore, is Chandrababu Naidu's way of telling the world that the proposed capital city of Andhra Pradesh is rising like a phoenix from the ashes. Between 2019 and 2024, during the YSRCP regime, the then chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy sought to undermine Amaravati by proposing three capitals for Andhra Pradesh. Visakhapatnam was projected as the executive capital and the seat of the chief minister, Kurnool as the judicial capital and the seat of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, reducing Amaravati to just the legislative capital where the assembly would be located. Subsequently, all works that took off at a frenetic pace between



2015 and 2019, when Naidu was chief minister, were allowed to gather dust and moss, making Amaravati look like a ghost town, with incomplete constructions and no life.

May 2 therefore, will give a sense of deja vu because the two lead stars of Amaravati 2.0, like all sequels, are the same. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who brought soil and water from Delhi on Vijaya Dashmi day in 2015, will inaugurate the relaunch of the Amaravati capital city projects, with Naidu in attendance. For a state known for its love for larger-than-life imagery

on the big screen, it is no surprise that the narrative is equally filmy - the heroes coming together once again after having electorally vanquished the group that tried to kill the Amaravati capital dream. A sizeable crowd is expected to be mobilised for this matinee show on Friday afternoon to cheer as Modi lays the foundation stone for projects worth Rs 1 lakh crore. But is Naidu making the same mistake that he made in his first innings as the chief minister of the newly bifurcated state - of overinvesting in the Amaravati vision? No, says the chief minister, who turned 75 last month. Naidu sees Amaravati beyond just the

seat of administration, and describes Amaravati as the embodiment of Andhra's collective pride, aspirations, and emotions. In Naidu's mind, the real story is that of Amaravati's resilience despite the attempts to derail it.

On the anvil is an entire shopping list of projects. As part of the Amaravati capital development, foundation stones will be laid for the assembly, the secretariat, the high court, residential quarters for judges, ministers, MLAs and officials. Capital City Amaravati as a green, smart city - catchphrases Naidu is extremely fond of - will further spawn nine theme cities and 27 townships. The Amaravati master plan also includes the ambitious construction of 365 km of trunk roads and 1500 km of layout roads. The grandiose plan is to develop the 217 sq km between Vijayawada and Guntur into an economic hub amidst the matronly presence of administrative power, to create 15 lakh jobs and house 35 lakh people. Going beyond Amaravati, thanks to the Centre's dependence on the Telugu Desam for numbers in the Lok Sabha, Naidu has managed to get the green flag for many projects on his bucket list. These include projects in the defence, railways, roadways and infrastructure sectors.

The message of Pahalgam: 'Normalcy' and cross-border terror cannot co-exist

By Rajdeep Sardesai

In the vocabulary of the long-running Jammu and Kashmir conflict, one word has crept in periodically, namely 'normalcy'. Politicians and pundits have often spoken triumphantly of how 'normalcy' is being restored in the Kashmir Valley. And yet, the stark truth is that for three and a half decades, Kashmir has been anything but 'normal'. The latest tragic terror attack, in which at least 28 civilians were massacred, is only a stark reminder of how, in a bloodied Valley, every time a window of hope is opened, it is firmly shut by the merchants of terror. From a ray of sunshine to a dark abyss, Kashmir is trapped in a deadly schizophrenia.

Recall how Prime Minister Narendra Modi expounded on his vision of a 'Naya Kashmir' soon after the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. Mr Modi spun a dream of how this was a major step towards 'normalcy': Kashmir would soon see, promised the prime minister, a flood of investments, of massive infrastructure development and even a return of Bollywood cinema to the snow-capped mountains and verdant meadows. This would be a 'new normal' where Jammu and Kashmir would be rapidly 'mainstreamed' into a 'new' India.

The promised 'normalcy' was a facade. Sure, new roads, highways and tunnels were built as a positive symbol of change. It was now possible to whizz from Srinagar to Anantnag or Baramullah with a speed that was perhaps unthinkable a few years ago. But 'normalcy' isn't just about physical infrastructure. It is ultimately about winning the hearts and minds of the people. And that is where long-standing resentments on the ground refused to go away. How is it 'normal' when India's only Muslim-majority state is split and downsized into a union territory by an overnight legislative firman? How is it 'normal' when three former chief ministers are detained and placed under house arrest? How is it 'normal' when thousands of Kashmiris are arrested under draconian preventive detention laws and packed off into prison? How is it 'normal' when schools remain shut for months and internet shutdowns are routine? How is it 'normal' when thousands of security troops are swarming across every nook and corner of the Valley, their overwhelming presence a constant reminder of how the Indian state could not afford to take any risks on the ground? How is it 'normal' when a rogue and dysfunctional Pakistani state continues to arm and train young men to spread fear and violence?



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Don't think it's a secret: Bilawal Bhutto on Pakistan's links with terror groups

(News Agency)- In a sweeping diplomatic retaliation to the recent deadly terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam, the Indian government on Thursday revoked all visas issued to Pakistani nationals and suspended all categories of visa services for Pakistan.

In an official statement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the move followed decisions taken by the Cabinet Committee on Security or CCS in the aftermath of the Pahalgam attack.

Effective April 27, 2025, all valid visas issued to Pakistani nationals have been cancelled. Even the medical visas — often extended on humanitarian grounds — have been given a limited window. They will remain valid only until April 29, 2025. Moreover, India has completely suspended visa services for Pakistani nationals and no new visas will be

Emphasising that the country no



longer supports such elements, Bhutto added, "As far as Pakistan's history is concerned, it is history and it is not something that we are partaking in today. It is true that it is an unfortunate part of our history."

A few days ago, a video clip of Pakistan's Defence Minister Khwaja Asif speaking to Sky News's Yalda Hakim went viral. In it, Hakim pressed him on Pakistan's history with militant

groups, asking, "But you do admit, sir, that Pakistan has had a long history of backing, supporting, training, and funding these terrorist organisations?"

In response, Asif said, "We have been doing this dirty work for the United States for about three decades and the West, including Britain. That was a mistake, and we suffered for that. If we had not joined the war against

the Soviet Union and later the war after 9/11, Pakistan's track record would have been unimpeachable."

'EITHER OUR WATER WILL FLOW OR THEIR BLOOD'

Expressing anger over India's decision to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty, Bilawal Bhutto had earlier said that Pakistan was the true custodian of the Indus civilisation and warned India that "either our water or their blood will flow through it".

Training his guns on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bhutto said neither Pakistan, nor the international community, would tolerate his "warmongering" or bid to divert the Indus waters.

"He (Modi) says they are heirs to a civilisation thousands of years old, but that civilisation lies in Mohenjo Daro, in Larkana. We are its true custodians, and we will defend it," Bhutto said.

Defending his remarks, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chief said he was only communicating what the people of the country felt.

Mr Rijiju is leading the government delegation to Vietnam.



"Arrived in Vietnam leading the high-level Indian delegation with the Sacred Relics of Lord Buddha. Grand ceremonial reception was accorded by the Govt of Vietnam & Vietnam Buddhist Sanghas. The Holy Relics will be in Vietnam from 2nd-21st May 2025 for UN Vesak Day celebrations," Mr Rijiju posted on X and also shared some photos.

The visit is taking place in the context of the United Nations (UN) Day of Vesak celebrations being hosted by Vietnam from May 6-8, the Ministry of Minority Affairs said in a statement on Friday.

The holy relics of Lord Buddha were transported to Vietnam by the special IAF aircraft from the Hindan Air Base in Ghaziabad, befitting the status of a "State Guest", officials said on Thursday.

The sacred relics were ceremonially brought to Delhi on Wednesday and placed in a "special protected enclosure" at the National Museum for prayers for a couple of hours.

On Thursday evening, the holy relics were taken from the National Museum to the Hindan Air Base with full "state honours" in a "special bulletproof vehicle" after rituals at the museum for

their onward journey to Vietnam.

The aircraft arrived in Ho Chi Minh City on Friday morning.

The holy relics were received by Dao Ngoc Dung, Minister of Religious and Ethnic Affairs of Vietnam, Duong Ngoc Hai, Standing Vice-Chairman of Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee, Supreme Patriarch of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha Thich Tri Quang and venerable monks of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, the statement said.

Special ceremonial prayers were held at the airport on arrival, followed by prayers led by the Supreme Patriarch of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and the

enshrinement of the holy relics at Thanh Tam Monastery, Ho Chi Minh City, it said.

"On the occasion, a sapling of the Sacred Bodhi Tree brought from India was planted by the visiting minister from India and the Supreme Patriarch of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha at the Buddhist University, Ho Chi Minh City," the statement said.

In Vietnam, the sacred relics will be ceremoniously enshrined, venerated and worshipped at several important sites, the culture ministry earlier said. The holy relics will be at the Thanh Tam Monastery from May 2-7, followed by their exposition in the Tay Ninh, Ha Noi and Ha Nam provinces till May 21, it said.

The sacred relics have been provided through the Mahabodhi Society of India and the National Museum of the government of India with the support of the International Buddha Confederation.

The holy relics hold special significance for the Buddhist community around the world, and their exposition in Vietnam is taking place for the first time. "India treasures the strong bonds between the people of India and Vietnam and wish that the visit of holy relics to Vietnam and other related activities will further deepen these close ties between India and Vietnam," it said.

Prince Harry loses fight against UK removing his police protection in Britain

Prince Harry on Friday lost his legal challenge to changes to his security arrangements made by the British government following his decision to step down from royal duties with his American wife Meghan.

Harry, King Charles' younger son, had sought to overturn a decision by the Home Office - the ministry responsible for policing - which decided in February 2020 he would not automatically receive personal police security while in Britain. Last year, the High Court in London ruled the decision was lawful and that decision was upheld by three senior Court of Appeal judges who said that, while Harry understandably felt aggrieved, that did not amount to an error of law in the decision.

Judge Geoffrey Vos said Harry's lawyer had made "powerful and moving arguments" about the impact of the decision about his security.



"It was plain that the Duke of Sussex felt badly treated by the system, but I conclude - having studied the detail of the extensive documentation - I

could not say that the Duke's sense of grievance translated into a legal argument for the challenge to RAVEC's decision," he told the court.

Harry, 40, who now lives in California with Meghan and their two children, attended two days of hearings in person in April, when his lawyer told the

court that he had been singled out for different, unjustified and inferior treatment.

His lawyers said al Qaeda had recently called for him to be murdered, and he and his American wife Meghan had been involved in "a dangerous car pursuit with paparazzi in New York City" in 2023.

"One must not forget the human dimension to this case: there is a person sitting behind me whose safety, whose security and whose life is at stake," his lawyer Shaheed Fatima told the court as Harry watched on.

"His presence here and throughout this appeal is a potent illustration, were one needed, of how much this appeal means to him and his family," she said.

However, the government's legal team said the bespoke arrangement for Harry, the Duke of Sussex, had positive advantages from a security assessment point of view.

7.4 magnitude quake hits Drake Passage; Chile, Argentina issue tsunami warning

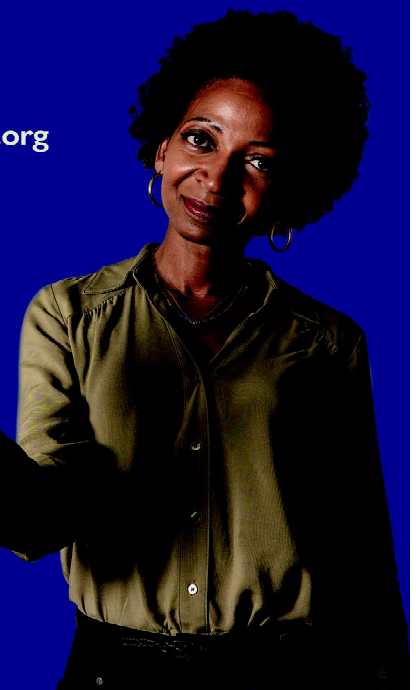


(News Agency)- A major tsunami warning was issued after a 7.4 magnitude earthquake hit the southern coast of Chile in South America, the US Geological Survey said on Friday. People living close to the southern tips of Chile and neighbouring Argentina have been asked to evacuate and move to safer places. We call for evacuation of the coastline throughout the Magallanes region," Chilean President Gabriel Boric said in a post on X. At this time, our duty is to be prepared and heed the authorities. Regional and national COGRID (Cogrid of the Nationwide Risk Management System) is underway. All

state resources are available," he added. The quake also prompted the suspension of water activities throughout the Magallanes region. The epicentre of the quake was 219 kilometres off the coast of the Argentine city of Ushuaia at around 2 pm (local time), the USGS said, while also reporting aftershocks. It struck the Drake Passage, situated between Cape Horn and Antarctica, and near the Chile-Argentina border, at a depth of 10km (6 miles). According to local media reports, the authorities issued precautionary evacuation orders, asking residents to move to places higher than 30 metres.

