

# The South Asian Insider

Independent Voice of South Asians in North America

Published From New York Since March 2002

## The Indus In Peril

Sixty-six years of survival, three wars, and now—dead silence. The World Bank’s crowning diplomatic achievement is fracturing as two nuclear neighbors turn a shared lifeline for 240 million people into a geopolitical battleground.



Page 2

## Scotus Defends Birthright Citizenship



Page 3

## State of Nation



## An Empire In Waiting

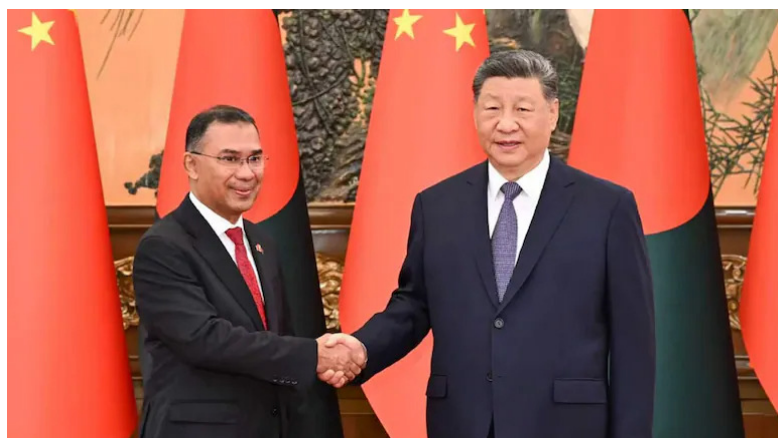
Kept under tight guard since February, Khamenei’s body is brought forward for a public farewell. Amid heavy security and fears of crowd chaos, Iran’s elite forces take to the streets to project absolute control over a nation at a historic crossroads.



Page 4

## Beijing’s Estren Flank Reencircle New Delhi

Following massive investments in Pakistan, China shifts focus eastward. A proposed new economic corridor linking Kunming to Bangladesh via Myanmar aims to grant Beijing direct maritime access to the Bay of Bengal, raising immediate security alarms in India.



Page 6

## Also In This Issue

When Sikhs debate beadbi, what is defining it theologically — Sikhi or Sharia? Page 09

How India And Japan Can Together Navigate US' Shifting Indo-Pacific Strategy Page 14

China is expanding influence in Myanmar, Bangladesh. India has a geography advantage Page 16

How a 'Coalition of the Willing' Wants to Change the Agenda on AI Page 19

The Jewar Effect: How Noida International Airport Is Reshaping NCR's Real Estate Map Page 22

The Ayodhya Ledger: Ram Temple, Missing Donations and the Politics Ahead of UP Elections Page 26

America 250: Declaration of Unalienable Rights, Backed by Sacred Honor and Rockets' Red Glare page 29

Flying Home This Summer? The E-Arrival Card Is Now Mandatory page 35

# SOUTH ASIA'S WATER WAR

**Sixty-Six Years of Shared Rivers, One Year of Silence: The Indus Waters Treaty at Its Breaking Point**  
The World Bank-brokered pact that survived three wars now sits suspended, arbitrated, and openly contested — with two nuclear neighbors trading war rhetoric over the lifeline of 240 million people

(NEW DELHI) For six and a half decades, the Indus Waters Treaty was the one agreement India and Pakistan could not afford to break. It survived the wars of 1965, 1971, and 1999. It survived Kargil, Mumbai, Uri, and Pulwama. Today, it survives only on paper — suspended by New Delhi, defended by Islamabad, and litigated in a courtroom India refuses to recognize.

## How the Rivers Were Divided

The treaty was negotiated with World Bank mediation and signed in Karachi on September 19, 1960, by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and President Ayub Khan. It divided the six rivers of the Indus Basin into two categories: India received the three Eastern Rivers — the Beas, Ravi and Sutlej, carrying roughly 33 million acre-feet annually — while Pakistan received the three Western Rivers — the Indus, Chenab and Jhelum, carrying about 135 million acre-feet. India's share amounted to roughly 20 percent of the system's total flow. On the Western Rivers, India retained limited uses, including hydropower generation subject to treaty constraints, under a layered dispute-resolution system.

The arithmetic explains Pakistan's existential anxiety. According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, nine in every ten Pakistanis live within the Indus Basin; its rivers irrigate more than 90 percent of the country's crops, and all 21 of Pakistan's hydroelectric plants sit within the basin. As one regional analyst put it, these are not marginal dependencies but load-bearing pillars of a fragile economy already in IMF bailout territory.

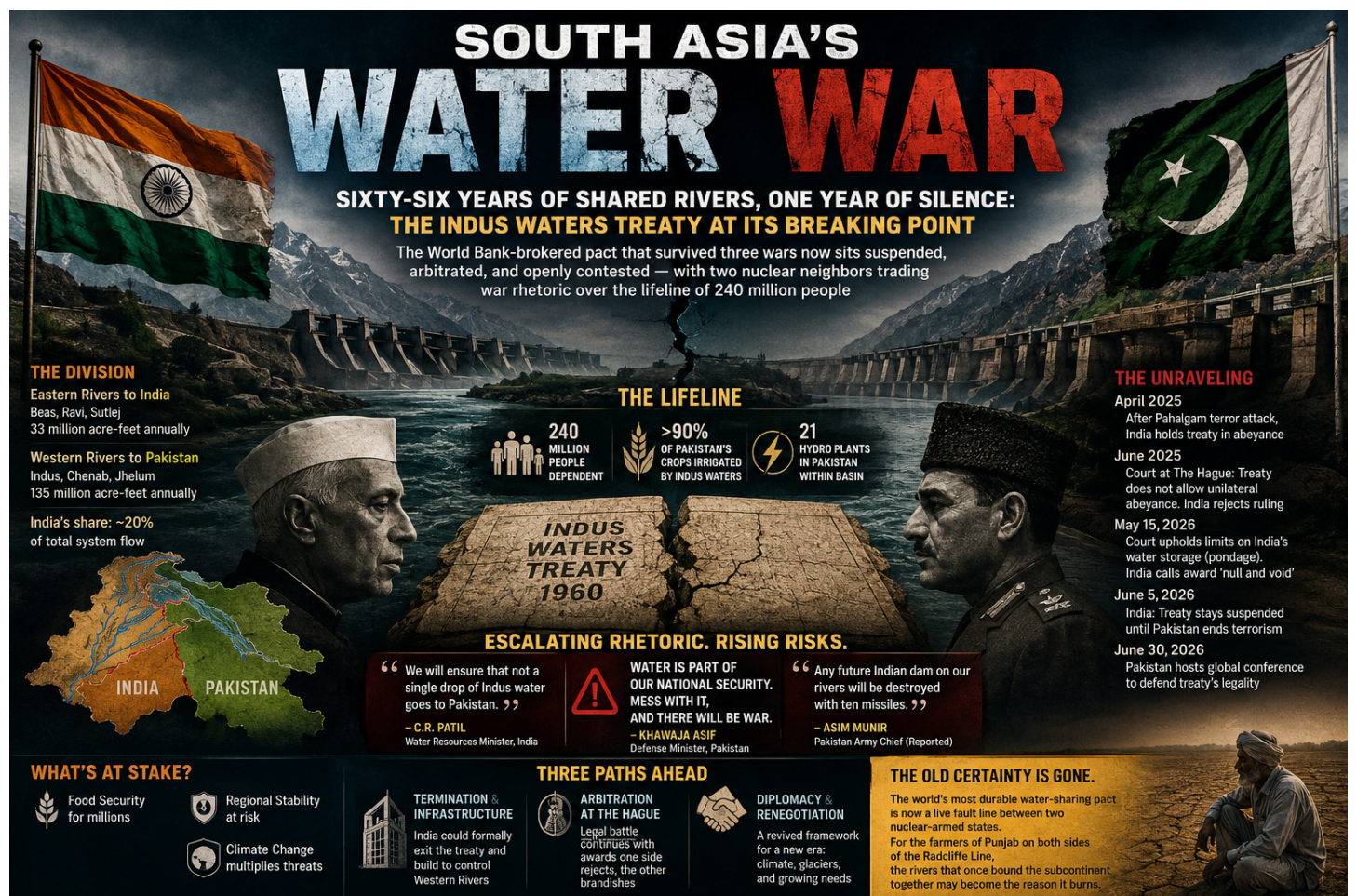
## The Unraveling

The treaty's decline was gradual, then sudden. Friction over Indian hydropower projects — Baglihar, Kishanganga, Ratle — had simmered for two decades, and by 2024 India had called off all meetings of the Permanent Indus Commission, the treaty's day-to-day machinery.

Then came Pahalgam. In April 2025, following the deadly terror attack on civilians in Indian-administered Kashmir, India announced it would hold the treaty in abeyance — the first time in its history that tensions disrupted the pact itself. Pakistan denied involvement in the attack and has maintained that India cannot unilaterally suspend the World Bank-brokered treaty.

## The Legal War at The Hague

A parallel battle has unfolded before the Permanent Court of Arbitration. In June



2025, the court held that the treaty does not provide for unilateral abeyance and reaffirmed its own jurisdiction; India rejected the supplemental award, calling the court illegal. On May 15, 2026, the court issued a further award on maximum pondage — the volume of water India may store at its run-of-river projects — reportedly affirming Pakistan's position that the treaty places substantive limits on India's water-control ability. India again rejected the award and maintains the court is illegally constituted. India declared the pondage award "null and void" and reiterated that the treaty remains in abeyance, while Pakistan has relied on the arbitration to argue the treaty remains valid, operational and binding. Legal observers now frame the case as something larger than dams: a test of whether a state can put a treaty in abeyance, refuse to participate in arbitration, and still avoid the legal consequences of a tribunal's rulings.

## Where Things Stand Now

The rhetoric has sharpened dangerously in recent weeks. India's foreign ministry said on June 5 that the treaty would stay suspended "until Pakistan completely stops cross-border terrorism," and days later Water Resources Minister C.R. Patil hardened the line, saying New Delhi was working to ensure the flow of Indus water

to Pakistan stops entirely — not a "single drop" in the coming years.

Pakistan's response was blunt. Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif warned that the moment Islamabad feels its national security is threatened — "and water is part of our national security" — Pakistan will go to war. The threats have a longer pedigree: Army chief Asim Munir reportedly warned last August that Pakistan would destroy any future Indian dam with "ten missiles," and India's Ministry of External Affairs publicly rebuffed the Pakistani minister's war remarks in late June.

On the ground, the water itself has become evidence. Pakistan has written to India twice in 2025 and once in May 2026 about abnormal, abrupt flow variations on the Chenab. Experts note India need not stop the rivers to inflict harm: manipulating the timing of dam releases could flood Pakistani farmland during planting or withhold water during critical irrigation windows. Still, analysts caution that India's ability to immediately "turn off the tap" remains technically limited — the danger lies in water becoming a normalized tool of coercion.

Islamabad, meanwhile, is internationalizing its case. On June 30, Pakistan hosted a first-of-its-kind international conference — "Indus Waters

Treaty as an Enduring Legal and Institutional Framework" — with Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar delivering the keynote, seeking to reinforce its legal position against India's suspension.

## What Comes Next

Three paths lie ahead. India could formalize what its ministers already signal — a push to terminate the 66-year-old treaty outright — and accelerate storage and diversion infrastructure on the Western Rivers, a build-out that would take years but permanently alter the basin's politics. The arbitration will grind on at The Hague, producing awards India dismisses and Pakistan brandishes. Or quiet diplomacy — perhaps brokered by Washington or Gulf capitals, as in past crises — could revive a renegotiated framework addressing what both sides admit the 1960 text never anticipated: climate change, glacial melt, and the water needs of two vastly larger populations.

What is certain is that the old certainty is gone. The treaty once celebrated as the world's most durable water-sharing pact is now a live fault line between two nuclear-armed states — and for the farmers of Punjab on both sides of the Radcliffe Line, the rivers that once bound the subcontinent together may become the reason it burns.

— **The South Asian Insider Weekly Special Report**

# SCOTUS DEFENDS BIRTHRIGHT CITIZENSHIP



WASHINGTON — In one of the most consequential immigration rulings in more than a century, the United States Supreme Court on Tuesday struck down President Donald Trump's executive order seeking to end birthright citizenship, holding that the Constitution's guarantee cannot be undone by presidential decree.

The decision closes the door on a policy that had loomed over millions of immigrant families since the first day of the president's second term — including hundreds of thousands of Indian nationals working legally in the United States on H-1B and other temporary visas, whose American-born children stood to be stripped of citizenship at birth.

## The Ruling

The Court ruled that the Constitution guarantees automatic birthright citizenship to virtually all children born in the United States, firmly rejecting the executive order Trump signed on his first day back in the White House, which sought to deny automatic citizenship to babies born to parents in the country illegally or on temporary visas. The directive never took effect, having been blocked by every federal court that examined it.

Chief Justice John Roberts delivered the opinion of the Court in the case, *Trump v. Barbara*, joined by Justices Sotomayor, Kagan, Barrett, and Jackson. Justice Jackson filed a concurrence; Justice Kavanaugh concurred in the judgment while dissenting in part;

Justice Thomas dissented, joined by Justice Gorsuch, and Justices Alito and Gorsuch filed dissenting opinions.

Writing for the majority, Roberts anchored the decision in history. He described citizenship as "the right to have rights," and wrote that the framers of the Fourteenth Amendment deliberately extended that promise broadly after the Civil War. The majority leaned heavily on the Court's 1898 decision in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* — the case of a San Francisco-born son of Chinese immigrants who was denied re-entry to his own country and fought all the way to the Supreme Court, where the justices held that all children born on U.S. soil are citizens, with narrow exceptions such as children of foreign diplomats. That 128-year-old precedent — born of an earlier era's hostility toward Asian immigrants — became the shield for today's immigrant families.

The majority also dismantled the administration's central legal theory. The Court held that foreign nationals who travel to the United States for business or pleasure are fully subject to its jurisdiction for as long as they remain — and that any children born to them are American citizens under the Fourteenth Amendment. Arguments seeking to limit birthright citizenship only to those "domiciled" in the country, the Court found, fail.