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How The White House Turned Viral Gorilla Debate About Immigration



(News Agency)- The internet is abuzz with a peculiar question: could 100 unarmed men take down a single adult male gorilla in a fight? The debate was sparked by X user Michael Sherrills on April 24, and it has since snowballed into a full-blown phenomenon, captivating the attention of celebrities and politicians alike.

YouTube star MrBeast poked fun at the idea, posting a fake thumbnail titled "100 Men vs. a Gorilla" and jokingly asking for volunteers. Elon Musk said: "Sure, what's the worst that could happen?"

Even the White House got in on the action, using the meme to make a pointed commentary on immigration. Their post featured a photo of immigrants boarding a plane with an image of President Donald Trump, captioned: "100 men vs 1 gorilla is still up for debate. Meanwhile, 142,000+ illegal alien criminals went up against 1 President Trump - They all got deported."

The White House's post seemed to endorse Trump's headline immigration record. According to ICE, during Trump's initial 100 days in office, 66,463 people were detained without proper documentation, and 65,682 were deported.

Michael Sherrills, the man behind the original question, expressed surprise at the frenzy his query sparked and he told NBC, "The thing people love the most is things that probably won't ever happen, because you can debate about it," he said. "It's like tasting a dream, you know what I'm saying? And I think people love to feel it out." Sherrills remains confident that 100 men could defeat a gorilla, but with some caveats. "I can do it, but I got to be in the last batch, and I have to be able to pick the other 99 people," he said. "We're gonna have to call a couple of wrestlers, some football players probably."

Trump, divine dreams and his miraculous 38 virgins

On National Prayer Day, US President Donald Trump sought "divine dreams" and discussed bringing "religion back to the White House". Then, he addressed Muslims and thanked them for voting for him in the 2024 Presidential election, and discussed a conversation with Imams of Michigan, involving "38 virgins".

(News Agency)- US President Donald Trump was surrounded by faith leaders calling for him to be given "divine dreams" during an extraordinary event at the White House on May 1, marking National Prayer Day. Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and other religious leaders gathered to sing "Amazing Grace". After thanking Muslim voters for their support, Trump spoke about his interactions with Muslim clerics and made a bizarre reference to "38 virgins". The concept of "72 virgins" in Islam is a tradition found in certain hadiths (sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad). It is believed that Muslim martyrs will be rewarded with 72 virgin companions in Paradise.

As to how the President came with the number 38, we do not know.

Trump's maths works in mysterious ways.

Trump recently reached the conclusion that "India and Pakistan have been fighting over Kashmir for 1,000 years" and "sharing a tense border for 1,500 years".

The event took place as Trump signed an executive order establishing a so-called



Religious Liberty Commission, with various religious leaders in attendance.

At one point, a member of the audience rose from his seat and fell to one knee in a gesture of prayer before Trump. Others raised their hands and joined in singing.

TRUMP ADDRESSES CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS
Since surviving an assassination attempt during the 2024 election campaign, Trump's religious rhetoric has

intensified. He claimed that he had been saved by God.

"We're bringing back religion to our country, and we're bringing it back quickly and strongly," Trump said.

He added that God had answered Americans' prayers by installing an administration that would "make you proud again." "Surround him with divine supernatural protection," said televangelist Paula White, Trump's official spiritual adviser and head of his newly created

Faith Office at the White House. Leading a prayer for Trump, White called for a "spiritual reset" in America, with the 47th president at the helm.

"Grant him wisdom beyond human understanding.... and give him divine dreams, visions," she said.

Trump also emphasised his efforts to restore religion to the White House.

Trump thanked Muslim voters who supported him in the 2024 campaign, citing their response

to his promise to end the bloodshed in the Middle East. He spoke about meeting imams in Michigan, which has a large Arab-American population.

"I said, 'You want to die?' They said, 'We don't want to die.' I said, 'What about 38 virgins?' They said, 'That's nonsense.'" While Trump discussed how Muslims do not want to die, he also came up with a number of his own which is not mentioned in the Islamic faith.

People took to social media to discuss the same.

"It's 72 virgins, not 38. Trump's now trying to rip off people on the number of virgins they'll get. I bet his billionaire friends will get the full 72 virgins," wrote a person on X.

"Trump recounts a bizarre conversation with imams," wrote another person.

Others quipped about how this is going to make some people have a meltdown.

"When you're listening to Trump's speech and he says something that you know the left is about to meltdown about. 'The Imams don't want to die 38 virgins,' one person shared on X.

'Indian Threat', '1962 War': How Chinese 'Experts' Are Batting For Pak Over India

In the aftermath of the terror attack on civilians in Pahalgam, Kashmir, on April 22, 2025, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiankun commented that Beijing firmly opposes all forms of terrorism. And yet, China's posturing around the state of India-Pakistan relations has largely stuck to three assertions, which express its implicit support for Pakistan's position.

The first is that China believes the incident was a result of unknown but positively local gunmen "shooting" civilians. This is evident from coverage on two of China's largest and most popular media platforms, Xinhua and CCTV, both owned and operated by the Chinese party-state. The only way Chinese articulation differs from that of Pakistan, in this regard, is that popular coverage has referred to the location of the incident as "India-controlled" or "India-administered" Kashmir, as opposed to Islamabad, which refers to it as "Indian illegally-occupied Kashmir". 'Avoid Premature Conclusions'

This approach undermines the idea that the incident was an act of terror, and pushes aside Indian concerns surrounding infiltration of Pakistani state-sponsored terrorists into Kashmir. In fact, coverage in leading Chinese state-owned media platforms such as the Global Times is fodder to the authenticity of The Resistance Front (TRF)'s rather hasty withdrawal, wherein the terror group attributed its statement claiming responsibility for the attack to a cyber intrusion. On this account, the platform urged India to act "rationally" and "avoid premature conclusions". To an informed audience, this is a blatant disregard for the history and context of Pakistani state-sponsored terrorism on Indian soil.

The second assertion is that China formally hopes for both India and Pakistan to move toward a peaceful resolution of the dispute and accept bilateral negotiations as the way forward. This was notably emphasised by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in a phone call with his Pakistani counterpart, Mohammad Ishaq Dar, on April 27. Further, the sentiment was reiterated by Guo Jiankun in his regular press conference on April 28, where he stated that "as a common neighbour of both India and Pakistan, China hopes the two sides will exercise restraint, move toward each other, and properly handle their differences through dialogue and consultation".

Mediation Or Interference?

There is some support for this position

in scholarly circles. For example, Wang Shida, an Executive Director at China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (a Chinese Ministry of State Security institution), argued in an opinion piece for Huanqiu (Global Times Chinese) that because India and Pakistan have a long way to go in terms of economic development, the two should focus on quickly resolving the dispute and moving on to their developmental agendas.

What is also interesting, however, is that the proposal for de-escalation doesn't exactly seem to be motivated by a desire for peace. It rather comes across from commentaries in Chinese media about how analysts believe India doesn't have the capability to engage in and win a hot war on Kashmir with Pakistan, and that it will derail its goals and ambitions if it attempts to do so. Scholars like Wang put it more subtly, in that he says in his opinion piece, "If the situation in Kashmir further escalates - or even 'explodes' - it would clearly not serve India's fundamental interests."

Other commentators, such as Gu Huoping (a pen name for an account that frequently writes on military affairs concerning China), argue that in the face of India's aggressive posture, Pakistan is right to not back down. In fact, in a recent article for the Chinese media platform NetEase, Gu opines that a hot war may be a test of all the 'Made in China' defence products the Pakistan armed forces are heavily reliant on. Using examples of India's retreat in the 1962 war with China, and by misleadingly arguing that India has not held a clear advantage in its historic wars with Pakistan, Gu attempts to propagate the idea that it's best for Delhi to back off.

How China Is Undermining India

Another angle that ties into this narrative on negotiation as the way forward, is Beijing's willingness to play mediator. In his April 28 remarks, Guo Jiankun also stated, "China welcomes all measures conducive to de-escalating the current situation and supports the early launch of a fair investigation." Interestingly, this statement was made in response to a question posed by a journalist of the RIA Novosti, a Russian state-owned media agency, based on the platform's recent interview with Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif. In this interview, Asif said that he would find an international intervention by Russia, China, or any Western countries highly useful to figure out who was behind the incident, and added that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif supported this proposal.

Naturally, Beijing seems to believe that it could be the right actor to enable a de-escalation of the situation, including by supporting the launch of a "fair and swift" investigation. In fact, the coverage of Guo's statements rarely acknowledges that Asif also called on other actors, including countries in the West, to support an international investigation. If one further looks at the Chinese transcript of Wang Yi's phone call with Dar, Wang vouches for Pakistan's sovereignty and "legitimate security concerns", while again calling for an "impartial investigation". By consistently iterating its ability to bring peace, Beijing is inadvertently supporting

Pakistan's internationalisation of what is clearly a bilateral issue, and undermining India's opposition to global mediation.

What China Said For Pulwama

It is important to note here that China's official rhetoric surrounding negotiation and mediation to resolve India and Pakistan's differences is not new. Similar statements were presented by the Foreign Ministry to respond to the Jaish-e-Mohammed attack in Pulwama in February 2019. Even then,

spokesperson Geng Shuang had refused to acknowledge Pakistani involvement, arguing that India's naming of the terror group responsible for the attack does not indicate a confirmed judgment; this is likely to remain a rhetorical trend in China's posturing vis-à-vis India-Pak tensions.

Third and final is the Chinese emphasis on the immorality and futility of India's punitive measures against Pakistan. Some of this is reflected in the writings of commentators of Gu Huoping on the resilience of Pakistan's China-backed armed forces in the face of Indian resolve. On a more nuanced level, the rhetoric emerging out of Beijing is focused on opposing everything, from India's decision to shut off its airspace to Pakistani aircraft, to its move to hold the Indus Water Treaty in abeyance.

For example, a recent commentary on Sohu, a Chinese internet media and online search company, glorifies Pakistan's retaliatory decision to shut off its airspace to Indian aircraft and halt bilateral trade as a landmark response to India's punitive measures. The commentary is authored by a popular analyst going by the name 'Global



There Is A 'Third' Player In The India-Pakistan Conflict

This is perhaps one of those moments when a single decision by a single person will determine the future course of India, perhaps even the world. That decision is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's alone: how to respond to the terrorist attack on tourists in Pahalgam. The Prime Minister has asserted that the terrorists and conspirators will be punished "beyond their imagination". He has also vowed a decisive fight against terrorism. The immediate response - keeping the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) in abeyance and paring down relations - has been measured and, to use a phrase often deployed by defence experts, non-kinetic. Suspending the 1960 treaty, which has survived multiple conflicts between the two countries, including the 1971 war, is using a heavy hand. The seriousness of the diplomatic offensive can be gauged from the fact that Pakistan immediately termed it as an act of war and threatened to suspend the 1972 Simla Pact.