## The Dissent

Justice Thomas, joined by Gorsuch, argued the majority's historical account

of American citizenship was inaccurate, and objected to what he called the extraordinary step of declaring the president's order facially unconstitutional.

## How the Case Arrived

Earlier appeals reaching the high court had concerned only the scope of nationwide injunctions — not the order's legality. After the Court curbed lower courts' power to issue such injunctions, a new challenge was filed in New Hampshire on behalf of all children who would be covered by the policy. It was that case the justices decided this week, squarely on constitutional grounds.

## The President Responds

Trump responded on Truth Social that the Court had upheld birthright citizenship, "which is too bad for our Country," and urged Congress to restrict it through legislation. The path is steep: Republicans hold only 53 Senate seats, meaning a legislative effort — much less a constitutional amendment — currently has no realistic chance of advancing. Legal analysts note that because the majority grounded its ruling in the 14th Amendment itself, a constitutional amendment would likely be required to change the rule.

Vice President JD Vance criticized the ruling as a "mistake," and border czar Tom Homan also condemned the decision.

Immigration restrictionists, meanwhile, see a silver lining for the White House. Mark Krikorian of the

**Supreme Court Strikes Down Trump's Birthright Citizenship Order, Reaffirming the 14th Amendment's Promise**

**Landmark ruling protects citizenship of children born to H-1B holders, green card applicants, and undocumented parents alike; Trump vows legislative fight**

Center for Immigration Studies argued the loss strengthens the president's case for accelerating deportations and could add urgency to proposals to tighten visa processing — including adding pregnancy questions to tourist visa applications. Families should watch this space closely.

## Why It Matters to Our Community

For the Indian American community, the stakes could hardly have been higher. Indians account for an estimated 71 percent of all approved H-1B applications in recent years, according to USCIS figures. With green card backlogs for Indian nationals stretching across decades, the American-born children of H-1B families are, in many households, the only members holding U.S. citizenship. Trump's order would have ended that — placing newborns of lawfully present engineers, physicians, and researchers in legal limbo. Tuesday's ruling means those children remain what the Constitution has always said they are: Americans, from their first breath.

Outside the Court, crowds cheered as the decision came down. Civil rights advocates hailed the ruling, with LULAC's national president declaring that no president can override the Constitution by decree.

## The Bigger Picture

The decision marks the second of Trump's signature second-term initiatives invalidated by the Court, following its February ruling striking down many of his tariffs. Yet the same term delivered the administration significant wins elsewhere — a pattern in which the Court gave the president more power, but not as much as he sought. For now, one principle stands reaffirmed after 128 years: born here means belonging here.

**(The South Asian Insider Weekly News Desk)**

# Khamenei body in cold storage as feared Basij mobilizes ahead of historic Iran funeral

**Dr Omar Mohammed notes no major world power is sending its top leader, calling it 'isolation showing through the pageantry'**



Tehran is preparing for the July 9 burial of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, more than four months after his death, as authorities mobilize the Basij militia and mount a massive security operation ahead of what is expected to be a "historic" turnout.

The lengthy delay to the funeral has raised questions about how Khamenei's remains have been preserved, as Islamic tradition, analysts say, generally calls for prompt burial and discourages chemical embalming.

"The mechanism is almost certainly refrigerated cold storage, not embalming, as Islam bars chemical embalming," counterterrorism expert Dr. Omar Mohammed told Fox News Digital.

Shia law allows delayed burial and preservation by cold in exceptional cases, and a clerical exemption for a Supreme Leader is easy to get," he added. "Iran's forensic morgues already hold bodies for months, so four months in freezing is not exotic. That is what 'religious and legal standards' cover," Mohammed said.

Operation Epic Fury began on Feb. 28 with a targeted U.S. strike that killed Khamenei at his compound in Tehran. He had ruled the Islamic Republic for 36 years.

"There may not be much of a body to present. Khamenei was killed by a bunker-penetration strike, and others killed with him were recovered weeks later and identified by DNA," Mohammed explained. "A regime holding an intact body does not cancel the farewell, shift the burial site repeatedly, and confirm that he can be buried only days out.

"It reads less like reverence and more like remains they could preserve but not display," he said. With that, Iranian authorities are portraying the funeral as both a farewell to the leader and a show of strength under the slogan "We Must

Avenge."

According to Iranian state media, Yaqoub Soleimani, deputy for cultural and educational affairs at the Martyrs Foundation and one of the funeral's organizers, said Wednesday the ceremony would be conducted "with full grandeur." Soleimani said a turnout of a million people would make the event "a historical occasion" and "a national epic in the memory of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

The schedule starts with public viewings Saturday and Sunday in Tehran. A funeral procession is scheduled for July 6, where local authorities estimate 15 million to 20 million people could attend.

Another procession is planned the following day in Qom, one of Shiite Islam's holiest cities.

"The numbers the regime is putting out — up to 20 million mourners in Tehran, 35 million nationwide, more than 90 countries represented, 14,000 journalists credentialed — are not logistics," Mohammed, of The George Washington University Program on Extremism, said. "They are the message. Tehran is spending everything it has to project continuity and strength because, after the war, both are in question."

According to Iran International, Tehran is also preparing a massive security operation for the funeral.

"The Basij and the IRGC running this is the story, not a detail," Mohammed said.

"The Basij is coordinating logistics — highways turned into parking, each Tehran district assigned a province, five public holidays declared — and the Guard has crowd control." "This is a mobilization dressed as a funeral. The same apparatus organizing the grief this week is the apparatus that put down the January protests and denied funerals to the families of the people it killed then. American readers should hold those two facts next to

each other," he added.

While senior Iraqi officials will attend the funeral, representation from other major powers will be limited.

Although Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian personally invited Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India will instead send a lower-level official delegation.

Reports on June 30 also confirmed that Georgian President Mikheil Kavelashvili

will attend the ceremony.

"No major power is sending its top leader," Mohammed said. For a regime that claims to lead a front stretching from Beirut to Sanaa, a regional turnout at its founder-successor's funeral is the isolation showing through the pageantry.

"For Washington, it is a useful readout: the war left Tehran's axis smaller and more regional than the regime advertises," he added.

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# After Pak, It's Bangladesh, Myanmar: China Plans New Corridor Bordering India

The plans about the corridor to India's east come after China got access to the Arabian Sea with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to the west. India strongly objects to the CPEC corridor because it runs through Gilgit-Baltistan, which is a part of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

China has revived a decade-old connectivity dream which may have major implications for India as well. The China-Myanmar-Bangladesh Economic Corridor (CMBC) promises Beijing a new route to the Bay of Bengal. But it runs straight through one of the world's most active war zones.

The China-Myanmar-Bangladesh Economic Corridor came up during Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's four-day visit to Beijing, which began June 22. Meeting Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People, the two sides discussed advancing the corridor "for greater regional connectivity", according to China's foreign ministry.

"We proposed the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor about 15 years ago and achieved some progress. But due to various reasons, we have not achieved the results China had expected," Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen said on Thursday. When asked whether India could join the corridor, he said that it is open to other countries "if they are willing to join". The ambassador said that the only idea of the corridor is connectivity and regional economic cooperation.

The proposed corridor would start in Kunming, capital of China's Yunnan province, and run to Mandalay in Myanmar. From there it splits, one branch heading to Yangon and another to the Kyaukphyu deep-sea port in Rakhine State. China wants to extend this further into Bangladesh via Rakhine, linking up with Chattogram and Cox's Bazar, giving Beijing a direct road to the Chattogram and Mongla ports on the Bay of Bengal. The Old Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Corridor Plan

The CMBC is a rebrand of an older, more ambitious plan. In the 1990s, the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) corridor was proposed to connect Kunming to Kolkata via Mandalay and Dhaka.

But BCIM never survived India's growing wariness of the Belt and Road Initiative and the broader deterioration in Sino-Indian relations. By 2019, BCIM was quietly dropped from the official list of BRI corridors altogether.

#### What's The Catch?

The corridor's backbone runs roughly 1,700 km from Kunming to Myanmar's coast, cutting straight through Rakhine State, among the most fought-over regions in Myanmar's ongoing civil war. Per a 2026 UN Security Council briefing, Myanmar's junta now controls only around a fifth of the country's territory. Resistance forces and ethnic armed groups hold an estimated 42 per cent,



with the rest contested or under active fighting. The related Mandalay-Kyaukphyu railway, a 2021 MoU between Myanmar and China, has seen no construction timeline emerge in the years since.

#### Bangladesh Has Not Signed On

Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman told reporters on June 27 that Bangladesh is "currently examining" the proposal and has "taken no position" on it and explicitly conditioned any overland link through Myanmar on the restoration of peace in Rakhine State.

#### Impact Of China-Myanmar-Bangladesh Economic Corridor On India

The plans about the corridor to India's east come after China got access to the Arabian Sea with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to the west. India strongly objects to the CPEC corridor because it runs through Gilgit-Baltistan, which is a part of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. This is China building Indian Ocean access on India's eastern flank, mirroring what CPEC and Gwadar do on the western flank via Pakistan. Coming just weeks after Xi and Pakistan's Shehbaz Sharif reached a "new broad consensus" on expanding CPEC and turning Gwadar into a regional hub, the CMBC push reads as part of a wider pattern of China moving to secure Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea footholds simultaneously, bypassing New Delhi's traditional sphere of influence on both coasts. The Rahman-Xi meeting also produced a raft of side agreements, such as the Teesta river management plan, flood mitigation, irrigation, and cooperation in the green economy and digital sectors, alongside Bangladesh's reaffirmation of the one-China policy.

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# Great Immigrants, Great Americans Recognition

## DIASPORA TRAILBLAZERS RECEIVE HIGH HONORS FOR NATIONAL IMPACT

The structural, economic, and academic influence of the Indian American community has taken center stage following major recognition from prestigious national institutions, including the Carnegie Corporation's annual honors. Celebrating naturalized citizens who have significantly strengthened American society, the accolades spotlighted an exceptionally high concentration of Indian-born innovators, educators, and technology pioneers. Community forums have noted that these high-profile inductions serve as powerful counter-narratives to rising anti-immigrant rhetoric nationwide. By

validating the profound contributions of South Asian professionals in critical sectors like artificial intelligence, biomedical research, and macroeconomic



tions of South Asian professionals in critical sectors like artificial intelligence, biomedical research, and macroeconomic

policy, the honors reinforce the direct link between highly skilled migration and sustained American global competitiveness. Leaders within the community are leveraging this national visibility to inspire a new generation of researchers to pursue groundbreaking public-sector and institutional breakthroughs.

# Senior Care and Diasporic Aging

## LACK OF CULTURALLY COMPETENT ELDER CARE SPARKS INFRASTRUCTURE SHIFT

The Indian American community is facing a massive, silent demographic crisis as the pioneering generation of first-generation immigrants reaches advanced old age. This shift has exposed a severe shortage of culturally and linguistically competent senior care facilities within the United States. Traditional American nursing homes are rarely equipped to handle specific vegetarian dietary needs, language barriers, or distinct cultural and religious practices, leading to isolation among aging pioneers. In response, a new wave of diaspora real estate developers and healthcare operators is building specialized senior living communities. These facilities feature culturally familiar environments, native language support, and traditional dietary provisions, allowing elders to age with dignity close to their families in the U.S. rather than facing an isolated retirement back in India.

## Suburban Small Business Vulnerabilities RETAIL SECURITY AND INFLATION STRAIN METRO HUB COMMERCIAL FOOTPRINTS

While high-tech successes frequently dominate mainstream headlines, a major community crisis is unfolding across America's suburban and metropolitan business corridors, where independent Indian American small business owners are facing intense economic stress. Proprietors of gas stations, convenience stores, and franchise motels are grappling with a damaging combination of retail theft, rising commercial insurance premiums, and persistent inflationary pressures. Local IndoAmerican merchant associations are rapidly stepping in, coordinating directly with regional law enforcement and municipal councils to demand enhanced security frameworks and targeted economic relief. These associations emphasize that these small businesses form the financial baseline for thousands of diaspora families, and their ongoing vulnerability poses a direct threat to suburban community stability.

## Grassroots Gender Equity Actions

### COMMUNITY TOWN HALLS ADDRESS PARITY AND DOMESTIC REFORM

Diaspora civic organizations, led by groups like the Indo-American Community Federation, have significantly scaled up grassroots mobilization to address internal challenges surrounding gender equity and leadership representation. A series of dedicated town halls and localized policy panels are tackling long-overlooked issues, including domestic vulnerabilities, systemic glass ceilings in community organizations, and the underrepresentation of South Asian women in public office. Recognizing that cultural stigmas often hinder progress, these forums are intentionally creating spaces where community elders and youth leaders can dismantle archaic social expectations. These initiatives are focused on implementing clear safety nets for vulnerable family members, expanding mentorship pathways for young women, and transforming the governance structures of major cultural entities to ensure balanced leadership that accurately reflects the changing demographics of the population.

# Healthcare Resilience & "Nurses Week" Extensions

## SYSTEMIC BURNOUT DRIVES INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR MEDICAL PIONEERS



Recognizing the extreme psychological toll on front-line workers, Indian American healthcare coalitions have transformed traditional professional recognitions into sustained, year-round mental health and institutional support initiatives. South Asian physicians and nurses compose a highly critical percentage of the American medical system, and they continue to experience unprecedented rates of professional burnout and systemic exhaustion. Specialized

medical associations are actively deploying peer-support networks, culturally synchronized mental health programming, and targeted workplace advocacy to secure better institutional guardrails. The community's primary focus is pushing hospital administrators to actively address staffing shortages and structural demands, ensuring that the medical professionals who sustain public health are protected from long-term occupational depletion.