Bigger Than Balakot? Expectation is, however, building that the Prime Minister would order a spectacular military operation that would surpass the special forces' "surgical strike" and the missile rain on terror camps in Balakot inside Pakistan in 2016 and 2019, respectively. Those responses were a significant departure from previous military actions, which were effective but quietly accomplished. The much-publicised nature of the latter strikes reduces the surprise element and effectiveness of a repeat operation. Moreover, India not taking the bait to fight a full-scale, economically debilitating war has ensured its rise to become the fifth largest economy in the world with a GDP of nearly \$4.5 trillion, which is 12 times larger than that of Pakistan. It has so far been victorious in the war of attrition with diplomacy and economic strength. A crucial diplomatic success was India getting Pakistan grey-listed by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Now, PM Modi has the unenviable task of responding with force enough to be seen



as proportionate, yet without the scope of escalation. That is tough, because Pakistan does not need a reason to escalate. Or, the Prime Minister could play the waiting game. That would require relying on his political equity to keep the nationalists assuaged. His predecessors, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh, managed it, quietly but surely uprooting the multiple terror networks that had entrenched themselves in the country and cutting off their air supply from abroad. The Modi government built on that, developing close diplomatic and intelligence ties with West Asian countries once friendly to Pakistan, choking off avenues of financial and material help. Today it is heavily dependent on China.

Changing The Rules

In an interview with Karan Thapar on April 28, former Friday Times editor and part-time politician Najam Sethi said that the issue was no more about Pakistan and India. There is a third player, China, which is deeply invested in Pakistan and will go to great lengths to protect its interests. Sethi was talking about the \$62 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is a key part of China's global Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Sethi hinted that China will support Pakistan militarily in the event of an attack by India.

About 43 projects worth about \$25 billion in the CPEC are complete, yet it is besieged by unrest in Balochistan, where

separatists attacks have crippled economic activity. The CPEC showpiece, the Gwadar Port, was expected to be China and Pakistan's trade gateway to West and Central Asia. The port, which was also supposed to reduce China's reliance on the Malacca Straits, is currently a white elephant.

The CPEC, however, has stalled due to local protests and separatist attacks. The attacks had become increasingly frequent, deadly and audacious. The most audacious attack came on March 11, when the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) hijacked Jaffar Express, a passenger train with more than 400 passengers on board. Although security forces took back the train after multiple raids, scores of people died. Lieutenant-General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, the director-general of Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) public relations, said the hijack "changed the rules of the game". Addressing a press conference after the rescue operation, Chaudhry squarely blamed India for the incident. He said India was using Afghanistan-based groups to sponsor terrorist attacks in Pakistan.

In an interview with Samaa TV soon after Chaudhry's comment, former editor Sethi said that India changed the rules of the game after the Mumbai attacks. It carried out attacks across the border. Pakistan would do the same thing. "It means taking the war

to Afghanistan," Sethi said. He said Pakistan would target BLA and Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) camps in Afghanistan. It would also exercise strategic options, as India did after the 2008 attacks. The most obvious option was to "open the tap [of terror] in Kashmir", he said, and added that Pakistan should take a leaf out of India's playbook and go on "offensive defence", a term from national security advisor Ajit Doval's lexicon. Read with Pakistan army chief Asim Munir's jingoistic speech two weeks ago, the Pahalgam attack appears to be the first twist of the tap.

Why China Is Backing Pakistan

Unsurprisingly, China has strongly backed Pakistan. "China has always supported Pakistan in its resolute anti-terrorism actions. As a staunch friend and all-weather strategic partner, China fully understands Pakistan's reasonable security concerns and supports Pakistan in safeguarding its sovereignty and security interests," the Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi was quoted as saying. The Chinese foreign ministry also said that China backs an "impartial investigation" into the incident. Pakistan has sought an international investigation into the Pahalgam attack, which effectively means internationalisation of the Kashmir issue and rolling back India's diplomatic gains since 1971. One element of the Simla Pact is the

understanding that Pakistan cannot internationalise any issues with India. The agreement forces both countries to deal with any dispute bilaterally. By threatening to suspend it, Pakistan is trying to pry open a door to the internationalisation of Kashmir. It also changes the status of the international border, known as the Line of Control (LoC). Internal strife in Pakistan is something China is wary of. It knows that an impoverished, densely populated country controlled by the army is a recipe for disaster. The CPEC will never take off unless the unrest in the country abates. Pakistan has now allowed China to deploy private security in the region after resisting for a long time its demand to put boots on the ground to protect its assets and people.

The IWT Suspension

The suspension of the IWT will likely fuel ongoing protests in Sindh. An ambitious, army-backed \$3.3 billion project to build six canals to carry water from the Indus to irrigate dry areas has resulted in widespread protests, as the people of Sindh believe it will exacerbate water shortages in their province. The project revived provincial rivalry between Sindh and Punjab, and protests have brought the country to a standstill. The government has said it would temporarily halt the project. One of the key elements of the IWT is that India is obligated to share hydrological data of the Indus and allow visits by Pakistani experts to inspect river projects on the Indian side. Suspending the IWT would starve Pakistani engineers of crucial data that might be required to design and develop the canals.

Yet, none of that would be considered sufficient. Indications are that the government is looking to carry out a military or intelligence operation. Pakistan is expecting and preparing for it, too. India is perhaps looking to lean on its diplomatic strength to manage the fallout of its action. In any case, it doesn't appear to be far away.

Baba Ramdev: The Yoga Guru And The Court Scrapes Behind His Business Empire

Meet Baba Ramdev - 'yoga guru', entrepreneur, and, over the past few years - a regular in courtrooms across India, courtesy patently misleading ads, unsubstantiated remarks about his Patanjali products' ability to 'cure' diseases such as COVID, and sexist remarks about women.

The most recent court case involving the 60-year-old was May 1 - Labour Day - when his counsel was hauled up by the Delhi High Court for Ramdev blatantly violating its gag order in the 'Rooh Afza' case. Baba Ramdev "lives in his own world" was Justice Amit Bansal's withering response.

Many might agree with the Delhi High Court's observation, particularly since Ramdev seems to flout, judging by the cases against him, laws and violate ethical boundaries regularly. For example, the Delhi court's comment came after Ramdev this month promoted his herbal drink by speaking disparagingly - his remarks flagged by many as communal - about its primary competitor, Rooh Afza, a popular herbal drink made by Hamdard Laboratories (India).

A 'sherbet jihad' controversy sprang up and Ramdev was warned to take down all related promo content, including advertisements and social media posts. Many were, but that did not stop Ramdev from a repeat of the 'sherbet jihad' rant.

He then earned himself a contempt of court notice from the Delhi High Court. His critics believe much of the impunity with which he operates his mammoth multinational FMCG empire - which sells everything from cookies and shampoos to Ayurvedic concoctions and food grains - is because of a 'hotline' to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his BJP.

Such links, though, have never been acknowledged by the ruling party.

Ramdev himself believes he is a 'scientist'; in a 2015 interview with NDTV he called himself a 'scientist Baba'. "I was born in a farmer's house... and the work that we have done, we have connected yoga with science. You can talk to me about botany... medical science," he said. He then also swatted away talk of more of his contentious claims, including claiming he could 'cure' homosexuality and that his concoctions can 'guarantee' the birth of a male child.

Ramdev's Patanjali Ayurved Patanjali Ayurved, Ramdev's holding company, was founded in 2006. Based in Haridwar, in Uttarakhand, it recorded Rs 9,335 crore in revenue in FY24 and a profit of Rs 2,901 crore.

The total income for FY23 was Rs 7,580 crore.

For a company set up only 17 years earlier, in a space dominated by global heavyweights like Hindustan Unilever, Dabur, Nestle, Colgate-Palmolive, ITC, and Godrej, among others, these are impressive figures. And that includes the

period of the pandemic, when it continued to grow.

Alongside that growth are a long line of controversial statements, which has led to over 100 cases filed against him and/or his company; these cases include alleged labour law violations, selling substandard packaged food, and misbranding products as 'vegetarian only'.

'Toxic' Drugs And Covid 'Cure'

Among the biggest of those controversies was from 2021 and 2022, when the COVID pandemic was killing millions and governments worldwide were urging people to vaccinate themselves.

Then Ramdev claimed "lakhs died in India due to allopathic medicines" and called them "stupid and bankrupt", insisting they were 'designed' by foreign pharma firms to get Indians addicted. This was months before he launched 'Coronil', an "evidence-based ayurvedic medicine" that could 'cure' COVID and, remarkably, had a 'certification' from the World Health Organization.

Only, it did not. The WHO promptly said it had not certified 'Coronil', forcing company execs who echoed Ramdev's claims to delete tweets and the opposition to lament being embarrassed. It then emerged the government had tagged 'Coronil' as an 'immunity booster' only.

The row that should have ended there did not.

In August 2022 his comments about allopathy reached the Supreme Court; the Indian Medical Association had taken exception to his 'toxic drugs' and 'stupid' comment and filed a case.

Those comments included claims Patanjali could cure diseases like diabetes.

The then-Chief Justice NV Ramana told Ramdev he was free to promote Ayurveda, but not at the cost of criticising allopathy.

That, incidentally, was a week after the Delhi High Court told him to refrain from making such statements. Unsurprisingly, in the intervening days he did just that. This case dragged on for a couple of years, in which time the government was also pulled up.

In 2023 Ramdev, a day after he was told, again, not to make false statements, did just that, declaring he had a "database... of preclinical and clinical evidence", and lashed out "some stubborn and so-called frustrated doctors... who oppose yoga, ayurveda, and naturopathy".

Then Ramdev and Balkrishna were told to apologise and stop running false ads, including those unfairly criticising allopathy and allopathic doctors. But they did neither. The initial apology was slammed by the court as "indefensible" and "humbug", and the government and Patanjali were fiercely reprimanded for allowing the ads to continue.

The Toothpaste Row

First there was 'Coronil', then 'Divya Dant Manjan', Patanjali's herbal tooth powder. In August 2024 a petition in the Delhi High Court said the packaging featured a green dot - used to signify vegetarian products - but the list of ingredients included cuttlefish bone derivatives.

It was also claimed Ramdev had admitted as such in a YouTube video.

The brand reportedly posted sales of Rs 425 crore in 2016. Current figures are not available but, for context, in that year Colgate India posted revenue of Rs 982 crore.

Ramdev hasn't responded to this case so far, but the product remains in the market.

The Male Child 'Guarantee'

We rewind a little now, to January 2015, when a remedy for infertility was allegedly sold as a 'guarantee' for the birth of a male child, problematic in a misogynistic and patriarchal society.

'Divya Putrajeevak Seed', sold in Patanjali Pharmacies, a chain of shops owned by Ramdev, is described in catalogues as a natural herb for treatment of infertility. It does not promise a male child but the name is misleading, said doctors who pointed out 'Putrajeevak' means 'son's life'.

The concoction reportedly sold well in Haryana, which has among the worst sex ratios in India and where Prime Minister Modi, a week earlier, launched a campaign to save the girl child.

How much money Google, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft and Meta made in the last 3 months?

In the first three months of 2025, the five biggest tech companies — Google (Alphabet), Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, and Meta — made huge profits. Even with challenges like higher costs and economic slowdowns, each of these companies reported more revenue and income than at the same time last year. A big reason for this growth is how much they're investing in artificial intelligence (AI), along with cloud services, digital ads, and paid online services. Many of them also returned money to shareholders through dividends or stock buybacks. Here's a look at how much money each one made and what helped drive their success.

Microsoft earned \$70.1 billion (roughly Rs 592,625.4 crore) in revenue, which is 15 per cent more than last year. Its profit, or net income, rose to \$25.8 billion — up by 19 per cent. A big part of this growth came from Microsoft Azure, its cloud service, which saw a 35 per cent jump. The company also benefited from its AI tools like Copilot and its work with OpenAI. Microsoft gave back \$9.7 billion to shareholders in the form of dividends and share buybacks. Alphabet, the parent company of Google, made \$90.2 billion (roughly Rs 762,750.8 crore) in revenue, a 12 per cent increase. Its profit grew sharply by 46 per cent, reaching \$34.5 billion. Google Cloud grew 28 per cent, bringing in \$12.3 billion, while YouTube ads brought in \$8.9 billion, which is 10 per cent more than last year. Google also raised its dividend by 5 per cent and rolled out its new AI model, Gemini 2.5 Pro, which is expected

to help power many of its products.

Apple posted \$95.4 billion (roughly Rs 805,853.8 crore), up 5 per cent year-over-year. The company's net income also rose 5 per cent to \$24.8 billion. The biggest contributor was Apple's Services business, which includes iCloud and the App Store. That part alone brought in \$26.6 billion, a 12 per cent increase. Although hardware sales, like iPhones, remained steady, services made the real difference. Apple also announced a massive \$100 billion stock buyback plan.

Amazon had the highest revenue among all five, posting \$155.7 billion (roughly Rs 1,315,257.9 crore) in revenue, growing 9 per cent from the same time last year. Its profit jumped 64 per cent to \$17.1 billion. Most of the gains came from its cloud platform, Amazon Web Services (AWS), which brought in \$29.3 billion. Advertising was another strong area, making \$13.9 billion. However, due to spending more on new infrastructure, Amazon's free cash flow dropped to \$25.9 billion.

Meta, the company behind Facebook and Instagram, earned \$42.3 billion (roughly Rs 357,308.1 crore) in revenue, up 16 per cent. Its profit grew 35 per cent to \$16.6 billion. Advertising continues to be Meta's main source of income, and rising ad prices helped boost results. The company's AI assistant, now used by around 1 billion people monthly, is another major focus. However, Meta may face challenges in Europe due to new rules affecting its ad-free paid subscriptions.

US straddling the fence amid India-Pakistan tensions post Pahalgam attack?

While the US has been loud and clear in its support for India and its fight against terrorism, Donald Trump and top officials have spoken in differing voices on the Pahalgam attack. As tensions between India and Pakistan simmer in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack, the United States has walked a diplomatic tightrope, trying to avoid being seen as favouring one side over the other. This, despite a feeling that under Donald Trump 2.0, Pakistan would be put under the pump over its support for terrorism.

Apart from President Donald Trump, four other top US officials have spoken with India. The difference, though, lies in the nuance of their language. While US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Vice President JD Vance have urged de-escalation of tensions, others like Tulsi Gabbard have backed India's attempt to "hunt down" those responsible for the attack, which left 26 dead. However, all of them have been loud and clear in their support for India and its fight against terrorism. 'CLOSE TO INDIA AND PAKISTAN'

Trump, who had offered to mediate the Kashmir dispute in his first term, was more circumspect this time. The eccentric US President left it to India and Pakistan to sort out the issue, saying the countries would figure a way out "one

way or the other".

He also played a delicate balancing act. "I am very close to India, and I am very close to Pakistan, as you know... they'll get it figured out one way or the other," he said last week.

Even though Pakistan's relevance in the US's calculations in South Asia has been diminished, Washington has maintained ties with Islamabad.

Despite a foreign aid freeze, Trump has granted \$5.3 billion

in security-related exemptions to Pakistan and okayed nearly \$400 million for maintenance of its F-16 jet fleet.

Interestingly, in his first term, Trump cut USD \$1.3 billion in security aid to Pakistan and called it out for being a "safe haven" for terrorists.

JD VANCE, MARCO RUBIO URGE DE-ESCALATION

JD Vance, who was on a visit to India with his family when the Pahalgam attack took place, also adhered to a measured tone while urging Delhi to

exercise restraint in a bid to avoid a regional conflict.

At the same time, he urged Pakistan, to the "extent that it is responsible", to cooperate with India. "Our hope is that India responds to this terrorist attack in a way that doesn't lead to a broader regional conflict. And we hope, that Pakistan, to the extent that they are responsible, cooperates with India to make sure that the terrorists sometimes operating in their territory are

hunted down and dealt with," Vance said in a podcast with Fox News. Rubio, who spoke to both External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, called on both countries to avoid further escalation. During his call with Jaishankar, Rubio reaffirmed the US's commitment to cooperate with India against terrorism. On the other hand, the top US official urged Sharif to "condemn" the Pahalgam attack and called on Pakistan to "cooperate" in the probe.

Adani port in Communist state triggers 3-cornered credit fight

The inauguration of the Adani-made Vizhinjam International Seaport in Communist-ruled Kerala by PM Narendra Modi on Friday triggered a three-way tussle for credit. The high-profile commissioning ceremony of India's first deepwater transshipment port ignited a fierce political tussle among the CPI(M), Congress, and BJP over who made the project a reality.

The ceremony, presided over by PM Modi, was attended by Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan and Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, might have several political takeaways, but the tug-of-war over credit reveals the project's significance.

Tharoor is the MP from Thiruvananthapuram, where the project is located.

Thiruvananthapuram's Vizhinjam seaport is India's first deepwater transshipment port. Built at an estimated cost of Rs 8,867 crore under a public-private partnership (PPP) with Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ). It is poised to transform Kerala's economy and bolster India's position on the global trade map. CPI(M) CLAIMS ITS 9-YEAR RULE TURNED PORT INTO REALITY

The ruling CPI(M), led by CM Vijayan, has positioned itself as the architect of the Vizhinjam project. It has attributed its success to the party's nine-year governance in the southern state.

Vijayan, who was present at the inauguration alongside PM Modi and Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani, said, "Kerala is bearing the majority of the cost, Rs

5,370.86 crore out of the total Rs 8,686 crore", subtly downplaying the Centre's role.

Vijayan described the port as "a historic investment by the state", marking "the beginning of a new era in India's maritime trade". Not just Vijayan, the CPI(M) roped in another stalwart to claim credit for the Left party.

CPI(M) state secretary MV Govindan Master said that if anyone can be given the fatherhood of the Vizhinjam project, it is former Chief Minister EK Nayanar, who led Left governments in the state from 1980-1981, 1987-1991 and again 1996-2001. "Nayanar is the one who launched the Vizhinjam project," MV Govindan told India Today Malayalam.

The CPI(M) also highlighted its role in overcoming hurdles,

including protests by local fishermen in 2022, to bring the project to fruition.

However, the CPI(M)'s narrative drew the sharpest criticism from the Congress, which alleged that the efforts by the Grand Old Party had been sidelined and undermined.

CONGRESS WANTS VIZHINJAM PORT NAMED AFTER OOMMEN CHANDY

The Congress, leading the United Democratic Front (UDF) opposition, vehemently contested the CPI(M)'s claims of credit. The Congress, which is eyeing to dislodge the Vijayan-led Left Democratic Front (LDF), asserted that the project's foundation was laid by the Oommen Chandy-led government in 2015, adding the port be named after the former Congress leader.

Mika says Salman is different person after 2 drinks, recalls him ignoring Meet Bros

Singer Mika Singh, in an interview, spoke about his relationship with actor Salman Khan. He mentioned that the superstar is a different person during the day, and experiences a drastic change in his personality at night. Singh, who has sung many popular songs in Khan's films, also shared an incident involving Meet Bros. and how they felt when Khan didn't recognise them at an event after having biryani with them

the night before.

Mika Singh appeared on Shubhankar Mishra's show and said, "Salman Bhai raat ko kuch aur hote hain aur din ko kuch aur hote hain (Salman Bhai is a different person at night, and a different person during the day)."

The 47-year-old said one should never let a sense of importance creep in, even if Salman Khan chooses to hang out with you. He said, "He is very open with me. After two

drinks, he treats me like an equal. But this shouldn't make you delusional, regardless if you're two pegs down or four pegs down. He's Salman Khan. The problem is when people become arrogant early in their lives."

Mika went on to reveal that Salman Khan has a penchant for calling people during odd hours. He said the superstar also gets offended if people don't pick up his call at night or early in the morning. The singer

narrated an incident from 'Kick' days.

He said, "Salman Bhai loves to sing. He also loves calling people up in the middle of the night, sometimes at 4 am. And he gets upset if you don't answer. I was in Bali, and I get a call from him at night. He tells me that he wants to sing the song 'Hangover', and he sang on the phone. I thought he sang very well."

He continued, "Then he sang 'Jumme Ki Raat', and I didn't

have the heart to tell him. That was supposed to be my song, but obviously nobody was going to tell him that he couldn't sing it. So, I texted Bhushan Kumar and Sajid Nadiadwala, and I told them I knew what was happening..." Mika has collaborated with Salman Khan on many songs, including 'Desi Beat' (Bodyguard), 'Aaj Ki Party' (Bajrangi Bhaijaan), 'Party Chale On' (Race 3), and 'Dhinka Chika' (Ready), among others.

Is Pahalgam Attack The Beginning Of The First Water War Between India And Pakistan?

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Chandy, who passed away in 2023, signed the initial agreement with the Adani Group in August 2015. His government had then faced massive criticism from the opposition over the pact.

Leader of the Opposition in Kerala Assembly and

Congress leader VD Satheesan, who claimed he boycotted the inauguration ceremony, accused the CPI(M) of "hijacking credit" and attempting to "erase Chandy's legacy".

"Those who deliberately try to forget or rewrite history are the ones who fear even the memories of Oommen Chandy," Satheesan wrote on

Facebook, sharing a 2015 video of the Congress leader's speech on the port's significance. Congress MLA M Vincent, representing the Kovalam constituency where the port is located, paid tribute to Chandy at his tomb before attending the ceremony, calling him the "father of the Vizhinjam Port".

BJP SAYS VIZHINJAM PORT PART OF PM MODI'S VISION

The BJP, led in Kerala by state president Rajeesh Chandrasekhar, has framed the Vizhinjam port as a cornerstone of Prime Minister Modi's vision for India's maritime and economic growth.

Chandrasekhar, speaking to news agency PTI, said the Vizhinjam port was a result of the Narendra Modi-led Centre's steadfast support. "The Vizhinjam port is part of PM Modi's vision of having a large number of ports around India that will improve India's global trade competitiveness and make India an increasing hub for manufacturing.

Vizhinjam is one of those ports and the government of India has been steadfast in supporting the development of

that port despite many delays over the last several years," Chandrasekhar told news agency PTI.

PM Modi himself took a swipe at the opposition INDIA bloc during the event, noting the presence of CPI(M)'s Vijayan and Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on stage, taunting that the inauguration of the Vizhinjam Port would give "sleepless nights" to many.

The credit war over the Vizhinjam port has now turned into a political flashpoint, with each party leveraging it to bolster its electoral prospects in Kerala, whose Assembly goes to polls before May 2026. The CPI(M) and Congress, traditional rivals in Kerala, but part of the INDIA bloc, are both fancying their chances. And the BJP's fight for credit, in a state where it has historically struggled to gain ground, shows it also sees itself in the fight.

WHY KERALA'S VIZHINJAM PORT IS A GAME-CHANGER Irrespective of the political claim-game and what implications it might have on elections next year, the Vizhinjam port is a rare convergence of Communist governance and corporate enterprise. The seaport, which has emerged as a remarkable success story in the Communist state, will go on to boost the state's economy.

Operated by the Adani Group, the port topped cargo handling charts among 15 Indian ports in February, a feat Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan hailed as an "amazing achievement". The milestone came just three months after the port began commercial operations.

Located near Thiruvananthapuram and strategically positioned close to major international shipping routes, Vizhinjam handled 78,833 TEUs of cargo from 40 ships in February, surpassing ports like Kochi and Chennai.

So far, the Vizhinjam port project has directly generated over 2,000 jobs and indirectly supported around 5,000 livelihoods in the region,

reported the Indian Express, citing inputs from project officials. With the port now operational, local businesses, from transportation to food services, have reported a sharp rise in demand. This will signal a ripple effect on the regional economy, which is mostly rural.

THE VIZHINJAM SEAPORT STORY SO FAR

However, the Vizhinjam port project's journey was anything but smooth.

Despite political opposition and massive protests by Latin church-backed fisherfolk concerned about coastal erosion and loss of livelihood, Vijayan pushed ahead with it. The Left veteran stood firm in support of the public-private partnership with the Adani Group, which had been in the crosshairs of his national coalition partner and local rival, the Congress.