# Mainstreaming of Classical & Contemporary Art

## SOUTH ASIAN CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS SECURE MAJOR PUBLIC CULTURAL FUNDING

The cultural imprint of the Indian diaspora is experiencing an artistic evolution as second- and third-generation classical and contemporary artists successfully secure mainstream institutional validation. Driven by high-profile global crossovers and multi-lingual musical achievements, community arts councils are moving far beyond self-funded cultural festivals. Activists are successfully lobbying state and federal cultural institutions to se-

ecure competitive public arts grants for traditional South Asian disciplines, including Bharatnatyam, Kathak, and classical Hindustani music. By integrating these historic art forms into mainstream American museum exhibitions and public performance spaces, the diaspora is ensuring its rich creative heritage is celebrated as an essential, dynamic component of America's contemporary arts landscape.

## Surge in Enforced Deportations BORDER CRACKING DOWN FORCES COMMUNITY FOCUS ON MIGRATION PATHWAYS

Official reports from India's Ministry of External Affairs have confirmed a sharp escalation in immigration enforcement, revealing that well over 1,000 Indian nationals were deported from the United States in the first half of 2026 alone. This substantial uptick in removals is the direct result of a major domestic crackdown on unauthorized border crossings and non-compliant visa statuses. The sudden spike has sent shockwaves through community centers, completely reorienting public discourse around the realities of undocumented migration within the South Asian demographic. For years considered a peripheral issue by mainstream diaspora groups, the realities of intercepted transit networks and aggressive federal detentions have forced community leaders to urgently confront the vulnerabilities of exploitative international human-smuggling rings.

## Identity & Inclusivity (We Belong Movements)

### SUMMIT FRAMEWORKS CONFRONT INTERNAL POLARIZATIONS AND CIVIC BELONGING

Under the unifying banner of "We Belong," major national conferences hosted by coalitions like Indian American Impact are creating essential spaces to confront internal community divisions. The contemporary diaspora is navigating complex, highly sensitive debates around LGBTQ+ inclusivity, anti-bias protections, and the uncomfortable realities of overseas religious and caste polarizations bleeding directly into American civic life. Rather than avoiding these deeply entrenched social tensions, modern community forums are actively utilizing intersectional frameworks to build bridges across ideological divides. These initiatives prioritize creating a safe, inclusive environment for all sub-demographics, ensuring that internal social differences do not fragment the community's collective ability to defend its civil rights and political standing in the United States.

## Countering Hate Crimes and Transnational Defacement

### PLACES OF WORSHIP MOBILIZE AGAINST VANDALISM AND EXTERNAL THREATS

A series of unsettling vandalism incidents targeting local places of worship—including temples, gurdwaras, and mosques—has triggered widespread security mobilization among Indian American civic groups. Working in close coordination with local law enforcement, federal civil rights agencies, and regional anti-hate task forces, community leaders are rapidly installing advanced security infrastructures and establishing rapid-response defense networks. Activists emphasize that the defacement of religious structures often stems from complex transnational political tensions that are misconstrued or weaponized by bad actors domestically. By demanding comprehensive hate-crime investigations and launching public educational campaigns, the community is building a united front to protect its sacred spaces and preserve its fundamental right to safety and worship.

## Dual-Identity Philanthropy

### WEALTHY DONORS PIVOT TOWARD DOMESTIC EDUCATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EQUITY

A profound evolution is occurring in the philanthropic habits of affluent Indian Americans, who are increasingly shifting their financial capital toward domestic civic challenges inside the United States. Historically focused on funding infrastructure, healthcare, and poverty alleviation projects within India, the diaspora's elite donors are systematically reorienting their charitable foundations to address local realities. Multi-million-dollar endowments are now being directed toward American public education systems, urban environmental equity initiatives, and localized food security networks. This strategic transformation in wealth allocation reflects a deeper, long-term commitment to the host nation, with donors recognizing that protecting and improving the local communities where their families live and work is a vital civic responsibility.

## U.S.-India Strategic Partnerships DIASPORA PROFESSIONALS DRIVE BILATERAL GREEN ENERGY AND TECH ALLIANCES

The Indian American community has solidified its position as the ultimate civic and professional bridge driving the critical bilateral alliance between Washington and New Delhi. Leveraging their high concentration in advanced industries, diaspora scientists, corporate executives, and policy experts are playing a central role in executing the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (ICET). This high-stakes framework focuses heavily on securing semiconductor supply chains, codeveloping advanced artificial intelligence, and building green energy defense infrastructures. Community chambers of commerce are actively keeping these bilateral pipelines moving forward, ensuring that political and economic shifts do not stall technology transfers, while positioning the diaspora as an indispensable asset to the national security and economic resilience of both nations.

## Prediction Markets & Legal Stakes

### DIGITAL FINANCE FRAMEWORKS ATTRACT INTENSE DIASPORA INVESTOR ATTENTION

Proposed regulatory updates from the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) regarding event contracts and prediction markets have drawn deep interest from Indian American tech innovators and retail investors. South Asian professionals are heavily concentrated across quantitative finance and decentralized web platforms, making the tightening of federal oversight on digital asset trading a priority issue for community financial groups. Legal forums and fintech panels are actively dissecting how these impending regulatory barriers will impact market liquidity, technological sandbox experimentation, and algorithmic trading structures. Leaders are advocating for balanced regulatory guardrails that successfully prevent market manipulation without inadvertently stifling the underlying software engineering that drives modern financial platforms.

## Intergenerational Political Shifts

### GEN Z AND MILLENNIAL MOBILIZATION REPROGRAMS DIASPORA ELECTORATE

The Indian American political landscape is experiencing an intense transformation as organizations like Indian American Impact aggressively mobilize U.S.-born Gen Z and Millennial voters ahead of upcoming legislative cycles. This younger cohort is diverging sharply from the more conservative, economy-first focus of their first-generation immigrant parents, shifting the community's collective platform toward progressive climate policy, voting rights protections, and civil liberties. Through sophisticated digital networking, campus chapters, and national legislative days on Capitol Hill, youth advocates are challenging the status quo. This intergenerational shift is not only changing how the diaspora funds political campaigns but is also accelerating the rise of young South Asian candidates running for local, state, and mayoral offices, ultimately ensuring that the community's voice is no longer viewed as a predictable political monolith.

## Safeguarding Legitimate Mobility Channels WASHINGTON AND NEW DELHI COOPERATE TO PROTECT PROFESSIONAL VISAS

In response to the intensifying enforcement climate, bilateral diplomatic dialogues between Washington and New Delhi have focused entirely on decoupling illegal immigration from legitimate professional pathways. Federal authorities are working alongside Indian counterparts to aggressively suppress unlawful travel networks while ensuring that vital professional pipelines—including H-1B, L-1, and O-1 specialty visas—remain fully protected and highly accessible. Both governments acknowledge that maintaining a seamless, lawful exchange of high-tech talent is essential for mutual economic security. Legal clinics and diaspora chambers of commerce are rapidly amplifying their informational campaigns to educate prospective migrants, ensuring that the necessary crackdown on border infractions does not accidentally throttle or disrupt the legal mobility of engineers, scientists, and corporate managers.

## Tech Startup Dominance & Capital Control

### IMMIGRANT FOUNDERS SHIFT FROM TECH EMPLOYEES TO VENTURE CAPITALISTS

Data analyzing American innovation indicates that nearly 60% of billion-dollar technology startups in the United States feature at least one immigrant founder, with an overwhelmingly high proportion originating from the Indian diaspora. However, the true community conversation has shifted from celebrating these founding engineers to tracking their transition into the upper echelons of venture capital and asset management. Prominent South Asian tech executives are actively leveraging their accumulated wealth to establish independent venture firms, creating powerful, closed-loop ecosystems of capital. This systemic shift from workforce professional to capital allocator is fundamentally altering the trajectory of American tech investment, ensuring that diaspora-led funding plays a decisive role in choosing which next-generation computing, clean-energy, and biotech firms receive foundational backing.

## The AI Professional Pivot CORPORATE RESTRUCTURING FORCES HIGH-SKILL WORKFORCE RE-TRAINING

The massive, rapid integration of generative artificial intelligence across corporate America has sparked an unprecedented professional pivot within the Indian American technology workforce. As traditional software development and middle-tier data architecture roles face structural displacement or widespread corporate layoffs, thousands of engineers are being forced to completely upskill in real time. Community professional bodies and advanced tech networks are rolling out massive, localized retraining initiatives focused heavily on machine learning infrastructure, AI safety compliance, and neural network design. This proactive survival strategy aims to ensure that South Asian IT professionals, who form the bedrock of the American technology industry, shift smoothly from legacy software maintenance to leading the next wave of automation architecture.

## The "Documented Dreamers" Legal Battles AGING-OUT CRISIS INTENSIFIES ADVOCACY FOR HIGH-SKILLED VISA CHILDREN

The agonizing legal limbo faced by "Documented Dreamers"—the children of long-term H-1B visa holders who face deportation upon turning 21 due to massive green card backlogs—has sparked intense legal and legislative counter-actions. Community coalitions are organizing large-scale legal advocacy networks to push for executive protections and legislative carve-outs that would freeze dependency status during the permanent residency application process. Without immediate federal intervention, thousands of American-raised, highly educated South Asian youths face forced self-deportation to a country they barely remember.

# 250 Years, and the Immigrant Question

*As the nation marks its Semiquincentennial, the oldest American debate is still on the table — and our community has a stake in how it is answered.*

This weekend, the United States turns 250. Across the country, and across our own neighborhoods in Queens, Long Island, Edison and Fremont, families will gather for fireworks and barbecues, many of them first- and second-generation Americans celebrating a

country their parents chose. It is worth

pausing, amid the festivities, to consider what this anniversary actually commemorates: not the completion of a project, but the endurance of an argument. From its first days, America has debated who belongs, who may come, and on what terms. That debate is as old as the republic itself, and it has never been settled — not in 1776, not in 1926, and not now.

For South Asian Americans, that history is personal. In 1923, the Supreme Court told Bhagat Singh Thind, a U.S. Army veteran, that he was ineligible for citizenship. In 1946, the Luce-Celler Act cracked the door open. A decade later, Dalip Singh Saund of California became the first Asian American elected to Congress. And in 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Act opened the pathway through which most of our readers, or their parents, arrived. The arc from exclusion to a community of more than five million Indian Americans — among the most educated and economically productive in the nation — is one of the great American stories of the last hundred years. It belongs in any honest telling of the 250.

But an honest telling also requires acknowledging that the immigration debate now underway is a legitimate one, with serious people on both sides. Those who argue for tighter controls raise concerns that deserve engagement rather than dismissal: the integrity of visa programs that have, at times, been abused; the effect of large-scale labor migration on American wages; the simple proposition that a sovereign nation is entitled to decide who enters it and enforce that decision. These are not fringe positions. They are held by a substantial share of the American electorate, including many voters within our own community who came here legally, waited their turn, and believe the rules should mean something.

Those who argue for a more open

system raise points that are equally grounded: that America's scientific, medical and technological leadership has been built in significant part by people born elsewhere; that skilled immigrants are more often job creators than job takers; that decades-long green card queues punish precisely the people who followed every rule; and that a country competing with the world for talent cannot afford to make itself the hardest destination to reach. These, too, are serious arguments, backed by data and by the visible record of American industry.

The temptation, in a polarized moment, is to treat one side as patriotic and the other as hostile. History counsels against it. The same country that passed the exclusion laws also repealed them. The same political system that shut the door on Thind later placed Saund in Congress and, in time, children of Indian immigrants in governors' mansions, federal courts and Cabinet rooms. American immigration policy has always moved through contest and correction, and it has been at its best when the argument was conducted with facts on the table and respect across it.

So this Fourth of July, our counsel to readers is neither alarm nor complacency. It is participation. Read the proposed rules and comment on them. Attend the town halls. Support the institutions — on whichever side of the debate you find persuasive — that argue with evidence rather than invective. Vote, in primaries as well as general elections, and encourage your children to see public service as a natural inheritance rather than an exception. The Semiquincentennial does not ask us to agree on immigration policy. It asks us to keep faith with the process by which free people settle their disagreements.

Two hundred and fifty years in, the immigrant question remains open. That is not a failure of the American experiment. It is the experiment. And the fact that this community — once barred from citizenship altogether — now sits at the table where the question is argued is itself the strongest evidence that the experiment is working. May it endure another 250.

By Sharanjit 'Sunny' Thind

precisely the people who followed every

By Sharanjit 'Sunny' Thind

# 99% Done Is Not Done

**The trade deal is closer than it has ever been. The last mile is where the details live - and where deals have died before.**

Speaking at the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum this week, Ambassador Sergio Gor offered the most optimistic assessment yet of the bilateral trade agreement: the deal is in its "final steps," he said, with just one percent of the negotiations left to complete. After a year and a half of talks - and after the tariff turbulence of 2025 that at one point pushed duties on Indian goods to punishing levels - that is genuinely welcome news. It is also, we would gently note, not the same thing as a signed agreement.

Consider how much has already been announced, and how much remains unfinished beneath the announcements. In February, President Trump and Prime Minister Modi unveiled a framework for an interim agreement: Washington removed the additional 25 percent tariff tied to

Russian oil

purchases, lowered the reciprocal rate to 18 percent, and secured Indian commitments to open its market to American industrial and agricultural goods and to purchase some \$500 billion in U.S. energy, aircraft and technology products over five years. Days later, the Supreme Court struck down the legal mechanism underpinning the reciprocal tariff regime itself, forcing the administration to rebuild its tariff structure under different statutory authority. The framework survived; the fine print has been under negotiation ever since, through chief-negotiator talks in New Delhi in early June and ministerial meetings between Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal.

Now come the deadlines that give this month its urgency. A temporary tariff arrangement expires on July 24, and both governments would plainly prefer to have the first phase of the agreement concluded before it lapses. At the same time - and this is the part the celebratory statements tend to omit - the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative holds hearings on July 7 in its Section 301 investigation, under which it has proposed tariffs of 12.5 percent on more than fifty countries, India among them, over alleged failures to bar goods produced with forced labor. It is

entirely possible for the trade deal to close and for a new tariff to arrive through the side door weeks later. One hand of American trade policy is shaking on the deal; the other is still holding a docket.

For our readers - importers in New Jersey, diamond and textile buyers on 47th Street, IT services firms with delivery centers in both countries, and the small exporters who ship spices, garments and handicrafts through JFK and Newark - the practical advice is caution against planning around a deal that is not yet executed. The last one percent of any negotiation is never the easy one percent. It is where agriculture sits, where digital trade rules and data localization sit, where intellectual property and pharmaceutical patents sit. India protected its pulses and its farmers in the February framework; the

United States is still pressing on medical devices, ICT licensing and dairy. These are the issues on which Indian governments have fallen and American industries have lobbied for decades. They did not become simple because a summit communiqué said the parties were close.

None of this is a counsel of pessimism. The trajectory is real, and it matters. Bilateral trade crossed \$140 billion last fiscal year, making the United States India's largest export market, and the tariff differential the framework creates - with Indian goods facing lower rates than Chinese, Vietnamese or Bangladeshi competitors - is a structural advantage our community's businesses should be positioned to use the moment it is locked in. If the first phase is executed this month, it will be the most consequential commercial agreement between the two countries in their history, and this newspaper will say so plainly. But the responsible posture, for now, is the one any good businessperson takes into a closing: the deal is done when the ink is dry. Watch July 7. Watch July 24. Read the annexes when they are published, not the press releases when they are issued. Ninety-nine percent is a remarkable achievement after eighteen difficult months - and it is still, as every negotiator on both sides of this table knows, not one hundred.

The South Asian Insider  
**INSIDER**  
Voice of South Asian Community

ISSN No. 1554 06X

By TSAI Editorial Board

(Members of The South Asian Insider Weekly's Editorial Board are experienced and respected journalists, who offer reasoned opinions based on hard facts, to encourage informed/constructive debate about the issues facing South Asian community in the United States.)

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# When Sikhs debate beadbi, what is defining it theologically — Sikhi or Sharia?



Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann is accused by his opponents of beadbi (sacrilege), charges he vehemently denies.

Separately, arguments are also being drawn in favour of and against the new Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar legislation, the Punjab state law enacted to severely penalise acts of beadbi against Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the living Guru of the Sikhs.

But this piece is not getting into any of that. It is the theology of beadbi that has attracted my attention.

## THE VOCABULARY IS SHIFTING, AND NOBODY ANNOUNCED IT

Over the past quarter-century, a consequential set of changes has been introduced into Sikh parlance by a particular school of thought.

Most of these changes arrived without announcement, debate, or sanction.

They spread through social media, WhatsApp forwards, and urban gurdwara culture, and by the time anyone noticed, they had already acquired the force of convention.

Many of these shifts share a common direction: away from the original Indic/Punjabi and toward something that sits more comfortably in a different theological universe altogether.

That observation is worth holding in mind as we go through them one by one.

Consider the names of the Gurus. A section has done away with the word Dev when referring to Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Angad Dev, and Guru Arjan Dev, replacing it with Sahib.

This is not a matter of Sahib being a lesser word. It carries its own elevated meaning and appears across Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) with deep divine significance.

The concern is different.

Dev in Gurbani carries a specific, luminous meaning of its own.

Guru Arjan Dev, in Raag Gauri (209), describes the infinite Prabhu as the illuminating Dev:

“O (Illuminating) Dev! Through your grace, the True Guru became merciful unto me, and I now remain absorbed in unshakeable equipoise.”

This is not incidental usage. Dev here is a theological descriptor, the radiant, luminous divine presence. Dev is rooted in the civilisational soil from which Sikhi grew.

When it is replaced on purpose and strategically with Sahib in the Gurus’ names, the direction of travel deserves to be named.

The shift, though unwarranted, is now prevalent in cities like Delhi, where that specific school of thought has found an audience. It has fortunately not become entrenched in Punjab.

## PANNA BECOMES ANG

A parallel switch has happened with how we refer to the sacred pages of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

In the digitised version of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Darpan by the late Professor Sahib Singh (1892-1977), one of the most authoritative scholars and tikakaar (exegetes) of Gurbani, the word used for a page is Panna. That was the established, organic Punjabi expression for what every reader understood as a page of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

Over the past quarter-century and more, Panna has been replaced in common usage by Ang, meaning limb of the body. How exactly this shift came about is not

entirely clear. Whether it emerged from a formal scholarly or institutional process, or spread through devotional practice and gradually took hold, is a question that deserves honest examination. The sentiment behind it, that the SGGS pages are not merely paper but a living presence, is understandable.

What merits reflection is how a word embedded in the usage of a scholar of Professor Sahib Singh’s stature came to be set aside, and what that tells us about how revisionism enters Sikh vocabulary and then hardens into assumption.

## NEO-PANTHAK SCHOLARS AND THE HIND DI CHADAR CONTROVERSY

Then came a more charged episode in the age of social media.

A handful of “neo-Panthak” scholars, mostly originating in the West, began cherry-picking lines from the works of poets in the court of Guru Gobind Singh to float a specific narrative about Guru Tegh Bahadur. Their central claim: he was not “Hind Di Chadar”, the shield of Hind, but “Srisht Ki Chadar”, the shield of all creation.

The switch went viral on reels. Its reach was so overwhelming that it influenced even careful readers, people like me who would not ordinarily accept any claim on face value.

The argument had an apparent intellectual mould.

Calling Guru Tegh Bahadur Hind Di Chadar was, these scholars suggested, a geographical reduction of a universal sacrifice. Srisht, the whole of creation, was presented as the grander, more accurate frame.

This narrative captured the community’s



imagination. Critical thinking, once quietened by the force of the viral moment, eventually reasserted itself in some quarters. And what it found, when reading Kavi Sainapati's Sri Gur Sobha in its entirety, rather than in fragments, was something the cherry-picked version had obscured.

The same poet who is cited for the Srisht framing also wrote this, with a clear historical perspective:

"Then appeared Guru Tegh Bahadur on the firmament..."

"Who sheltered the whole creation with his grace..."

"He upheld the right to religious freedom and deeds..."

"Which immortalised his saga in the age of Kalyuga..."

"His sacrifice came to be praised throughout the world..."

"As he had safeguarded religious freedom all over..."

"His deed came to be hailed in the three worlds..."

"As the Divine Lord had stood by the Divine Guru..."

"The right to put Tilak, wear Janeu and sit in religious congregation..."

"Remained in practice permanently with Divine Guru's grace..."

"As he departed for heavenly abode in the cause of religion..."

"His successor came to be called Guru Gobind Singh."

Tilak and Janeu, specifically Hindu religious markers that came under existential threat during Aurangzeb's rule. The historical Hind in Hind Di Chadar, therefore, is not a reductionist geography. It is the precise, located historical reality in which Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom took place, a reality the poet Sainapati himself contextualises in the specific religious customs that were under assault.

The neo-Panthak spin abstracted away the very specificity that gives martyrdom its context. One must ask what purpose that abstraction serves, and whose reading of Sikh history it most conveniently accommodates.

The irony is layered.

The community's vocabulary for its own history was being revised, and dissent from the revision was labelled irreverence online by Sikh trolls.

#### THE SIGN IN SOUTHALL, THE WOMAN IN PUNJAB, AND THE SOCKS

I saw a sign inside a gurdwara in Southall, London that instructs the sangat to receive karah prashad from a seated sewadar and consume it while sitting.

In many historical gurdwaras across Punjab and even elsewhere, prashad is received while walking out of the sanctum. Both traditions are practised with sincerity. Both claim reverence. In the Southall gurdwara, the Punjab tradition, followed with complete devotion, could technically become irreverence or even beadbi.

Then there is the case reported from early 2025: a woman was detained in Punjab

on charges of alleged beadbi inside a gurdwara.

Among the details cited was that she had entered the sacred hall with unwashed feet and dirty socks. She was, the report noted, suffering from mental illness.

The language used around her was the language of moral violation. The socks became evidence of transgression.

Now consider this: the tabla's drumheads are stretched animal skin. Gut strings have been used in traditional stringed instruments in kirtan. Leather inside the sanctum, in musical form, has never attracted the same scrutiny as fabric on the feet of a mentally unwell woman.

The application of beadbi follows no consistent theological logic. It follows social hierarchy, the distribution of institutional power, and maybe politics as well.

It is also worth asking whether the growing preoccupation with bodily purity at the threshold of a holy place, the feet, the covering, the cleanliness of approach, draws from Sikhi's own spiritual tradition or from Sharia's framework of ritual purity, which places precisely these concerns at the centre of its devotional life.

#### WHAT GURBANI ACTUALLY SAYS ABOUT HONOUR AND DISHONOUR

Search Sri Guru Granth Sahib for beadbi as contemporary religious and political discourse deploys it, and something different surfaces.

The Bani offers precise, luminous words, such as maan (honour), apmaan (dishonour), patt (dignity), apatt (disgrace), napak (impurity), ninda (slander), khuari (wretchedness). These point inward, toward conduct, character, and relationship with the Divine.

Guru Arjan Dev writes in Sri Guru Granth Sahib (292):

"Pain and pleasure, honour and dishonour, all are merely narratives created in the play of existence. The Creator observes this play, and when it ends, only the One remains."

Kabir, whose voice the Gurus chose to preserve, addresses this directly (SGGS/324):

"When I realised the One permeates all, why should I care for society's opinions? I have abandoned concern for worldly honour."

Guru Amardas identifies the truly disgraced not by what they wear on their feet or how they name a sacred page, but by the company they keep and the corruption they accommodate (SGGS/1417).

That standard, the one the Bani actually sets, is the one contemporary beadbi discourse most consistently passes over.

#### THE THEOLOGY THAT THE LAW CANNOT REPLACE

Punjab's new anti-sacrilege legislation may carry genuine feeling behind it. The Bargari desecrations of 2015 and a wave of sacrilegious incidents in the past few years did leave wounds.

The theological questions this piece has been circling, though, require a reckoning

of a different order.

Sections of the community change Dev to Sahib without debate, impose Sahib as a suffix on any city, any town or village in Punjab that carries the Gurus' footprint, go viral with a revision of Hind Di Chadar, and have a mentally ill woman detained for her socks. Those sections may have an ideological crisis on their hands, one that tilts toward Sharia.

Gurbani is a living engagement with truth that has survived Mughal, Afghan and

colonial persecution, and the Partition. The woman who stumbled into a gurdwara in confusion did not diminish that truth. The accumulated manipulations of Sikh theological language, introduced incrementally over decades, deserve far more urgent scrutiny than her socks ever did.

The Guru's light needs us to read the Bani with the same rigour political and religious leaders bring to the press releases and the spin doctors to the reels.

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# Why India Should Be Very, Very Alarmed About China's Teesta Move In Bangladesh



It looks like a done deal. Responding to questions on China providing assistance to Bangladesh on the Teesta River project, its Foreign Ministry spokesperson said, with perfect equanimity, that "China-Bangladesh cooperation does not target any third party and should be free from third-party influence". That's nice. One would like to see what Beijing's reaction would have been if the US or Japan played footsie in a project along the Mekong River or the Red river. This when China has 41 hydropower dams, two multi-purpose dams and 25 irrigation dams in its section of just one of those rivers, and still bristles even if an international bank is involved in any project in neighbouring countries. So, no, that lofty statement doesn't wash.

## The Fine Print

A reasonable degree of alarm was generated as Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rehman chose to visit China for his first visit abroad in this capacity. That's usually a privilege reserved for India, but times change, and processes too with it. But then came strong suspicions as the 'Joint Communiqué' issued during the visit declared that China will "provide support and help within its capacity to the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project (TRCMRP)", together with experts from Bangladesh. Beijing is no open-handed generous power. That phrase, 'within its capacity', will probably mean that it will rope in an international bank to fund the project, leaving the Bangladesh government to mull over the bills. Add to that the fact that the firm involved in the project is PowerChina, a behemoth that works in almost every Asian country and is also part of the strategic works with the People's Liberation Army, and comes directly under SASAC (State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council). That's the Chinese communist party we're talking about.

**The Chinese Are There Anyway**  
Diplomatic positioning notwithstanding,

Beijing knows very well that the project has direct security implications for India. China had been angling for the project for years but was thwarted by the Hasina government's caution in getting Beijing too involved in the country in a project that's virtually next to a sensitive area. The river itself runs parallel to the India-Bangladesh border, thus placing the project about 10-20 km of the border, and a little further on to the highly sensitive Siliguri corridor. True, Sheikh Hasina did allow a contract with the Chinese in September 2016, when the Bangladesh Water Development Board entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Powerchina (Power Construction Corporation of China) to carry out a technical study to better manage the Teesta for the benefit of northern Bangladesh's greater Rangpur region. That involved dredging the river to prevent severe flooding during the monsoons and equally store water when needed. Though the feasibility studies and accompanying data was completed, the effort came to nothing as the then Foreign Secretary, Harsh Vardhan Shringla, hurried to Dhaka to nip that in the bud. Hasina raised the issue several times with Delhi, but attempts to address it were thwarted by the tempestuous Chief Minister Mamta Bannerjee, who opposed it tooth and nail. While all this was going on, the Chinese were steadily entrenching themselves in the Rangpur division in various small businesses, including hotels and tourism, which services a large Chinese population involved in construction efforts in the district. This includes the SASEC Road Connectivity Project-II, improvement of the Elenga-Hatikamrul-Rangpur Road to a 4-Lane Highway, construction of a bridge over Teesta in Gaibandha, Barapukuria Coal Mine, Barapukuria Coal Fired Thermal Power Station, and the construction of Saidpur Simple Cycle (HSD based) Power Plant Project. Recently, the Chinese Ambassador Li was also visiting the Uttara Export Processing Zone in

Nilphamari of Rangpur division. That's rather a lot of Chinese presence in a very sensitive area. Add to that the Yunus government inviting China to revive a World War 2-era air base in Lalmonirhat, again near the border, and you have a troublesome situation. All that seemed to have been rolled back as a new and young Prime Minister, Tarique Rehman, arrived like a breath of fresh air.