Vizhinjam, India's first deep-water, fully automated container transshipment port, will operate under a 40-year agreement with Adani Ports and SEZ. The Kerala government provided 500 acres and signed the project under the DBFOT model in 2015 under Oommen Chandy. Partial operations began in October 2023, and Phase One was completed by December 2024. With plans to expand capacity to 4.5 million TEUs by 2028 and an investment of over Rs 10,000 crore, the port is expected to become a key node in global maritime trade. The Vizhinjam International Seaport, with a natural water depth of 18-20 meters and proximity to international shipping routes, the port is designed to handle large container vessels and reduce India's reliance on foreign ports like Colombo and Dubai.

As PM Modi said, the Vizhinjam port is the "symbol of new-age development", adding, "On the one hand, there is this big sea with so many opportunities, and on the other hand, there is the beauty of nature. In between, there is this Vizhinjam Seaport."

Humble makhana gets a fancy makeover in Indian homes this summer

Makhana glow-up is real. Summer 2025 is all about using makhanas at home for dishes like smoothies, mousse desserts and puddings.

When you think of foxnuts — yes, the humble makhana — you might be reminded of your evening breaks, relishing this roasted and crunchy superfood with a cup of chai. You may also recall Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who mentioned at a rally earlier this year that he eats makhanas 300 days a year. Actress Kareena Kapoor Khan might come to mind too, as she has been an outspoken fan of makhanas, calling them her go-to snack for years. In recent years, the popularity of makhanas has surged — not just in India, but globally. The United States, Canada, and Australia are among the top importers, sourcing these 'black diamonds' from India.

Makhana's nutritional value is, undoubtedly, a prominent reason why it

holds the title of a global superfood. This is further supported by the growing presence of nutrition and health experts



sharing information on social media platforms. It is hailed as an excellent choice for those aiming for weight loss due to its high protein and low-calorie content. With high levels of antioxidants and flavonoids, it helps combat

inflammation and ageing. During the annual budget this year, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman declared that a

"Makhana Board" would be set up in Bihar. The reason? Well, to enhance production, processing, value addition, and marketing of makhana. Bihar is the largest producer of these nuts in India, contributing 80 per cent of the country's supply, yet it has struggled to capitalise on the growing global demand for this

superfood. Amid these developments, makhanas are enjoying a gourmet makeover in Indian homes this summer. Traditionally, they were relished as roasted snacks paired with coffee or chai. Other popular preparations include

makhana bhel and rich, creamy kheer. Before gaining popularity as a mainstream snack, makhana was primarily known as a traditional offering (prasad) at temples.

The summer of 2025, however, marks a rather fancy era for makhanas. From wholesome smoothies to lip-smacking mousse desserts and ice creams, they are emerging as a key ingredient in a variety of appealing homemade dishes. Chefs admit to the versatility of makhanas too, saying there's no end to the delicious possibilities they offer.

"Once associated with fasting foods or simple roasted snacks, they're now showing up in haute home cuisine — thanks to their neutral flavour, light texture, and health halo.

Can drinking alcohol worsen your menopause symptoms?



After a long, tiring day, a glass of Cabernet Sauvignon is the best way to unwind, and most of you will agree (especially the women out there). But if you're navigating menopause, experts warn that alcohol might be doing you more harm than good.

We are aware that experts have warned us against the consumption of alcohol, even a glass. But for those who still like to indulge, if you are someone in the midst of menopause, you might want to rethink your alcohol consumption.

Alcohol can worsen symptoms During an episode of her The Goop Podcast last month, Gwyneth Paltrow opened up about how increased alcohol consumption amid the January 2025 Los Angeles wildfires exacerbated her menopause symptoms. Typically a light drinker, Paltrow found herself drinking nightly during the stressful period, admitting, "I was medicating." Paltrow also opened up about experiencing severe anxiety and insomnia during this time, describing nights where she would lie awake for hours, overwhelmed by anxious thoughts, a stark contrast to her usual sleep patterns. So, does drinking alcohol worsen menopause symptoms like the Oscar-winning actress claims? Well, yes. Research shows that while many women may use alcohol as an escape from the symptoms of menopause, it is actually not the best thing to do. "Alcohol can significantly worsen menopause symptoms and increase a woman's risk for serious health issues like heart disease, breast cancer, osteoporosis, and even colorectal cancer," says Dr Sarada M, consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist at Yashoda Hospitals, Hyderabad.

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Ego scrolling, a troubling trend on dating apps?

Though it may seem harmless, indulging in ego-scrolling can negatively impact others, causing them to doubt themselves and contributing to dating app fatigue.



When you sign up on a dating platform, it's understood that you're seeking a dating prospect. However, the sincerity of intentions can vary — some may be looking for a long-term relationship or dating with the goal of marriage, while others might simply be interested in casual flings. But being on a dating platform just to prove to yourself that you're still desirable? That can be problematic — or so relationship experts say.

Do you know someone who constantly brags about the number of matches they get on dating apps? Or someone who's always swiping left and right but rarely actually talks to any of their matches? There's now a term for this common behaviour — it's called ego scrolling.

Katie Dissanayake, CEO and founder of the dating app After, in an interview with USA Today described ego-scrolling as the act of swiping through dating apps in search of easy validation rather than genuine connections or relationships.

"You're not even looking for a date — or often even a real conversation — you're just seeking proof that you're still desirable," she said.

Though it may seem harmless, indulging in ego-scrolling can negatively impact others, causing them to doubt themselves and contributing to dating app fatigue. While one person may be scrolling for validation, someone genuinely seeking connection is likely to lose trust in the process after experiencing ghosting and miscommunication from ego-scrollers. Ruchi Ruuh, a Delhi-based relationship expert, calls ego scrolling a troubling trend.

"Ego scrolling is a troubling trend in modern dating as it completely changes the purpose of the platforms meant for building relationships into tools for super-

of rejection and loneliness are also among the common reasons why youngsters end up ego scrolling.

How ego scrolling works is that it gives



ficial self-validation. While I feel it's perfectly alright to desire affirmation and validation as a human, to rely on dating apps to prop up one's ego while bypassing vulnerability and authenticity is not," Ruchi Ruuh tells India Today.

"This behaviour highlights a cultural tendency to prioritise external validation over self-acceptance and genuine intimacy. These shallow interactions can leave both the scroller and others feeling unsatisfied," she adds.

But why do people ego scroll?

Apart from seeking validation, a fear

of the illusion of being seen without the risk of being truly known or rejected. Those avoiding real emotional investment (knowingly or unknowingly) ego-scroll as it feels safer.

"Ego scrollers are often dealing with insecurities, lower self-esteem or have an avoidant attachment style. Those with avoidant attachment may engage in this behaviour to seek validation without the emotional risks of closeness, as it allows them to feel desirable while maintaining distance," says Ruuh.

She explains: the instant gratification

of matches provides a quick ego boost (similar to social media likes) that temporarily soothes deeper emotional needs for connection. Loneliness, past rejections, pressures to keep looking attractive or fear of genuine intimacy can further fuel this tendency, as ego scrolling offers an easy way to feel affirmed without emotional investment.

In some cases, ego-scrolling can actually be helpful. For instance, if you've gone through a divorce or ended a long-term relationship, it may serve as a reminder that there are still other options out there as you begin to move on.

Its impact on others

Experts agree that ego scrolling can significantly harm those on the receiving end.

"When people match on dating sites they tend to invest emotional energy and hope into a potential connection. But in an ego scroller's case, they end up feeling ignored or ghosted once the scroller's validation needs are met. This can trigger feelings of rejection, self-doubt or mistrust in the dating process, especially when they are navigating

their own insecurities," explains Ruuh. Ultimately, while ego-scrolling might offer a quick boost of validation, it's important to remember that real people — with real emotions — are on the other side of every swipe. Being upfront about your intentions helps maintain a healthier, more respectful dating environment. And if you are considering breaking this cycle of ego-scrolling, you may want to first sit with your own thoughts and know your worth before trying to seek it from others.

Politicking Over Pahalgam

By Lakshmi Iyer

Within a week of the Pahalgam terror attack, the Congress, which had initially extended support to the government, dropped the pretence of offering unstinted backing in the fight against terror. In a series of posts on X, the party accused the Modi government of misleading the public on an "intelligence failure". Suddenly, for the Congress, a terror attack on India no longer seemed like an opportunity to unite the country. Rather than holding Pakistan accountable for the terror strike, the Congress's official handle on X questioned why the government had claimed that the Baisaran grounds - referred to as 'Ground Zero' - were closed to the public until June 2025.



The party alleged that the grounds had been opened without proper security deployment or clearance. Quoting Pahalgam officials, it stated that "pony riders and tour operators claimed it remained open throughout the year". The apparent purpose of these posts was to settle a petty score by contradicting the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) claim that the Baisaran Valley was opened to tourists on April 20 without prior intimation to security forces. Intelligence officers reportedly told an all-party meeting on April 24 that the Baisaran grounds were typically accessible to tourists and Amarnath pilgrims only from June onwards.

Embarrassing Comments

The Congress defended its critical stance on matters of

national security. All India Congress Committee (AICC) General Secretary KC Venugopal explained that, during the all-party meeting on the Pahalgam attack, the Congress had expressed unequivocal support for the government's actions. "We'll raise some questions that the government needs to answer, but we are with the government to finish this cross-border terrorism. It's very clear that Pakistan is behind it, and in our CWC [Congress Working Committee] resolution, we directly mentioned it. We want the government to take steps, and the entire Opposition is ready to support them," he said. This statement suggested that the senior Congress leader saw no contradiction in certain remarks by party leaders and

ministers that could be exploited by Pakistan. For instance, Karnataka Excise Minister RB Timmapur dismissed anecdotal evidence from survivors who claimed that their male companions were shot after their religion was identified. Similarly, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah publicly declared that there was no need for war with Pakistan over the Pahalgam attacks

- a statement that caused significant embarrassment.

Timmapur's Remarks

Timmapur's comments appeared at variance with the party's stated position. It is hard to imagine that an untutored Timmapur would independently question whether the "perpetrators of the attack in Pahalgam even asked the name and religion of the victims". He was evidently following the Congress playbook when he insisted, "It is unfair to target a particular religion over the attack." This stance came even as the wife of a victim from Shivamogga recounted on national television how she and her son helplessly watched her husband being shot dead after the terrorists asked for his name and religion. Siddaramaiah also drew

attention from Pakistani media for his controversial remark that there was "no need for war" over the Pahalgam terror attack. The state BJP dubbed him "Pakistani Ratna" for his statement. Among the Opposition, the only leader who questioned whether Muslims in India feel "accepted, cherished, and celebrated". Aiyar also reflected on Pakistan's evolution post-Partition, particularly after the 1971 war that led to the creation of Bangladesh. Four days after the Pahalgam terror strike, Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered a strong message from Madhubani, Bihar. In what could be described as a war cry, he declared that the Pahalgam attackers and conspirators would be punished "beyond their imagination". RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat echoed this sentiment, emphasising that while non-violence is a core value for India, "teaching a lesson to hooligans" is equally important. Despite this, the Congress, through a series of posts on X, questioned why PM Modi had not yet visited Kashmir. The party continued to mock the Prime Minister for avoiding Islamabad's name. In this context, the party's exhortation to its leaders to adhere to the CWC resolution seems somewhat ironic. The underlying intent, however, appears to be laying the groundwork for a special Parliament session to discuss the Pahalgam attack.