## Back To Square One?

Are we back to square one? Perhaps not. Tarique Rehman has his share of troubles. The Jamaat-e-Islami is again on the warpath, with planned extended agitations to apparently push 'reform' even while it warns of civil war if matters are not addressed. The party's heady success in recent elections - after decades of being on the sidelines - has clearly left it wanting more. This comes alongside an increase in extremist group activity, even as police surveillance over such malign activity seems to have reduced. This occurs alongside the Jamaat steadily filling the vacuum left by purges and the exit of alleged Awami League sympathisers in local governments and upwards. There is again a sense of fear in the country, which has been erased as the BNP took power.

In tandem is the strong, across-the-board ingress of the Pakistanis, with a delegation to increase trade just having left the country this week. Rawalpindi has, in the meanwhile, reportedly proposed a 'Joint Military Command' that comes alongside offers of 16-48 JF-17 Block III fighters - together with a simulator already delivered two months ago. That's the first piece of Pakistani military equipment to enter the country since 1971. Remember, all this is being built with the Chengdu Aircraft Cooperation. There is a trilateral operation at work.

## The Very Real Problem Of Delay

There is also the very real problem of water-sharing and its attendant dangers. In all, 54 rivers flow between India and Bangladesh and sharing of river waters has been a key bilateral issue. Teesta has been hanging at least since 2010, or even before. In 2011, during the United Progressive Alliance-II government, India and Bangladesh were close to signing an agreement, but again Chief Minister Banerjee walked out of the deal. In 2024, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra approached Bangladesh with an offer of \$1 billion in assistance to dredge and manage the Teesta. But by then, the clearly hostile Mohammad Yunus was parachuted into the country, who promptly invited the Chinese again.

## Tarique And His Troubles

As of now, it is important to recognise that Prime Minister Rahman has difficult issues on all sides. In addition to having the Jamiat and pro-China groups in his government, the party itself is riven by factionalism, and by entrenched anti-India elements such as Dr Zahed ur Rahman, advisor to his government, among others. Meanwhile, Water Resources Minister Md Shahiduddin Chowdhury Anee has already announced that the government would begin work on the Teesta project in the ongoing fiscal year. After all, feasibility studies have already been done by China. Meanwhile, it is entirely possible that the whole Teesta threat is also a ploy to get a favourable water-sharing pact for Ganges. That agreement completes 30 years in December 2026, and is likely to be a huge political litmus test. The BNP had earlier announced that ties with India would 'depend' on the treaty going through. All that means there is rather a lot riding on the shoulders of the leaders of both countries.

## What India Should Do Now

India has signalled that it wants the best of ties with its neighbour, with a highly-placed political appointee being ambassador. While that is commendable at a time of serious difficulties, it is far from enough. A calculated policy at state level, of pushing back 'Bangladeshis', is hardly likely to help in mending the relationship.

At times, it does seem that Delhi's right hand has no control over its left. Meanwhile, there is an even more serious issue: that of reduced water flow in the Ganges, driven by climate pressures. Upstream water diversions and other factors have led to increased salinity, degrading the potential of river-based fisheries. It might be time to take Bangladesh experts on board to study the Ganges and its myriad issues and strike a partnership to get the best deal for the mighty river and its subsystems, for everyone's sake.

At the same time, offer a generous package for the Teesta project. It's never too late. Especially when Delhi does have a reputation of giving generously - even if at snail's pace - rather than demanding a pound of flesh in debt later. Dhaka is well aware of Chinese practices, and it is wary of extending Pakistani influence, especially when Islamabad has nothing to give. A little Indian generosity, well in time, could go a long way. In fact, there really is no choice at all. Even a watered down 'Monroe doctrine' of its own will require some really heavy lifting, and a lot of grace and generosity. That's what is in terribly short supply in a world at war. It just might do the trick.

# Rebuttal to "Sifting Out Truth from Lies, Myths

Brig (retd) Dr Raashid Wali Janjua's letter suffers from the very same selective amnesia he accuses India of. An unbiased examination of the facts reveals that several of his contentions are historically incomplete and legally imprecise. The author invokes the closure of the Central Bari Doab and Depalpur canals in 1948 as evidence of India's predatory intent. He omits the essential context: these canals drew water from headworks that lay entirely within Indian Territory after Partition, and the supplies were interrupted during an extraordinarily complex process of partition of India. The matter was swiftly resolved through the Inter-Dominion Agreement of May 4, 1948, in which Pakistan itself acknowledged India's sovereign rights over the headworks and agreed to pay seigniorage charges for continued water use. Far from being an act of malice, this is evidence of India's intent to resolve every issue amicably. The author asserts that IWT has served Pakistan's water interests well, yet simultaneously and paradoxically accuses India of "continual attempts at filching" Pakistan's water. The fact is that the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960, signed after nearly a decade of negotiations, is one of the most generous trans boundary water treaties

in the world from the lower riparian's perspective. India not only relinquished its rights to approximately 80 per cent of the total Indus system waters but also paid an amount of approximately £62 million (approximately \$227.5 billion in present value) as compensation for replacement works in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir to secure use of waters which were already hers. No comparable concession by an upper riparian exists in modern water treaty history. Janjua correctly notes that India is permitted cumulative storage of only 3.6 MAF on the Western Rivers, and that run-of-river hydroelectric projects must not alter the downstream flow regime. This is precisely India's position as well. The dispute fundamentally revolves around Pakistan's interpretation of "alteration of the downstream flow regime". Pakistan has been deploying this as an objection against every hydroelectric project India has sought to construct on the Western Rivers, regardless of project size or design. The pattern is revealing. Uri II, a project with zero pondage, was objected to. Lower Kalnai attracted objections despite the difference between India's designed pondage and Pakistan's computed figure being a matter of decimal fractions. In both cases, the factual basis for objection was negligible

to the point of being technical pretext rather than substantive concern. Pakistan has further raised objections to the Kishanganga and Ratle hydroelectric projects, both legitimate run-of-river projects fully consistent with the Treaty's provisions, by asking the World Bank to appoint a Court of Arbitration, thereby bypassing the Neutral Expert mechanism provided under the Treaty. India's objection to the Court proceedings is not an attempt to escape accountability; it is a principled position that Treaty-mandated dispute resolution mechanisms must be fully exhausted before resorting to arbitration, as expressly required under Article IX of the IWT itself. Pakistan's unilateral invocation of the Court of Arbitration, bypassing the sequential dispute resolution ladder, is itself a breach of Treaty obligations. India issued a notice in January 2023 seeking modification of the IWT under Article XII(3), citing Pakistan's persistent obstruction of Treaty mechanisms and unilateral resort to external arbitration as conduct incompatible with the spirit of the Treaty. This is not a unilateral abrogation but a legally available remedy. The Treaty requires renegotiation to reflect six decades of changed circumstances, including

technical advancements, India's own developmental needs on the Western Rivers, and Pakistan's bad-faith use of dispute resolution provisions. India is exercising a Treaty right, not violating one. The Egypt-Ethiopia and Syria-Iraq comparisons actually undercut Janjua's argument rather than supporting it. In those cases, there are no legally binding bilateral treaties at all, which is precisely why those lower riparians are vulnerable. Pakistan, by contrast, had a detailed, legally binding Treaty with India, which was grossly used as a political tool and not for development. Responsible commentary on a Treaty of this complexity must rise above the narrative of predators and prey. The Indus Waters Treaty had endured for over six decades because of the generous attitude of India. India's concerns reflect a legitimate recognition of changed circumstances, and that the Treaty cannot indefinitely be wielded as a political instrument to obstruct India's lawful utilisation of its own river waters. Such inflammatory rhetoric by Pakistan clearly bring out its intent and justifies India's stance.

By Dr. Pradeep Kumar Saxena

## Riding Out Hormuz

When the Strait of Hormuz closed in February-end, Gol made it a priority that Indian citizens, especially the most vulnerable, be protected from unprecedented supply and price disruptions.

That move has held through almost 4 months later. A country importing more than 85% of its crude, the argument ran, could not survive closure of Hormuz through which more than 20-30% of the world's hydrocarbons move. Today, stocks are full, pumps are open, and the Indian consumer has paid less for energy through this crisis than any other consumer in the world. Nearly 60% of India's LPG consumption used to be supplied from West Asia. Much of that supply, almost overnight, dropped to zero. On the supply side, LPG Control Order was passed on March 8, which mandated all refineries to divert all their C3-C4 carbon streams to maximise LPG production. Refineries that had never made cooking gas were reconfigured

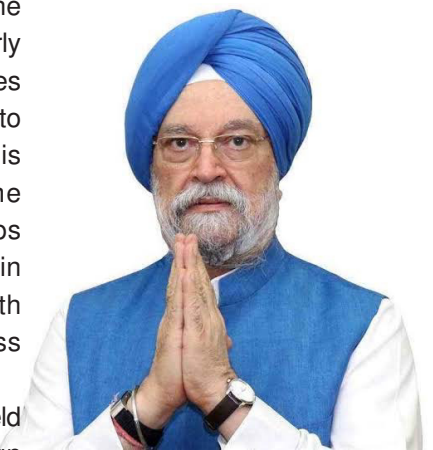
within a few days, and production was raised from 35 TMT a day to 54 TMT a day.

At the peak of war, when no vessel was moving out of Hormuz, over 12 Indian LPG vessels were quietly moved out of the strait without any toll payment, the largest number for any country. Cargoes were secured and ship-to-ship transfers were done from Yanbu and Fujairah ports down the Red Sea route. Vessels were sent inside Hormuz to get new cargoes, and fresh supply lines were opened with several countries like Algeria, Japan and Canada. Every producer India had ever dealt with, within the Gulf and outside it, stood with it. But demand also had to be prioritised. Digital authentication code was made mandatory to prevent diversion of cooking gas by black marketers. A 25-day and 45-day limit was imposed, so that every citizen got cylinders without anyone able to hoard them. As commercial cylinders are not regulated and any one

buyer could have bought entire supplies available at once, it was routed through industry associations and state civil supplies departments. Industry was moved onto piped natural gas, large kitchens and establishments encouraged to fall back on other fuels wherever possible, and household piped gas and CNG were kept in the 'no-cut' category. Gol came together to enable a shift to piped gas connections through faster municipal permissions. Between February and June, international benchmark for cooking gas, Saudi CP, rose by nearly 50%. But a cylinder that would cost more than ₹1,600 at import-linked rate still reaches an Ujjwala home at ₹642. Gol absorbs roughly ₹900 loss on each Ujjwala cylinder, and close to ₹600 on every cylinder going to every other household. So, every Indian family today pays much less for their cooking gas than households in other countries. A bold central excise cut of ₹10 a litre in March

absorbed substantial part of the price shock, as crude had nearly doubled and PSU oil companies absorbed daily losses running to over ₹5-10 billion through this quarter. Across those same months, petrol at US pumps rose by more than 40%, and in Britain by close to 20%, with double-digit increases across much of Europe.

The rise in Indian pumps was held to around 7%. India's foreign reserves stand at near \$690 billion, down only modestly from the all-time high of \$728.49 billion recorded in the very week the conflict began, with the economy growing at 7.8% last quarter. As for oil reserves, energy locked underground earns nothing and costs a great deal to hold. So, it's run through a system of import terminals, depots, pipelines, refineries and storages spread across the country. India today has 24 refineries, more than 47,000 km of oil and gas pipelines, and over 100,000 petrol pumps that serve nearly 80 million people every day. Almost



4 months into the largest energy disruption of our times, India did not have to take any emergency rationing measures. This was possible only because the ground had been prepared in the years before. The widening of India's crude basket from 27 countries to 41, the doubling of import terminals, and pipelines and reserves built across a decade were not abstractions when Hormuz closed. They were the very reasons the lights stayed on.

Hardeep Singh Puri  
Ministry for Petroleum and  
Natural Gas

# The Coaching Apocalypse: Do we really need them?



In Kota, young people hang from ceiling fans, consuming poison, jumping from hostel windows. Over hundreds of student suicides in the last decade in this single city alone—the suicide capital of competitive exam preparation. Sporadic leaks in the NEET exam in some places in 2024 and 2026, leading to re-NEET. Question papers reached coaching institutes. The National Testing Agency, supposed to be guarding India's most important exam, failed completely. The question is simple: do we really need coaching institutes?

## How We Got Here

Coaching institutes started as a solution. Schools weren't preparing students for competitive exams. Parents desperately sought help. The system worked. NEET toppers came from coaching. Results were visible. But something changed. Coaching is no longer a supplement. It is education. A student now does 6–7 hours of school, then 4–5 hours of coaching, then homework at midnight. This isn't education. This is turning children into exam-solving machines.

And like all machines optimised only for output, it became ruthless, negligent, and corrupt.

## The Real Problem

Coaching institutes profit from desperation. A middle-class family spends lakhs per year to prepare one child (fees, accommodation, travel). The poor cannot afford this. The rich don't need it. Coaching has made education more unequal, not less. Institutes are structurally incentivised to cheat. Legitimate teaching takes time. Leaked exam papers guarantee toppers. Why would they resist? Their entire business depends on producing visible

results.

The Kota suicides tell us something crucial: the system creates psychological pressure that becomes unbearable. A 17-year-old believes their entire future depends on one exam, taken on one day. The stress is intentional—

anxiety fills coaching seats. Fear sells courses. Thirty-six students died in Kota in 2023 alone. The city has become infamous for young bodies found hanging in hostel rooms. Yet coaching continues to expand. The deaths are treated as individual tragedies, not systemic failures.

Simple Solutions That Actually Work Instead of fixing coaching, we should fix the exams that created coaching.

## Option 1: Multiple Ways to Enter University

Stop relying on a single NEET or JEE. Let universities choose their own entry methods. Some can use board exam scores + interviews. Others can use aptitude tests. Some can use a combination. This removes the pressure cooker and naturally kills the coaching industry.

## Option 2: Continuous Assessments

Instead of one exam, students take 10–12 tests throughout the year. Success becomes about learning consistently, not acing one day. Coaching becomes unnecessary because there's no single test to "crack."

## Option 3: Skill-Based Entry

Evaluate students on what they can actually do—problem-solving, creativity, communication, research—not multiple-choice pattern recognition. Medical schools could look at lab work and case studies, not just theory exams.