Denying Religious Motive

It wasn't just one or two Karnataka Congress leaders questioning the government about the intelligence failure on April 22. Several Karnataka ministers insisted that the terrorists did not shoot based on religion. BJP leader Arvind Bellad found it troubling that Congress leaders seemed to justify the terrorists' actions by denying any religious motive. While AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge expressed full support for the government's stance on Pakistan, it seemed contradictory that Congress ministers like Santosh Lad and Priyank Kharge were speaking against it. Veteran Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar added his perspective,

suggesting that the Pahalgam attack was a grim reminder of unresolved issues from the Partition of India and the 1971 war with Pakistan. He questioned whether Muslims in India feel "accepted, cherished, and celebrated". Aiyar also reflected on Pakistan's evolution post-Partition, particularly after the 1971 war that led to the creation of Bangladesh. Four days after the Pahalgam terror strike, Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered a strong message from Madhubani, Bihar. In what could be described as a war cry, he declared that the Pahalgam attackers and conspirators would be punished "beyond their imagination". RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat echoed this sentiment, emphasising that while non-violence is a core value for India, "teaching a lesson to hooligans" is equally important. Despite this, the Congress, through a series of posts on X, questioned why PM Modi had not yet visited Kashmir. The party continued to mock the Prime Minister for avoiding Islamabad's name. In this context, the party's exhortation to its leaders to adhere to the CWC resolution seems somewhat ironic. The underlying intent, however, appears to be laying the groundwork for a special Parliament session to discuss the Pahalgam attack.

Didi, Behenji, Their Nephews And Succession Wars



By Bharti Mishra Nath

This is a tale of two 'sisters'- Didi in West Bengal and Behenji in Uttar Pradesh - and their on-again, off-again relationship with their nephews, aka their "successors".

Trinamool Congress (TMC) chief and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee and BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) supremo and former Chief Minister Mayawati brought in their nephews Abhishek Banerjee and Akash Anand into the parties they head. Later, both were anointed successors by their aunts.

But as the nephews came of age, politically speaking, and formed their own coterie, their aunt-bosses started feeling uneasy about the unexpected parallel power centres. Recently, both Didi and Behenji divested their nephews of the 'crown prince' title. The twists could put a daily soap to shame.

Rise of The Nephews

Didi introduced her 'bhaipo' (nephew in Bengali) to politics soon after coming to power in West Bengal in May 2011. She refused to be deterred by nepotism barbs when it came to promoting and defending Abhishek Banerjee. Abhishek was launched into politics as a member of the Trinamool Congress in 2011 at the age of 24. The same year, the party launched a new youth wing called 'Yuva' with Abhishek Banerjee as

its president. This upset many, including Mamata Banerjee's top aide Suwendu Adhikari (now in the BJP), who headed an already active and strong Trinamool Youth Congress at the time.

Bypassing old timers in her party, Mamata Banerjee decided to field her nephew from the prestigious Diamond Harbour seat in the 2014 Lok Sabha election. He went on to win the seat in 2019 and 2024. In 2021, Abhishek Banerjee became national general secretary of the party. He was the chosen one. Until the silent fallout.

Mayawati introduced her nephew Akash, son of her brother Anand Kumar, at the age of 22 in 2017. After the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BSP chief made her brother Anand Kumar vice president, and Akash the national coordinator of the party.

Akash was entrusted with managing the BSP's 2024 Lok Sabha campaign. The party didn't win any seat in the polls. A case was filed against Akash in May 2024 for his hate speech during the campaign. Mayawati then removed Akash both as national coordinator and her political successor. But she soon had a change of heart.

Two months later, Akash Anand was reinstated in both positions and given the responsibility of leading the party's campaigns in Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and

Delhi.

In March, Akash was not only shunted out but also expelled from the party. The drama lasted a few days.

On April 13, Akash put out a public apology on X to his aunt. She "melted" and Akash was back in the BSP - on the condition that he would "respect party elders" and not hobnob with his father-in-law Ashok Siddharth. Mayawati declared this time that she would not name a successor in her lifetime.

Lost bonhomie

Both Mamata Banerjee and Mayawati are battle-hardened women politicians worried about the future of their parties. And so, the need to bring in someone close and trusted and groom them for future leadership.

This has led to much heartburn among the veterans who worked alongside their leaders to build the party. Having weathered the resentment of the seniors, these strong women leaders feel insecure when it comes to their protégés asserting themselves. The Trinamool currently has two groups - one loyal to the boss and the other, her nephew.

There is a growing feeling, especially in Abhishek Banerjee's camp, that Mamata Banerjee is insecure and that is why she has denied him a place in her cabinet. And that she loves to be the power centre and doesn't like anyone challenging her position

- including her nephew.

Many old timers were up in arms against Abhishek in December 2023, when he advocated an age limit for politicians holding organisational and ministerial posts. This was seen by many as a hint for Mamata Banerjee. But she sided with the old timers and asserted that hers would be the 'last word' on such matters. The chief minister also shut down suggestions from Abhishek Banerjee's coterie to give him a role in the government. The aunt-nephew tension persisted in 2024. Abhishek Banerjee has even been disapproving of the Mamata Banerjee government's handling of issues like the RG Kar Hospital rape case. He differed with some party leaders on the issue of boycotting artists who had been critical of the Trinamool government's handling of the case. Sources say, Mamata Banerjee tersely showed Abhishek his place by conveying the message that he was not a part of her government, so had no authority to question or take decisions. She has also been critical of ministers close to Abhishek. It has been firmly conveyed to Abhishek that he has to prove himself among party cadre and gain the respect of his seniors. Since the Lok Sabha election last year, Abhishek has been asking for the removal of district chiefs wherever the party fared poorly. There were also

rumours of him quitting the party.

These reports agitated Mamata Banerjee so much that he had to declare his loyalty publicly at a party meeting in February.

Likewise, Mayawati is known to harbour insecurity. When BSP founder Kanshi Ram made Mayawati his successor in December 2001, her first move was to expel leaders close to her mentor. Over the years, she kept shafting anyone who was a threat to her. Now it's her own nephew. The BSP has been out of power for years now. With Mayawati periodically lapsing into silence, there hasn't been much action for the BSP cadre and leadership.

Akash Anand has yet to achieve any political milestones. Even so, he carried substantial authority in party affairs across India in his role as national coordinator and "behenji's" successor.

After the BSP's debacle in every election, sidelined party veterans loyal to her complained about Akash and his father-in-law calling the shots. They were also blamed for mismanaging party funds. The complaints rattled Mayawati, who feared that the youth in the party might go with Anand. As a balancing act, she inducted her younger nephew Ishan Anand - Akash's sibling - into the party in January.

For both Mamata Banerjee and Mayawati, family may be the only way forward. But their nephews need to play their cards right.

Heft? History? What Pak's Real Motive Behind Pahalgam Attack Could Be



By Tara Kartha

There is now an overdose of advice on what India should do against Pakistan. Social media wants everything, from air strikes to full war, dismemberment, and even assassinations. The fury is intense and unsurprising. This was an attack very much like the one Hamas perpetrated on innocent civilians in Israel on October 7, 2023. The intention is still unclear, but what that attack did was destroy a budding rapprochement between Israel and its neighbours, particularly the Saudis.

It is time now to assess why Pakistan launched the attack in Kashmir, and with what objective. The attack may be similar to what happened in Israel, but the histories are entirely different. And so, logically, the reactions should be.

Hamas And Lashkar

The Hamas link is now common knowledge. None other than the Israeli ambassador Reuven Azar has pointed to the similarities of the attack, and the fact that the Hamas was welcomed in a public rally on what Pakistan calls 'Kashmir Solidarity Day' on February 5 - something at least three Hamas leaders went to in posh SUVs, together with Jaish leaders, including UN-designated terrorist Masood Azhar. That in itself is an offence in international law by Pakistan.

Also, reports now say several visits were made by Hamas teams, including one to the Bahawalpur base of Jaish, and another to a newly inaugurated Pakistan army camp. That's not so outrageous as it sounds. Not only has Pakistan been witness to repeated massive rallies on the Gaza issue, but the country's lawmakers even supported the Hamas attack as it put an end to India-US plans for the Middle East Trade Corridor. On April 24, Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel) leader Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman called for an office for Hamas in the country and demanded action on Gaza and Kashmir. He was joined by other religious groups as well.

The Jamaat has long been collecting money for Palestine through its 'Al Khidmat' arm, and the front has already mobilised some \$543 million in aid for Hamas. This when Pakistan once again goes begging to China to reschedule a \$3.4 billion loan. One would assume that the country would hesitate to antagonise the US, especially under President Donald Trump. But all of this is being done with state support.

And that's the thing about Pakistan. There is seldom any logic to its actions: broke in the bank, but still bent on trouble. It is hardly ever deterred by an economic crisis. That was true even during the Kargil war, when Pakistan's economy was reeling

under sanctions after the nuclear tests. And again, when a full-fledged war was threatened by the use of Indian air power, it went running to the US to stop India. This time around, it rushed to the UAE asking it to mediate, and has offered to be part of a "neutral and transparent" investigation. This pattern is quite different from that of the Israel-Gaza wars, where both showed a certain grim logic.

Pak Army Is A Mess

Look at the present situation. Never in its history has the Pakistan army faced such travails. Imran Khan's allegations and his subsequent imprisonment, the arrest of an Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief and his subsequent court martial, the detention of senior officers, including of a Lieutenant-General and the families of senior officers, have all dented the army's image beyond imagination. Don't forget this either: late last year, Asim Munir gave himself (and other service chiefs) an extension of tenure of five years, which means he 'retires' in 2027 instead of 2025. That could not but have ended some promising careers in the top ranks.

On another level, that the Generals were running the country - and badly - was more than evident not only in Pakistan's continuous economic

woes, food shortages and its power crisis, but also in a hefty 66% rise in insurgent violence over 2023, the worst in a decade. Security forces were being killed on a daily basis. The Jaffar Express incident, which got international attention, probably put the lid on it. That the Baloch insurgency has been going on for 70 years now has been forgotten.

Ever the victim, Pakistan's reaction, consistent as it is, has been to blame India.

Given all these factors, it seemed, therefore, that a reaction from Rawalpindi was inevitable. The army needed the heft and someone to blame.

Warning Signs

The warning signs were thus in the following order. In February, the media quoted sources to say that some 80-100 foreign terrorists were assembled at launch pads. Noted analyst Ayesha Siddiqi observed the same trends and warned that "militancy is coming back to Kashmir", further quoting sources to say that militancy would be back after winters, but "at a lower scale". Then there was the Hamas link, followed by the mystery of Asim Munir's public rant against India, declaring that Balochistan would never break away from Pakistan, that Kashmir was Pakistan's "jugular vein", and the pushing of the two-nation theory to its limits. This was directed

towards a bunch of overseas Pakistanis who roared in approval. But at the time, this author felt that added up, all this warned of impending trouble.

Does this mean that intel failed? No, because intel is granular, and it is about time and place. There was nothing to indicate that an entirely peaceful Pahalgam area would be targeted during tourist season, something Kashmiris know is the time to make their incomes, with schools closing (first in the South) and the start of the Amarnath yatra preparations and all the paraphernalia that comes with it. It was literally stocking up for prosperity. In that background, there was no indication that terrorists would be given any space at all (as of now, it does seem that they were not).

The two locals who were part of the group had left Kashmir years ago. There would have been local 'overground workers', since money, something terrorists have a lot of, always talks. And here's the key: tourism cannot grow alongside hundreds of troops deployed on the ground. Picnics and dancing don't sit comfortably with armed soldiers.

Don't Give Pakistan What It Wants

So, the solution may be to work against what Pakistan wants. That is, support the Kashmiris to the maximum, by ensuring not just that tourism doesn't suffer, but also that it is boosted with special packages and subsidies, among other things. This, however, has to be preceded by strong vigilance - perhaps something like China's 'Safe City' project, which employs facial recognition systems and extensive surveillance. Israel is a master at this.

Counter-terrorism strategies also have to build on the rage inside Kashmir. In other words, locals should be allowed to have a say in both the 'punishment' and the solutions. Let them guide the narrative. Then, there should be a public declaration that India stands one and united in the face of terrorism, regardless of religion.

This was a pan-India attack, with its victims being from 14 different states. The response, too, has to be pan-India. Let the Indian flag fly.

No Flood Data, New Dams: How India May Target Pak With Indus Treaty Suspension

By Manoj Joshi

India has thrown down the gauntlet before Islamabad by suspending the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) of 1960. Through the treaty, Pakistan gets roughly 80% of the waters of western rivers (Indus, Jhelum and Chenab) that flow through India into Pakistan; India's share from the eastern rivers (Beas, Ravi and Sutlej) is 20%.