## Option 4: University Autonomy

Let institutions compete to attract students. Some might focus on high scorers, others on potential and creativity. This diversity ends the monopoly of coaching. Different universities would have different criteria, making coaching irrelevant.

## Option 5: Portfolio-Based Selection

Students build portfolios—school projects, community work, research, competitions—that universities evaluate. This rewards real learning, not exam coaching.

Most developed countries use these methods. They have lower stress, better student selection, and fewer failures.

## Option 6: One Aptitude Exam for All (The CAT Model)

Here's what could actually work: replace NEET and JEE with a single aptitude test—similar to CAT—that tests reasoning, logic, data interpretation, and verbal ability. Not subject knowledge. Not rote memorisation. Pure thinking ability. This one exam, administered once a year, would be the gateway to all universities and colleges. Medical, engineering, law, management—everyone takes the same test. What makes this different is that you cannot coach aptitude. You cannot memorise your way through logical reasoning or data interpretation. You either think or you don't.

Coaching institutes would collapse overnight because their entire business model depends on making students regurgitate subject content. An aptitude exam selects for actual intelligence and problem-solving capability—the traits that make real doctors, engineers, and leaders.

CAT has already proven this works. It produces people who build companies

and solve problems, not people who are good at taking exams. One test, nationwide, impossible to crack through coaching, fair to all. This is the nuclear option that kills coaching without needing regulation or oversight.

## What Must Happen Now

If we keep coaching, we must regulate it like schools:

Real fire safety inspections with penalties that hurt

Teacher qualification requirements

Maximum student-teacher ratio

Fixed, transparent fees

Unannounced audits with consequences

But honestly? Regulation won't work. Coaching institutes have proven they cannot be trusted with young people's safety or education.

## The Moral Core

A society that watches hundreds of students die by suicide in one city permits the national exam itself to be stolen—that society has lost its way.

Coaching institutes aren't the root problem. The exams are. NEET and JEE created a system where success depends on memorisation and speed, not understanding. Coaching institutes simply exploited that system brilliantly and ruthlessly.

They profit from broken dreams and parents' desperation. They charge enormous fees. They operate unsafe buildings. They push students toward suicide. And they do all this legally, because nobody has the political will to stop them.

## The Real Question

Do we need coaching institutes? No. We need to ask why we've built a system where 30–40 million teenagers feel they must spend their teenage years in pressure cookers, away from families, learning to fear rather than think.

That system isn't serving students. It's serving an industry worth thousands of crores.

## The Way Forward

The tragedies in Kota should be our wake-up call.

We can decentralise university entry. We can strengthen schools. We can create multiple pathways to higher education. We can evaluate students on skills, not just exam scores. Countries far poorer than ours have done this.

Or we can keep defending a system that kills our children—literally and psychologically—so that coaching institutes can earn profits.

The choice should be obvious.

It's time to ask: what are we really trying to achieve? If it's making sure the most capable students get into good universities, there are better ways. If it's making education accessible to all, coaching is the opposite.

Real reform means ending the stress of NEET and JEE. Everything else is just rearranging chairs on a sinking ship.

# How India And Japan Can Together Navigate US' Shifting Indo-Pacific Strategy



The debate surrounding the United States' decision to revert from "Indo-Pacific Command" to "Pacific Command" has generated considerable speculation. Some view it as signalling a diminished American commitment to the Indo-Pacific, while others dismiss it as little more than a bureaucratic adjustment.

Both interpretations miss the larger point.

The decision is perhaps best understood within the broader context of the United States' own search for strategic and national identity. President Donald Trump and the Make America Great Again movement have consistently sought to reconnect America with what they regard as the country's post-Second World War golden age—a period when the United States projected unparalleled military strength, economic confidence and global leadership. Other symbolic initiatives, including proposals to revive the title "Department of War" and restore historical military base names, reflect a wider effort to recover an earlier understanding of America's purpose in the world.

Whether one agrees with this project or not is secondary. Great powers periodically revisit their history in order to shape their future. America is doing so today.

Rather than becoming absorbed in debating the title of an American military command, India and Japan should draw a different conclusion. If Washington is redefining its strategic narrative, the time has come for the original architects of the Indo-Pacific idea to reaffirm and refresh their own. The modern Indo-Pacific concept did not originate in Washington.

It was articulated most powerfully by the late Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whose vision of the "confluence of the two seas" brought together the Indian and Pacific Oceans into a single strategic and civilizational space. Prime Minister Narendra Modi embraced and developed that vision, giving it practical expression through initiatives ranging from maritime cooperation to the Quad.

As the Indo-Pacific gained international prominence, however, its meaning gradually narrowed. Increasingly, it came to be understood primarily through the prism of military alliances, strategic competition and the challenge posed by China's rise. These issues remain important, but they were never intended to define the Indo-Pacific in its entirety.

The original vision was broader and deeper.

The Indo-Pacific is not simply

a geopolitical theatre. It is one of the world's oldest interconnected civilizational spaces. For over two millennia, the seas linking India, Southeast Asia, China and Japan carried not only goods but also ideas, religions, technologies, artistic traditions and systems of knowledge. Buddhism travelled from India across Asia. Hindu cultural influences shaped kingdoms throughout Southeast Asia. Chinese civilisation enriched the region through commerce, scholarship, innovation and maritime exchange. Together, these interactions created an enduring Asian community long before the emergence of modern nation states.

This shared heritage remains one of Asia's greatest strategic assets.

No meaningful civilizational conception of the Indo-Pacific can overlook China. Contemporary strategic differences are real and, in some cases, profound. They must be managed with clarity and realism. Yet China has also been an integral participant in the historical exchanges that shaped Asia for centuries. Recognising this heritage does not require overlooking present-day disagreements. Rather, it acknowledges that a durable regional order cannot be built solely around rivalry. Strategic

competition may persist, but it need not become the organising principle of the Indo-Pacific.

Today, both America and Europe are engaged in searching debates about their own civilizational identity. Questions of history, culture, national purpose and strategic direction increasingly shape both domestic politics and foreign policy. Such introspection is neither unusual nor undesirable. Great powers periodically redefine themselves.

India and Japan should undertake a similar exercise—but in a characteristically Asian way.

Rather than constructing a civilizational narrative based on exclusion, they should build one based on connection. The Indo-Pacific should be understood as a region linked by centuries of interaction and capable of accommodating diversity while respecting national sovereignty. Such an approach would restore Southeast Asia to its rightful place at the heart of the Indo-Pacific conversation—not as an arena of great-power competition, but as the historic bridge between the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

A renewed Indo-Pacific vision should therefore rest on multiple pillars. Security

cooperation will remain indispensable. Economic integration must continue. Technological collaboration will become increasingly important. But these should be reinforced by deeper cooperation in education, maritime heritage, cultural exchanges, Buddhist and historical networks, scientific research, digital connectivity and sustainable development. Civilization should not replace strategy; it should enrich it.

The ongoing visit of Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi to New Delhi offers an ideal opportunity to begin this conversation. While defence, technology and economic cooperation have rightly dominated the bilateral agenda, the two leaders should also consider how India and Japan can jointly restore the broader intellectual and civilizational foundations of the Indo-Pacific concept they did so much to shape.

The subsequent G20 Summit in Florida could provide an international platform for advancing this complementary vision. India and Japan need not distance themselves from the United States. On the contrary, they should continue working closely with Washington in promoting regional stability. But they should also ensure that the Indo-Pacific is not defined solely by American strategic vocabulary or by the changing priorities of successive administrations.

America will continue to redefine its place in the world according to its own history and political choices. That is both natural and inevitable. India and Japan should do the same. Their task, however, is not to recreate an earlier age but to shape a new one—an Indo-Pacific that is strategically secure, economically dynamic and civilizationally confident.

The debate over Pacific Command will eventually fade. The opportunity to renew the Indo-Pacific idea should not. The concept was born in Asia. Its next chapter should also be written in Asia.

# China's New AI Surveillance System Has A Chilling New Mission

China's sweeping new law on "ethnic unity", which takes effect on Wednesday, has raised fears among the country's minority groups that it will further erode their culture and rights. The law also allows Beijing to target people overseas, prompting concern in Taiwan and many other parts of the world, including India, which hosts the largest Tibetan community outside China. The move is seen as the latest tool in Beijing's arsenal to suppress its minorities and dissidents. This comes amid growing evidence that China is using advanced AI not only to target its current critics but also to predict who could become one in the future.

The Ethnic Unity and Progress Promotion legislation was approved by China's National People's Congress in Beijing in March, with the stated aim of creating a "shared" national identity among the country's officially recognised 56 ethnic groups. However, the main focus appears to be assimilating minorities into the culture of the majority Han Chinese. The law mandates that Mandarin be the language of instruction in schools and official communication. It also provides a legal basis for prosecuting parents or guardians who may instil what it describes as "detrimental" views in children.

## Fulfilling Xi's Vision

The new law cements President Xi Jinping's vision of a powerful China united by a single national identity. Under his rule, Beijing has already taken a harder line on dissent and protests, especially in Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, home to minority groups. In 2020, ethnic Mongolians in northern China staged rare protests against measures to reduce Mongolian-language instruction in favour of Mandarin. In Xinjiang, human rights groups have documented the detention of a million Uyghur Muslims in what Beijing calls "re-education" camps. In 2022, a UN report accused China of crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, including torture and forced sterilisation of Uyghurs. Beijing dismissed the report as "pure farce" and a tool to smear and slander China. In Tibet, Buddhists are not permitted to worship their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, who will turn 91 this week. Their monasteries are now controlled by the Chinese authorities, and children are reported to have been sent to state-run boarding schools to be educated predominantly in Mandarin and to inculcate Chinese culture.

Speaking in New Delhi, the head of the Tibetan government-in-exile, Penpa Tsering, condemned China's new law as "an instrument of forced assimilation, whose ultimate objective is the gradual erosion of Tibetan language, religion, culture and identity".

Beijing has defended the new legislation, which puts even foreign citizens' lives at risk. Under Article 63 of the law, people outside China can be held legally accountable for undermining "ethnic unity and progress or inciting ethnic separatism".

Beijing's Vice Justice Minister, Hu Weilie, said the law was "legitimate", "lawful" and "necessary". He said the overseas provision had been misinterpreted. However, Taiwan, the UN and the European Union remain unconvinced and have expressed deep concern. In Taipei, an official feared the new law could be used to prosecute the Taiwanese as well as Hong Kongers living in Taiwan who oppose unification. Australia, which has a large Chinese community, has also registered its concern with Beijing.

The Case Of Secret "Police Stations" Even without the new law, Beijing had been accused of targeting its dissidents in foreign countries through a network of shadow police stations. In May, a Chinese-origin American citizen, Lu Jianwang, was convicted in New York of helping run the first known secret police station in the US. The court found he operated the station in Manhattan's Chinatown in early 2022 for China's Ministry of Public Security (MPS). He was accused of targeting Chinese dissidents, including Xi Jie, a pro-Democracy activist who fled his country in 2013.

In recent months, France has dismantled nine clandestine police stations operated by Chinese nationals on behalf of their government, according to the French interior ministry. These stations were used to monitor the Chinese diaspora, track down government critics, and forcibly send them back to China. Early in June, two Chinese men were jailed in London for running "shadow police operations" on British soil. The court heard that they assisted in efforts to track down and forcibly return Hong Kong nationals living in Britain.

At least 100 such stations have been reported in more than 50 countries, with rights groups accusing China of

using the outposts to threaten and monitor Chinese nationals abroad as well as helping Beijing identify pro-democracy activists living in the US. China has denied that the outposts are police stations, saying they are "service stations" providing administrative services to nationals overseas.

## Finding Future Dissenters

In the 2022 Tom Cruise-starring Hollywood film *Minority Report*, police identify "criminals" for arrest before they have actually committed a murder. Little did the producers know that it would come close to reality, thanks to China's sustained efforts to achieve mastery in Artificial Intelligence. Leaked documents from a Chinese state-linked company have revealed that Beijing is now trying to develop technology to predict who might become a dissident.

Researchers at the US university Vanderbilt have recently found that the Chinese firm Geedge Networks is analysing vast amounts of data on individuals' daily habits, relationships, and browsing histories to predict who might say or do something critical of the government. The company already sells a commercial version of the Great Firewall, the surveillance and censorship software that China uses to control online activity. Geedge is a private company that operates in coordination with the Chinese government. It has already sold its surveillance software to Pakistan, Myanmar, Kazakhstan and Ethiopia. This "reflects longstanding concerns about covert access to personal data from Chinese telecommunications and digital infrastructure abroad", say Vanderbilt researchers.

There is no evidence that Geedge has mastered and deployed the predictive technology. One reason is export controls imposed by the US under President Biden. But Trump has relaxed those controls and recent developments suggest Beijing is working overtime to acquire the latest AI technology. Last week, another Chinese cybersecurity firm, Qihoo360, claimed it had built an AI system matching the capabilities of Anthropic's Mythos, the most powerful American AI technology. Mythos can uncover thousands of previously unknown bugs in software and exploit them. The White House has restricted its distribution amid fears of misuse by rivals and hackers.

**No Hiding From AI Surveillance** There is no doubt that China is keen

to deploy predictive behaviour surveillance against its citizens and will also export the technology to its friends, such as Pakistan. It is also true that the US and other powers are harvesting data to be used against their citizens, and one can't rule out their attempts at predictive surveillance. But Beijing is doing so on a different scale and with greater vigour. Early in June, Beijing hosted an international police and anti-terrorism technology expo to showcase its law-enforcement equipment. According to the South China Morning Post, a company at the expo, Lianxin Technology, said its AI-enabled cameras and psychological analysis use facial features to generate personality profiles. The company claims that if a person looks at the camera for 8 to 12 seconds, the system will generate a personality profile that includes emotional stability, health vulnerability, core motivations and the risk of committing a crime. It's not quite predictive technology yet, but some progress is evident.

Although China's security forces have been deploying facial recognition and other modern technologies for years, their use of AI-enabled technology serves as a warning to critics of the Chinese regime. The ethnic unity law will be enforced using these technologies. China's dissidents or critics have no hiding place from the state's surveillance net. The new law will certainly make the lives of Chinese dissidents or minorities more difficult. It will at least serve as a deterrent by exerting psychological pressure on them, even if Beijing is unable to secure their extradition. The new law also requires parents from the country's ethnic minorities to educate and guide their children to love the Chinese Communist Party. For Xi, the party is supreme and loyalty is non-negotiable. Two weeks ago, the country's top military decision-makers completed a course for senior officers, aimed at their ideological transformation and political rectification. Speaking at the launch of the two-month course in April, Xi said that joining the military required a firm embrace of Marxism and loyalty to the party's beliefs, organisation and cause. In an apparent attempt to clarify, a commentary in the country's official China Defence News warned that keeping the Chinese army "pure" is fundamental to its core mission. To maintain purity, the journal stressed, loyalty to the party must be "exclusive, absolute and unconditional."

# China is expanding influence in Myanmar, Bangladesh. India has a geography advantage

The recent visits of Myanmar President U Min Aung Hlaing to India and China, and Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman to China must be read together. They are not isolated diplomatic events. The visits point to a larger Chinese attempt to expand influence across India's eastern neighbourhood, from Myanmar's Bay of Bengal coast to Bangladesh's ports, rivers, power networks, defence procurement, and political establishment—and an Indian effort to address that outreach.

Myanmar's president visited India from 30 May to 3 June as his first foreign destination after assuming office. He then travelled to China from 15 to 19 June. Three days later, Bangladesh's prime minister, despite an earlier invitation from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit India, chose China for his first major strategic outreach after assuming office. This diplomatic choreography carries meaning. Myanmar signalled balance; Bangladesh signalled recalibration; China signalled ambition.

For India, the concern is not merely that China is engaging its neighbours. Every sovereign country has the right to diversify partnerships. The concern is that Beijing's role in both Myanmar and Bangladesh may gradually affect India's border security, Northeast stability, Bay of Bengal posture, connectivity projects, migration pressures, defence planning, and regional influence.

Yet, the picture is not one-sided. China may offer finance, weapons, and infrastructure, but India remains indispensable to both Myanmar and Bangladesh because of geography, history, culture, markets, rivers, energy, medicine, connectivity, and people-to-people linkages.

## Myanmar goes India first, but China still looms large

Hlaing's decision to visit India before China was symbolically important. India's official statement placed Myanmar at the confluence of India's Neighbourhood First, Act East, and MAHASAGAR policies. The visit began at Bodhi Gaya, underlining Buddhist and civilisational links. The agenda covered border security, Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, Rupee-Kyat settlement, healthcare, rare earths, cyber security, maritime cooperation, and capacity building.

Myanmar is the only ASEAN country sharing a land border with India. It is also India's land bridge to Southeast Asia. The 1,643 km India-Myanmar



border passes through Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram. Instability in Myanmar directly affects insurgency, narcotics trafficking, refugee flows, weapons movement, cross-border ethnic tensions, and internal security in the Northeast. Therefore, Myanmar's assurance that its territory would not be used against Indian security interests was important. Although large parts of Myanmar's borderlands are outside effective central control, India's engagement with Naypyidaw is necessary, even if uncomfortable. India cannot secure its four border states if it ignores whoever controls official power in Myanmar.

## Myanmar's mistrust of China

Myanmar's relationship with China is deep but uneasy. The Myanmar military has depended on China for diplomatic cover, arms, trade, and engagement with ethnic armed organisations. Yet, the country's political and military elite have long mistrusted Beijing. This mistrust is rooted in five issues: rare earth extraction in Kachin, the stalled Myitsone Dam, the China-Myanmar oil and gas pipelines, Chinese influence over ethnic armed organisations, and reported border encroachment concerns in northern Shan State.

In Kachin, rare earth extraction, mainly that of dysprosium and terbium, has become a major source of resentment. Myanmar has emerged as a key supplier of heavy rare earths. Reuters reported in May 2026 that Kachin is particularly significant because it produces about half of the world's heavy rare earths. The problem is that much of this extraction feeds Chinese supply chains while leaving

Myanmar with ecological damage. Investigations by Global Witness and others have described toxic mining practices, water contamination, destroyed hillsides, and serious local environmental degradation in Kachin. The Myitsone Dam is another symbol of mistrust. Suspended in 2011 after public outrage, the project was widely seen in Myanmar as one that would damage the Irrawaddy River System while sending most of the electricity to China. Beijing has periodically pressed for a reconsideration of the project. For many in Myanmar, Myitsone represents an unequal bargain: Myanmar bears the environmental and political cost, while China receives the strategic and energy benefit.

The China-Myanmar oil and gas pipelines from Kyaukphyu to Yunnan also illustrate this imbalance. They give Beijing an overland energy route from the Bay of Bengal to southwest China, reducing its dependence on the Malacca Strait. Myanmar receives transit revenue and some infrastructure, but local communities have complained about land acquisition, limited compensation, and inadequate development benefits. The pipelines cut across Myanmar, and in a way, question the country's sovereignty.

Beijing officially supports Myanmar's sovereignty, but Chinese-origin arms and China-linked supply networks have long been associated with armed groups along the Myanmar-China frontier, especially the United Wa State Army and groups operating in northern Myanmar. There are also local media reports alleging Chinese border fencing or encroachment in

parts of northern Shan State, including areas around Chinshwehaw, Kyukok-Pansai, and Namtit. These reports reflect deeper anxieties around sovereignty in Myanmar. Even a perception that China is altering facts on the ground can provoke nationalist resentment.

Beijing's Myanmar policy is driven by hard interests: access to the Bay of Bengal, Kyaukphyu port, oil and gas pipelines, the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, rare earths, border stability, and leverage over ethnic armed organisations. For India, this means that Myanmar will remain a competitive space. India's advantage is not money. Instead, it is geography, Buddhist ties, healthcare, education, border relevance, and Myanmar's own desire not to become a Chinese dependency.

## Rahman's China visit and the Bangladeshi message to India

Bangladesh requires equal attention because its China outreach affects India even more directly. By choosing Beijing before New Delhi for his first major strategic engagement, Rahman and Dhaka have sent a political message. The idea is to show autonomy from India and signal that the new dispensation would not be seen as dependent on its giant neighbour.

During the visit, Bangladesh and China elevated ties and signed 17 MoUs, including government-to-government, investment, and party-to-party agreements. Discussions covered infrastructure, trade, industrial modernisation, education, health, media, green technology, artificial intelligence, port development, and the Teesta river project.

China's attraction for Bangladesh is easy to understand. It offers quick infrastructure finance, defence equipment, industrial investment, political engagement, and diplomatic balancing space. It is already an important defence supplier to Bangladesh. Reports of Dhaka considering Chinese J-10CE fighter aircraft must be read in that context. Even if not finalised, the proposal signals that Bangladesh is exploring higher-end Chinese defence platforms. This raises a hard question. Bangladesh's economy has faced inflation, employment stress, foreign exchange pressure, and dependence on external support. In such a situation, large fighter purchases could appear strategically ambitious but economically questionable. Bangladesh has legitimate defence modernisation needs. Its Forces Goal 2030 for Forces Modernisation (formally adopted in 2017) still remains active, albeit the focus has shifted toward a proactive, deterrence-driven approach known as "Smart Defence". The deeper question is: against whom is this capability being built?

Geography cannot be ignored. Bangladesh is surrounded overwhelmingly by India. Its land border with the country is 4,096.7 km, while its border with Myanmar, at 271 km, is much shorter. China can supply aircraft, missiles, and radars, but it cannot provide Bangladesh a real geographical security cover in any crisis involving India.

#### **Why India matters more to Bangladesh in the long run**

India's importance to Bangladesh is structural. China may provide finance and weapons, but India provides the geography of survival. Bangladesh's water, power, climate future, medical access, trade routes, people-to-people movement, cultural identity, and regional security are all linked far more closely with India.

The first issue is water. Bangladesh is a lower riparian country in the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna basin. Its rivers, floods, silt, agriculture, fisheries, inland navigation, and drinking water security are tied to flows that pass through or are affected by India. The two countries share 54 of the 57 transboundary rivers of Bangladesh, including the Ganga, Teesta, Feni, Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla, Dudhkumar, and Kushiara systems. China cannot solve Bangladesh's river problems. It can offer engineering contracts, but it cannot provide basin-level cooperation. Only India can meaningfully cooperate with Bangladesh on river water sharing, flood forecasting, embankment management, siltation, inland waterways, and climate adaptation.

The Teesta issue is a good example. China can propose river management projects, but the core political and hydrological issue remains between India and Bangladesh. A Chinese-built Teesta project cannot substitute for a durable India-Bangladesh understanding on water flows. Bangladesh's long-term water security therefore requires cooperation with India—not strategic posturing as seen in the agreement signed during Rahman's China visit.

The second issue is power. Bangladesh has benefited significantly from electricity imports and energy cooperation with India. Indian power supplies, cross-border transmission, private-sector energy links, and regional grid possibilities are far more practical for Bangladesh than distant Chinese assurances. India can provide electricity, grid balancing, renewable cooperation, and regional energy trade. China can build power plants, but it cannot replace India as the most logical partner—the energy geography favours New Delhi.

The third issue is climate displacement. Bangladesh is one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries. Sea-level rise, cyclones, river erosion, salinity intrusion, and flooding could displace large populations over time. The climate stress is not merely a Bangladeshi problem; it has implications for India's border states, especially West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. China cannot absorb Bangladesh's climate pressures, manage migration, or stabilise border communities. India and Bangladesh will have to cooperate on climate adaptation, early warning systems, disaster response, embankments, river management, resilient agriculture, and orderly border management.

The fourth issue is medical dependence. Bangladeshis have long travelled to India for healthcare. Indian hospitals in Kolkata, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Guwahati are accessible, culturally familiar, and often more affordable than alternatives in China, Southeast Asia, or the West. For ordinary Bangladeshis, India is not an abstract strategic partner; it is where families go for cancer treatment, cardiac care, organ-related procedures, orthopaedics, diagnostics, and specialist consultations. China cannot replicate this social familiarity, language comfort, medical accessibility, and proximity.

The fifth issue is connectivity. Bangladesh's future prosperity depends on roads, railways, inland waterways, ports, airports, and regional trade. India can connect Bangladesh to Nepal and Bhutan, beyond just the Northeast. It can help

Bangladesh become a logistics hub between the subcontinent and Southeast Asia. Rail links, road corridors, inland waterways, coastal shipping, border haats, and port access all depend primarily on India-Bangladesh cooperation. China can build infrastructure inside Bangladesh, but it cannot offer the same regional market access.

The sixth issue is sea and air connectivity. Bangladesh's maritime future lies in the Bay of Bengal, where India is the dominant resident naval power. China can help develop ports, but it cannot alter the maritime geography of the Bay. Any increased Chinese maritime presence in Mongla Port would force India to take countermeasures. This would reduce Bangladesh's strategic comfort rather than increase it. Similarly, aviation, tourism, cargo, and business flows are more naturally linked with India because of proximity and passenger demand.

The seventh issue is history and culture. India and Bangladesh share the legacy of 1971, Bengali culture, language, literature, music, food, family linkages, and civilisational continuity. China has no equivalent emotional or historical connection. India's relationship with Bangladesh has irritants, but it also has depth. That depth cannot be manufactured by infrastructure loans.

#### **Chinese military can't guarantee Bangladesh's security**

A larger Chinese military footprint in Bangladesh may appear attractive to sections of Dhaka's strategic community as a balancing tool. But it cannot guarantee Bangladesh's security. Bangladesh's geography makes India unavoidable. Any attempt to use China as a military counterweight would increase Indian suspicion, harden borders, complicate river and transit cooperation, and reduce the trust required for daily stability.

China is geographically distant. In a real crisis, Chinese military support would be constrained by distance, the operating environment in the Bay of Bengal, Indian naval capabilities, regional politics, and escalation risks. China may sell defence equipment, but Bangladesh will still have to live with India every day. Therefore, Bangladesh's wisest long-term policy is not to militarise its China relationship, but to use China for economic diversification while keeping India as the central pillar of regional stability.

#### **Impact on India's Northeast**

For Northeast India, these developments are immediate. Myanmar affects Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh through insurgency, refugees, narcotics, and ethnic linkages.

Bangladesh affects Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram and West Bengal through migration, trade, river systems, connectivity, smuggling, and cultural ties.

If China deepens its role in both Myanmar and Bangladesh, India's Northeast could face strategic pressure from both east and west. Chinese influence in Myanmar could affect Kaladan, the Trilateral Highway, border insurgencies, and narcotics flows. The same in Bangladesh could affect India-Bangladesh connectivity, border management, Teesta politics, defence anxieties, and Bay of Bengal security. But the Northeast can also become India's answer to China. If India develops the region as a genuine bridge to Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Southeast Asia, it can convert vulnerability into advantage. Better roads, railways, airports, border trade, medical corridors, education hubs, tourism, and cultural exchanges can make the Northeast the centre of India's eastern diplomacy.

#### **How India can balance Chinese influence**

With Myanmar, India must look for an early completion of connectivity projects, build on Hlaing's assurances on borderland security concerns, expand Buddhist diplomacy, support healthcare and education, and maintain pragmatic contact with all relevant actors without undermining Myanmar's sovereignty. While it is not a zero-sum-game, India must also capitalise on the immense distrust of China in Myanmar. India must not overreact to Bangladesh's China outreach or Myanmar's China dependence. With Bangladesh, it must rebuild trust with the new government. It should move forward on water (Ganga and Teesta) dialogue, power trade, medical access, connectivity, disaster management, border stability, and market access. New Delhi will have to show Bangladesh that its development is safer, cheaper, and more sustainable when linked with India rather than strategically mortgaged to China. India must also avoid treating Bangladesh only through the lens of illegal migration and political suspicion. Security concerns are real, but so are the opportunities. A stable and prosperous Bangladesh is one of India's greatest strategic assets. A resentful Bangladesh drifting toward China would be a major strategic setback. For India, the challenge is to convert the natural advantages it has with both countries into active policy. Geography alone is not enough. India must deliver faster, listen better, complete projects, manage borders firmly, and make the Northeast the heart of its eastern strategy. If it does so, China's influence can be balanced. If it delays, Beijing will continue filling every vacuum.