The Indian action in suspending the treaty, which has seen many wars and alarms between the two countries, is in response to the Pahalgam terror attack. If Pakistan has sought to strike a blow against India in Kashmir, India has just dangled a sword over what Pakistan Army chief General Asim Munir called its "jugular vein".

Pak Has No Easy Answers

The Indian action could be only a part of retaliatory measures, which may yet see a military strike on Pakistan. But the IWT suspension has confronted Pakistan with a dilemma for which



it does not have easy answers. It is true that right now, India lacks the infrastructure in terms of dams, canals, tunnels or storage areas to divert the waters that flow to Pakistan. But in the immediate term, India can hurt Pakistan by halting data sharing, publicising new projects, optimising existing dams and escalating diplomatic pressure, thereby causing public anxiety in the already water-stressed country.

In the medium term, the situation may become more dire for Pakistan if India accelerates dam construction, maximises its

eastern river use, and develops diversions and affect the flow of the western rivers. It could significantly impact Pakistan's water-dependent agriculture, hydropower, and economy.

India could immediately stop the sharing of river-flow data, flood warnings and planned projects, as required under the IWT framework. This includes refusing to hold technical meetings or responding to Pakistani queries. Actually, agricultural disruptions are likely if India simply does not provide flood warnings this year, or chooses to open the sluice gates of the

Bhakra Dam in the high monsoon season, in August.

A Slew Of Existing Projects

In the longer term, India could publicise plans for accelerating the development of hydro projects with storage capacity, such as Pakal Dul, Ratle, Kiru or Sawalkot, all on the Chenab or its tributaries. India already has the right to use a certain amount of water of the western rivers for irrigation and storage for hydropower projects. Now, with the suspension of the treaty, this storage can be increased beyond the IWT limits.

The Pakal Dul (1,000 MW) project, started in 2018, aims to store 0.125 million acre feet (MAF) of water and also generate electricity. While India says it is permitted storage, Pakistan says it has exceeded the 0.15 MAF limit. However, even this storage could enable India to regulate the Chenab flow, especially during the dry season from April to May.

The Sawalkot (1856 MW) project, also on the Chenab, is a run-of-the-river project with a small reservoir for electricity generation. Construction is yet to begin, but India could increase the size of the reservoir, providing it with a means of disrupting river flows.

The Ratle (850 MW) project is downstream from Pakal Dul, and is a run-of-the-river project with minimal storage. Construction resumed in 2023 after delays, but here, too, India could enlarge the reservoir, something that will affect Pakistan. Kiru (624 MW) is near Ratle, also on the Chenab, and is essentially a hydropower project; its dam and civil works are 50% complete. Finally, while the Kwar Hydroelectric (540 MW) project on the Chenab has a small reservoir for hydropower, the Nimoo Bazgo (45 MW) is on the Indus in Ladakh and is a small run-of-the-river scheme with no storage.

Will AI take over your job? It's complicated



By Javed Anwer

Every 15 days or so, a clip goes viral on Twitter and Reddit. It is a clip from 60 Minutes, a TV show. In it, we see a sage-like Rick Rubin, sitting cross-legged in a meditative stance, answering a few questions. He is a music producer, famed and celebrated in the industry. Do you play instruments — Rubin is asked. Do you know how to work a soundboard? The answer is no to both. "I have no technical ability," Rubin says. "And I know

nothing about music." So, what does he have? Taste, Rubin has taste. Or so he says.

This clip goes viral often nowadays, because when people start thinking of generative AI tools like ChatGPT, Gemini and DeepSeek, they come to a conclusion that soon technical skills will not matter. That is because AI will offer all the technical skills one might need. It is already doing plenty of coding, for example. Google CEO Sundar Pichai just said that

within his company, almost 30 per cent of code is now written by AI. These AI tools are also already doing quite significant heavy lifting in industries like graphics design, media production, business writing and communications, consulting and data analysis.

So, in a world where technical skills — for example, the ability to code in Java — is already cheap and available to all, why will humans have a job where these skills are required? The

answer which many give is — taste. Like Rick Rubin's taste. But then, some people counter? They believe that taste is irrelevant. The argument goes that it is only in select industries where you need something like "taste". In other industries, the work itself has no room for it. What taste does an HR person require to create a spreadsheet with salary data? More significantly, you don't need an army of 10,000 workers for "taste". This taste can be defined by a group of 10 people. Or just by one person, like Steve Jobs did so often at Apple.

In other words, taste is not going to save jobs for humans in a world where AI tools have an IQ of 130 — think Google Gemini 2.5 Pro and OpenAI O3 — and where they can do most of the routine work better than humans can. Logically, if you look at it, the job market for humans isn't looking all that rosy. The whole apparatus is stacked against them. Even in areas where it is not apparent if AI can take over, for example, in manual jobs, humans should worry. Take the

case of drivers: It has been slow in coming, but the driverless cars are finally on the road. Google's cab service Waymo is now doing over a million driverless rides in San Francisco every month, rides which otherwise would have been managed by human drivers.

So, are we looking at mass unemployment in the future? The logical answer would be yes. But nothing about human affairs is logical. Because, if we were logical, John Lennon wouldn't have been Imagine-ing world peace and rivers full of milk and honey. That would have been reality. The reality is that a large percentage of the jobs that we do currently, the jobs that employ hundreds of millions of people across the world, are already redundant. Covid exposed many truths about the world we live in. One, it did more than expose was show just how unnecessary most of our jobs were. Millions of office workers simply stopped going to work as lockdowns spread across the world. Yes, these people did, in most instances, keep "working".

Air India expects \$600 million in losses if Pak airspace shut for a year: Report

The closure of Pakistani airspace for a year would result in losses of USD 600 million for the country's national carrier, Air India, news agency PTI reported, citing sources. The airline has sought the government's assistance to address the challenges.

Air India, the country's national carrier, has estimated it would face losses of USD 600 million (approx 5,081 crore) if the Pakistani airspace was shut for a year and suggested financial assistance to deal with the situation, news agency PTI reported, citing sources. The Pakistani airspace was shut to Indian airlines in response to India's diplomatic measures against the neighbouring country in the aftermath of last week's Pahalgam terror attack.

Several airlines, including Air India, IndiGo and SpiceJet, gave their inputs and suggestions to the Ministry of Civil Aviation on the impact of the Pakistan airspace closure in the aftermath of the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, which claimed 26 lives, sources said. The ministry is assessing the situation and looking at pos-



sible solutions to address the issue, they added.

The ministry recently held a meeting with various airlines to discuss the Pakistan airspace closure and sought their inputs on the fallout and suggestions to deal with the situation. Pakistan shut its airspace to Indian airlines on April 24.

Air India has estimated that the additional expenses in

case the airspace closure is in place for a year would be around USD 600 million, sources said. The airline was looking at various measures, including alternative routes, which will help reduce the costs, one of the sources said.

Air India, Air India Express, IndiGo, SpiceJet and Akasa Air have international operations.

There were no official comments from the airlines.

India on Wednesday shut its airspace to all Pakistani aircraft till May 23 in a tit-for-tat measure after Islamabad shut the airspace to Indian airlines in the aftermath of the Pahalgam attack.

On April 28, Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu said the ministry was assessing the situation arising out of the Pakistan airspace closure

and that it was working with airlines for alternative solutions.

Aspects related to airlines as well as passengers, including a possible increase in airfares due to higher operational costs, against the backdrop of the airspace closure were being assessed by the ministry.

The additional weekly expenses were likely to be Rs 77 crore for international flights operating from north Indian cities as the airspace curbs result in increased fuel consumption and longer flight durations. An analysis of the number of overseas flights and back of the envelope calculations based on increased flight time as well as approximate expenses by PTI showed that the additional monthly operational costs for the Indian airlines could be over Rs 306 crore.

Oyo delays IPO attempt for 3rd time as largest shareholder opposes: Report



Indian budget hotel chain Oyo is pushing back its third IPO effort until March 2026, following resistance from top investor SoftBank and ongoing market fluctuations, reported Bloomberg.

SoftBank, is reportedly not in favour of an IPO this year. It wants the company to wait until its earnings improve before going ahead with the listing, mentioned people familiar with the matter.

The company had earlier

filed for an IPO in 2021 and again in 2023, but both times it had to pull back.

The broader market has also been quite unstable lately. India's Nifty 50 index has risen about 3% in 2025 so far, but it's still over 7% below its all-time high from October last year. This market volatility has affected several companies. For example, LG Electronics' India unit also delayed its IPO, while e-scooter maker Ather Energy reduced both the size of its IPO

and its valuation.

Oyo's founder, Ritesh Agarwal, has been keen to move forward with the IPO quickly. That's because of a \$2.2 billion loan he took in 2019 to increase his stake in the company. The loan was backed by SoftBank's founder, Masayoshi Son, and the first repayment was due in December. However, sources said lenders may allow more time for repayment if Oyo is listed soon.

Now, there's talk that SoftBank might help extend the loan deadline in exchange for delaying the IPO further.

Oyo's earlier IPO filings had aimed for a much higher valuation, up to \$12 billion. But with market conditions still shaky and investor pressure mounting, the company seems to be taking a more cautious route this time. Meanwhile, neither SoftBank nor Oyo responded to the matter.

Rupee at strongest since October 2024 as it breaks 84/dollar mark

The Indian rupee surged to its strongest level this year on Friday, breaching the 84-per-dollar mark for the first time since October 2024. The currency rose as much as 0.7% to hit 83.83 against the US dollar in early trade, buoyed by a mix of strong foreign inflows and broader regional currency strength.

This marks a nearly 2% weekly gain for the rupee, powered by a sustained rally in Indian equities and growing optimism over an early US-India trade deal under the Trump administration. Traders also cited heavy dollar selling by foreign banks—likely acting on behalf of overseas clients—and the unwinding of bearish bets against the rupee.

Foreign institutional investors have been net buyers of Indian equities for 11 consecutive sessions, marking the longest such streak in two years and lending strong support to the local currency.

Dilip Parmar – Senior Research Analyst, HDFC Securi-

ties, said, "The Indian rupee witnessed its most significant single-day appreciation since November 2022. This surge can be attributed to month-end adjustments and a technical sell-off in the US dollar leading up to the holiday."

"Despite prevailing geopolitical tensions, trader caution was somewhat offset by the Reserve Bank of India's apparent absence from the market and the strengthening of other Asian currencies, providing support to the rupee," he added.

The rupee's recent run has prompted several analysts to revise their forecasts. Japanese bank MUFG now expects the rupee to end 2025 at 84, up from its earlier projection of 87.

"We now forecast INR to outperform other Asian currencies on the back of expected US dollar weakness and more favourable tariff outcomes for India in Trump 2.0," the bank said in a note.

While bids for the greenback

Alia Bhatt to join Aishwarya Rai, Eva Longoria for Cannes red carpet debut

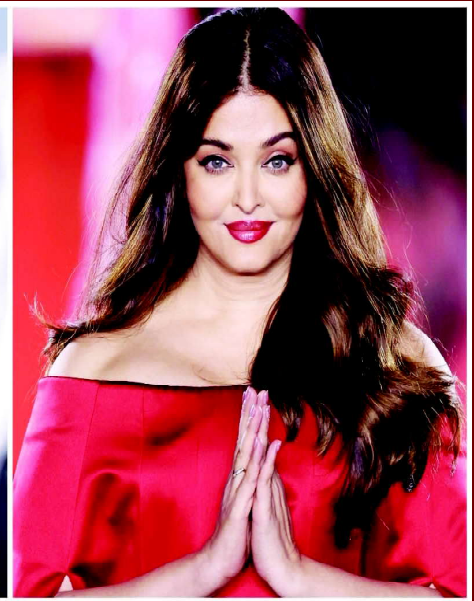
Actor Alia Bhatt is set to make her debut at the Festival de Cannes, which will kick off on May 13 and conclude on May 24. She will be present at the French Riviera in her role as a Global Ambassador for L'Oréal Paris.

This year marks the brand's 28th consecutive year at the prestigious film festival, celebrating the theme "Lights, Beauty and Action", a powerful philosophy rooted in confidence, self-worth, and the belief that everyone is inherently deserving.

Bhatt will join longstanding brand ambassador Aishwarya Rai Bachchan at the prestigious festival.

Sharing her thoughts ahead of her debut, the '2 States' actor said, "There's something absolutely special about firsts, and I'm so excited to make my Festival de Cannes debut this year, an iconic celebration of cinema and self-expression. It is such an honour to represent L'Oréal Paris at the Festival with this year's theme, 'Lights, Beauty and Action'.

The two Indian stars will join the extensive lineup of global ambassadors, including Eva Longoria, Viola Davis, Jane Fonda, Aja Naomi King, Andie MacDowell, Simone Ashley, Elle Fanning, Bebe Vio, and Yseult.



MET Gala 2025: Priyanka Chopra will make fifth appearance in Balmain and Bulgari



Global icon Priyanka Chopra Jonas is set to make her fashionable return to the MET Gala 2025 red carpet on May 6, marking her fifth appearance at the prestigious fashion event. She will be attending alongside renowned designer Olivier Rousteing, wearing a custom Balmain couture creation, paired with exquisite high jewellery from Bulgari.

This year's Met Gala theme, 'Superfine: Tailoring Black Style', pays tribute to the legacy of Black fashion and the evolution of Dandyism over the past 300 years. Though the full details of Chopra Jonas' ensemble remain under wraps, the actor is sure to steal the spotlight with her glamorous presence.

The 'Quantico' actor made her Met debut in 2017, where she walked the iconic steps in a Ralph Lauren trench coat dress. It was her entry with Nick Jonas that caught the attention of all. The actor, who is a MET veteran, stunned everyone in 2018 as she matched the 'Heavenly Bodies: Fashion' and the Catholic Imagination by opting for a deep red velvet straight gown with a bejewelled hood. In 2019, she slayed again on the red carpet in her Mad Hatter-inspired attire. In 2023, Chopra looked gorgeous in a Valentino gown around the theme, 'Karl Lagerfeld: A Line of Beauty'.

Joining her at the annual fashion event this year will be Shah Rukh Khan, mother-to-be Kiara Advani, and Diljit Dosanjh, adding to the growing Indian representation on the global style stage. SRK is believed to wear an ensemble by Sabyasachi for his grand debut.

On the work front, Chopra is currently shooting for her upcoming film with SS Rajamouli and Mahesh Babu. Her upcoming Hollywood release, 'Heads of State', co-starring John Cena and Idris Elba, is set to hit theatres on July 2, 2025.

Housefull 5 teaser: Akshay Kumar's laugh riot gets a killer twist this time



first glimpse of a truly star-studded ensemble featuring Bollywood's biggest names including Akshay Kumar, Abhishek Bachchan, Riteish Deshmukh, Jacqueline Fernandez, Sonam Bajwa, Nargis Fakhri, Sanjay Dutt, Jackie Shroff, Nana Patekar, Chitrangada Singh, Fardeen Khan, Chunky Pandey, Johnny Lever, Shreyas Talpade, Dino Morea, Ranjeet, Soundarya Sharma, Nikitin Dheer, and Akashdeep Sabir. Adding a twist to the plotline, this time, fans will witness a killer and a whole lot of suspense behind him.

Directed by Tarun Mansukhani, 'Housefull 5' takes audiences aboard a luxurious cruise, promising a rollercoaster ride of endless laughs, twists, and a killer comedy with chartbuster songs.

Produced by Sajid Nadiadwala, 'Housefull 5' is set to release in theatres on June 6, 2025.

On the 15th anniversary of the popular franchise 'Housefull', the makers dropped the teaser of Mansukhani and starring an ensemble star cast, the film promises five times the laughter, madness, and full-on family entertainment.

Karan Johar Revealed Kriti Sanon's Mother 'Stopped' Her From 'Having An Orgasm'



It is no secret that Kiara Advani's much-talked-about role in Lust Stories was first offered to Kriti Sanon. The Bhediya actress couldn't be a part of the film as her mother

didn't want her to do sexual scenes. Lust Stories became quite popular, and Kiara Advani was lauded for her role and portrayal of female sensuality. During an earlier episode of

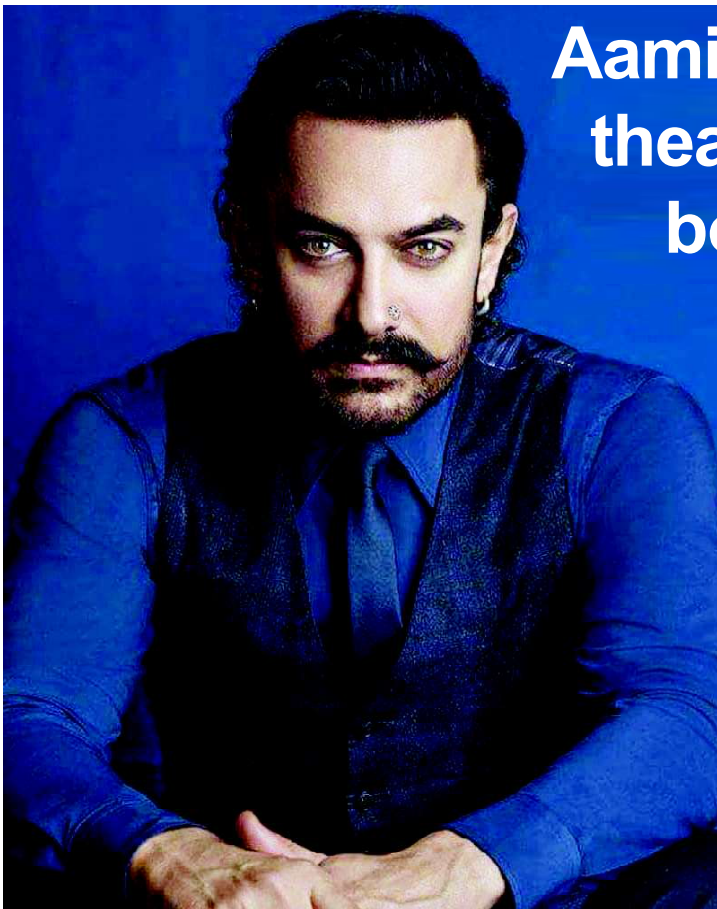
Koffee with Karan, the filmmaker teased Kriti that her mother 'stopped' her from 'having an orgasm'.

A clip from the episode frequently goes viral on social

media sites, and once again, it has resurfaced on Reddit. In the clip, Karan said to Kriti, "Your mom has, prior to this, also stopped you from having an orgasm." Kriti gasped and

replied, "Can you please explain? It doesn't sound good... He offered me Lust Stories... My god, that sentence was horrible." Karan said that he was quite keen on casting Kriti Sanon, but her mother didn't approve of the climax scene. In another episode of the show, Karan Johar told Kiara Advani, "I had offered it to Kriti Sanon, and she said that her mom didn't allow her. So, I thought now everybody's moms would stand in a line, not allowing their daughters. I'm like, 'It's actually a very empowering story.' It's about a woman's right to pleasure."

"I met Kiara at Manish Malhotra's house. I knew her, of course. I knew her as Alia Advani. In fact, her name was fed as Alia Advani on my phone till very recently. I asked her, 'Can you come tomorrow and meet me? It's for a short film.'



Aamir Khan blames lack of theatres for Bollywood's box office struggles

Aamir Khan, during a session at the WAVES Summit 2025, reasoned that the lack of theatre screens in India is the biggest reason why Bollywood films are not able to achieve their full box-office potential. During a session titled 'Studios of the Future', joined by Namit Malhotra, Dinesh Vijan, Ajay Bijli, Ritesh Sidhwani and Charles Roven, the panel discussed the reasons behind the box-office struggles of Bollywood in recent times.

Aamir Khan said, "I have always believed that we have very few theatres for the size of our country and the number of people living in India. In India, we have around 10,000 screens, and in the US, which is one-third of our population, they have 40,000 screens and China has 90,000 screens. And even in this 10,000, half are in the South (South India) and the other half in the rest of the country," emphasising the

stark difference in screens between India and other premier filmmaking countries like the US and China.

He further added, "For a Hindi film, typically we have 5,000 screens. Our biggest hits over the years have had a theatrical footfall of 3 crore people, which is roughly 2 per cent of our population. In a country recognised as a film-loving nation, only 2 per cent watches our biggest hits in a theatre. So where is the remaining 98 per cent watching the film?" Aamir exclaimed while speaking on the matter.

Diving deeper into the problem, Aamir explained, "My belief has always been that we need to have a lot more theatres in India. There are so many vast districts in India that don't have a single theatre for people to watch films. So I feel that one of the biggest issues that we have faced over decades is that we just don't have enough screens."

Raid 2 movie review:

Ajay Devgn's film crumbles under weight of his stardom

An intense drama like 'Raid' is a perfect recipe for an engaging film. Driven by Ajay Devgn, the franchise is both gripping and intriguing. You know that the hero is going to get the work done, and it's now his journey that you are excited about. In 'Raid 2', the new film in the franchise, Devgn reprises the role of a no-nonsense, honest income tax officer, Amay Patnaik. But this time, we don't see enough of Patnaik - we see a brooding Ajay Devgn.

'Raid 2' brings Riteish Deshmukh as Dadabhai, a powerful politician hailed as the people's messiah in a fictional state called Bhoj. Patnaik's entry into Dadabhai's state signals trouble - a clash between two towering figures, both well-known and respected in their fraternities, and almost equally sharp and witty. Raj Kumar Gupta, who directed the first film in the franchise, returns to helm the sequel. And there's Saurabh Shukla reprising his iconic 'Tauji' who's still serving his jail sentence. Vani Kapoor replaces Iliana D'Souza as Patnaik's wife. The film begins with a long shot of the convoy of Ambassador cars, led by Patnaik, arriving at a powerful politician's palace. Govind Namdev plays this royal, womanising power-broker who not only



hoards black money but also uses goons and guns to threaten government officers. Devgn wears his signature aviators - even in the dark - because, of course, stardom! Government officers flee in fear when the politician flexes his muscles. We see how the film makes a fool of the department in that scene. But, we move on. Patnaik is accused of accepting a bribe, and is transferred for the 74th time. Enter Dadabhai - a devoted mama's boy who washes his mother's feet with milk in a temple, someone who's morally flawed but holds his mother's blessings above all. Patnaik and Dadabhai's clash

completes the rest of the story - a cat-and-mouse chase where the honest officer must expose and extract illegal assets from one of the nation's most adored political figures. It's not just about a job that needs to be done, but about a dream that people have seen for and with Dadabhai, that needs to be broken. 'Raid 2' has a lot going on. It has more than two songs inserted to make it look more 'filmy', and a plot that needs tightening. The first half of the film builds up to Amay Patnaik's smartness and his passion for duty. It also establishes him as a family man - a detail that doesn't

have any relevance in the story. But, even if you overlook the songs, the irrelevant characters, and the meandering narrative, you can't help but notice how Devgn never truly lets Patnaik emerge as the hero of the film.

Devgn carries a quiet intensity in his eyes, and a purposeful walk that always conveys he's calculating his next move. All of this is effective - essential, even - but it doesn't assist the character he's playing. In 'Raid 2', the actor feels detached from Patnaik, never fully embodying him in a way that feels distinct or memorable.

Amay Patnaik hardly smiles. He maintains a serious air, appears all business and is entirely driven by duty - all classic Devgn traits. In Patnaik, you never meet a different person. He is who Devgn is. Riteish is well-cast as Dadabhai, but this villain is not menacing enough. His eyes speak trouble and his smile stands for mischievous, but he lacks Shukla's organic style. Dadabhai is not written like a fearsome villain. He's so polished and sophisticated that he ends up looking stupid in front of Amay Patnaik - an imbalance the film clearly didn't intend.