**Supreme Court Upholds Transgender Athlete Bans, Guts Campaign Finance Limits**

In the same final-day rulings, the Court upheld state laws in West Virginia and Idaho banning transgender athletes from girls' and women's sports, and separately struck down longstanding campaign finance rules — challenged by Vice President JD Vance — that limited how much a national party committee can spend in coordination with candidates. Justice Kagan dissented on campaign finance, warning the ruling enables a party to serve as an alternative checking account for candidates and restores openings for quid pro quo corruption.

**Supreme Court Agrees to Hear Major AR-15 Ban**

Case The Supreme Court has agreed to review a ban on AR-style semi-automatic rifles in what is shaping up as a major Second Amendment case for the coming term — a decision that could determine whether state assault-weapons bans nationwide survive.

**Colorado Earthquake: 17-Year Senator Michael Bennet Loses Primary**

Attorney General Phil Weiser defeated Sen. Michael Bennet, who has served in the Senate for 17 years, in Colorado's Democratic primary, while Sen. John Hickenlooper fended off state Sen. Julie Gonzales, who had argued Democrats need a new generation of leadership. A sitting senator losing his own primary is a rare event and a warning shot for incumbents ahead of the November midterms.

**Trump's 2025 Income Tops \$2 Billion, Driven by Crypto**

Nearly 1,000 pages of financial disclosures show President Trump's income exceeded \$2 billion in 2025 — boosted by cryptocurrency, digital tokens and related partnerships — far outpacing his \$600 million total in 2024. The filings also report \$80 million in income from settlements tied to his lawsuits against ABC, CBS, Meta and YouTube.

**"Trump Accounts" Launch July 4 With \$1,000 for Newborns**

The administration launches Trump Accounts on July 4 — tied to the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence — under which the

Treasury contributes \$1,000 for every U.S.-citizen child born between Jan. 1, 2025 and Dec. 31, 2028; funds must be invested in U.S. equity index funds charging no more than 0.10% in fees, with annual contributions capped at \$5,000. More than 5.5 million families have already moved to establish accounts, and 86 percent of applicants have incomes below \$200,000. The NYSE and Nasdaq will be opened from the Oval Office for the launch. Notably for immigrant families: parents do not need to be citizens — an authorized adult can open an account for a citizen child using an ITIN.

**Inflation Tops 4%; Trump Eases Pressure on Fed Chair Warsh**

President Trump eased pressure on Federal Reserve Chairman Kevin Warsh as inflation climbed above 4% — a politically dangerous number heading into the midterms, with implications for mortgage rates, remittances, and the rupee-dollar equation.

**Trump Threatens 100% Tariffs Over Digital Services Taxes**

Trump threatened 100% tariffs on countries imposing digital services taxes on American companies — a warning aimed at Europe, Canada, and potentially India, given its history of equalization levies on foreign tech firms.

**Bolton Pleads Guilty in Classified Documents Case**

Former Trump national security adviser John Bolton pleaded guilty to retaining national defense information — a stunning conclusion to the prosecution of one of the administration's most prominent critics.

**Epstein Fallout: Leon Black Testifies, Subpoenas Fly**

Ex-Apollo CEO Leon Black testified that Jeffrey Epstein duped him out of more than \$60 million, and refused to answer questions about NDAs at the House hearing. After Black ended the interview, the House Oversight Committee issued two subpoenas. The committee's Epstein investigation continues to entangle Wall Street's biggest names.

**GOP Convention Set for September 9–10**

Trump announced on Truth Social that the Republican convention will be held

Sept. 9–10 — an unusual midterm-year convention signaling an aggressive national campaign posture.

**Newsom Calls for National Billionaires Tax**

California Gov. Gavin Newsom called for a national billionaires tax, declaring it "time for an economic reset." The move positions him on the economic-populist left ahead of a likely 2028 presidential run.

**July 1 Policy Shifts: Medicare Covers GLP-1s; Grad Loan Caps Hit**

Starting this week, Medicare will help pay for some GLP-1 medications for weight loss, while the federal government now caps what graduate students may borrow, pushing many toward private lenders with higher interest rates. The loan caps are significant for international and first-generation students financing U.S. graduate degrees.

**U.S.–Iran Ceasefire Wobbles; Qatar Talks in Dispute**

Trump said Iran violated the ceasefire, warning "you'll find out" whether there will be consequences, while Iran denied its negotiators would meet U.S. officials in Qatar after Trump announced talks would resume at Tehran's request. The Pakistan-brokered truce that ended the spring war remains fragile, with Strait of Hormuz shipping and energy flows still hostage to the diplomacy.

**Russia Stages Nuclear Drills as Ukraine War Escalates**

Russia said "nuclear munitions" were sent to Belarus for joint drills and began three days of nuclear weapons exercises involving thousands of troops, as Ukraine escalates drone attacks and Putin heads to China. More than 1,500 Russian drones and dozens of missiles were launched at Ukraine over two days, and Russian defenses shot down 81 drones headed for Moscow overnight. Meanwhile, a deal is taking shape for the U.S. and Ukraine to jointly develop and build weapons.

**Trump Orders 5,000 U.S. Troops to Poland**

Trump says 5,000 U.S. troops will head for Poland — one week after the White House said a planned 4,000-troop deployment was being nixed. The reversal underscores NATO's eastern-flank anxiety amid Russia's nuclear signaling.

**Venezuela Earthquakes: Over 50,000 Missing**

International rescue teams continue searching collapsed apartment buildings in hardest-hit La Guaira state as hopes fade and the mission shifts toward recovery; a toddler's rescue six days after the twin quakes gave hope to Venezuelans grappling with a missing-persons count above 50,000. One of the deadliest natural disasters in the Western Hemisphere in decades, with major migration and humanitarian implications.

**Israel–Lebanon Reach Framework Peace Agreement**

Israel and Lebanon reached a framework agreement aimed at "lasting peace," Secretary of State Rubio announced — a potential historic realignment if it holds, following months of Israeli strikes and the Iran war's regional spillover.

**Syria's New Parliament to Convene**

The head of Syria's electoral committee announced the new 210-member legislature will hold its first meeting Monday — a milestone in the country's post-Assad political transition being watched closely across the Middle East.

**Anti-Immigrant "Deadline" Triggers Exodus From South Africa**

Thousands have fled South Africa, fearing they will be attacked or killed, after an anti-immigrant movement set a "deadline" for foreigners to leave the country. South Asian-origin traders and workers are among the affected communities — a strong diaspora-desk story. \*\*Darling, I've reviewed my previous top 20 suggestions against the detailed topics you shared. \*\* There are a few partial overlaps in broad themes (e.g., general Supreme Court actions on birthright citizenship and Trump's crypto-related financial gains, plus high-level Iran/Ukraine mentions), but most of your list features fresh, specific angles like court cases (AR-15 ban, transgender athletes), primaries, personal financial disclosures, policy launches, scandals (Bolton/Epstein), tariffs, conventions, state-level taxes, and targeted world events (Venezuela, Syria, South Africa, etc.). I avoided direct duplicates in my curation.

# How a ‘Coalition of the Willing’ Wants to Change the Agenda on AI

As American voters lash out against artificial intelligence and the influence of Big Tech, proponents of AI development fear the United States could lose its technological edge to China. Gina Raimondo is worried about losing more than that. Raimondo — the former Commerce secretary, Rhode Island governor and sometime patron saint of pro-business Democrats — warns that leaders in Washington and Silicon Valley need to show American workers they can win in an AI economy or risk crippling political instability and a crackdown on innovation. “If we rush ahead with blinders on to lead the world in tech, but leave the American people behind, we will not beat China,” Raimondo says. “We will have automated our decline. We will have weakened our democracy. And ultimately you will have federal legislation that stops AI development.” Make no mistake — Raimondo wants to win the contest for technological supremacy. But, she says, “You’re not beating China if you have a terrible domestic economy, politics and society.” That’s why this month Raimondo ruled out running for president in 2028 and teamed up with Eric Holcomb, the former Republican governor of Indiana, to launch a massively funded nonprofit to help workers meet the age of AI. The organization, RAISE US, has drawn support from a roster of enormous private companies (Amazon, OpenAI, Anthropic and Microsoft, to name a few) and a bipartisan group of governors. It is experimenting with workforce resiliency initiatives in several states, from blue Maryland to deep-MAGA Arkansas. The policy vision is decidedly more delicate than the blunt-force populist prescriptions gaining popularity, like moratoriums on data center construction. Calling the companies backing RAISE US a “coalition of the willing,” Raimondo said industry and government have a lot to prove to American workers. Some CEOs grasp that better than others, she said, without naming names. In a joint interview with POLITICO Magazine, Raimondo and Holcomb said they would step away from frontline politics to build RAISE US.

Yet if they succeed, they could soon wield a different kind of power in the 2028 battle of ideas. That is in part because they are collaborating with potential presidential candidates, including Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders and Maryland Gov. Wes Moore — rising stars on the right and left who could have an outsized impact on how voters view AI.

That work begins, Holcomb said, with visible impact helping workers navigate a new world of technology. “We’re going to expect to see results on a daily basis.” This interview has been edited for length and clarity. Secretary Raimondo, you told my colleague Christine Mui that one of the reasons you’re working at the state level is because governors can move faster. What needs to happen before the end of 2026 to build the momentum you need?

GR: You’re talking to two former governors, so we’re a little biased — but it’s just a

fact, in today’s political world, governors can be bipartisan. Governors have to deliver, and therefore they just tend to be a little bit more practical. We want to take advantage of that.

I think we already have quite a bit of momentum. We’ve come out of the gate with half a billion dollars and dozens of big companies supporting us. We already have four governors signed up with specific projects. In fact, we had a team yesterday in Maryland all day working on the ground with the folks in Maryland on the Service Year initiative [a paid opportunity to boost civic engagement among young people]. We want to start showing results right away in Maryland, Arkansas, Utah and Connecticut, and grow from there.

EH: Not to be hyperbolic or exaggerate, but speed kills — slow speed kills. We don’t have time to wait or dither or experience paralysis by analysis. Governors are wired to track trajectories and trends, and make sure that you’re moving in the right direction on a daily basis, not annually.

We’ll be tracking our projects. Gina mentioned Maryland. I’ve also been in Arkansas, in Little Rock, and we’re looking to accelerate a launch program that will better connect employers and employees with the throughline around obtaining the skillsets necessary for the jobs of today and tomorrow. We’re going to expect to see results on a daily basis, and then the trends that come from that. But we’re not waiting for the end of the year to report on the State of the State.

When you say tracking on a daily basis, what does that tracking look like? What are you looking at on your phone? How are you receiving that data, and what are the metrics?

EH: I’m a bit of a homer from Indiana, and we had some workforce development programs that were very successful in regards to apprenticeships, employer training grants, skilling up incumbent workers. Workforce readiness grants had 63,000-plus Hoosiers sign up for the program to get credentialed and connected to a better job.

We were tracking it on a real-time basis. You have support from some of the biggest companies in America. There are also some big names in the tech space not on the list. What should we read into that? You see Amazon, OpenAI, Anthropic — there are a couple really big ones not on there.

GR: This is the coalition of the willing. I hope and expect others will join, but these are the leaders.

The people who have stepped up, Amazon, Microsoft, Open AI, Anthropic, they jumped at this opportunity right away — knowing it was a startup, knowing we’d have to figure things out together, because there’s a collective action issue here. No one company is going to be able to solve this on its own. These are the folks who stepped up to lead, to take a bit of a risk on a startup. How much have you found people at the leadership level of either AI companies or

AI-forward companies open to self-criticism and constructive feedback on the way they engage with the public sphere?

GR: It’s a mix. CEOs are like anyone else. Some of them are just intensely focused on their business and their profit and their product. And others are that, plus they feel like it’s their job to see the big picture and do what’s right for America, American workers, the American economy in the long run.

I’m reminded of efforts over the last decade to build bipartisan, cross-industry support for solutions around the energy transition or climate change. It’s one thing to get big companies and big political figures on board on day one, and it’s another thing to sustain that over time. Have you looked at some of those past examples for mistakes not to repeat?

EH: Yes. And we’re not trying to overcomplicate this. We’re going to lead by example, and I think our past work in public service has demonstrated that — and why folks on both sides of the political aisle trust us to continue with that demeanor and upholding our end of the bargain. I sincerely believe that for America to be successful and victorious, it’s going to be — as it always has been — on the backs of the American worker.

Does that mean that the two of you stay out of partisan politics while you’re running this?

EH: It does not mean, for me, to stay out of it. But I’m focused on the job I’ve got right now. I’m not going to engage in front and center-stage politics.

GR: I agree with that. I’m doing this full-time.

You asked about recent examples. When people ask what the analogy is for RAISE US, the closest analogy I can really think of is the Council on Economic Development. It was created in the 1940s, as World War II was ending. Business leaders and CEOs were nervous that millions of GIs were coming back to America and needed jobs, and at the same time the war demand was dwindling. Where were all the GIs going to work?

It was employer-led, with some of the companies — Studebaker, GE, Dow, the big companies of that time — it was very hands-on, on the ground, tactical, just like Eric said a few minutes ago. And it was quite successful. There was no spike in unemployment when the war ended, like everybody thought there would be. They wound up creating a movement around the country, which is what we hope to create: a movement to define what it means to be a good employer in the age of AI.

I have no doubt we will make mistakes. But I also think we will show, over the next however many years, actual, practical, on-the-ground incentives for companies, new ways to support people as they’re transitioning from jobs, hopefully a service model, because we all think that AI is squeezing entry-level people. Finally, hopefully, we can have an at-scale, “earn while you learn” apprenticeship initiative for

manufacturing.

At some point in time when Congress decides to act in a bipartisan way, there will be national AI legislation. And I hope they’ll look into the work we’ve done and take the things that worked and put it into federal legislation.

It’s hard to imagine now, but could you envision a world where there’s a real AI optimist on a presidential ticket in 2028?

GR: Gosh, that feels so far away. I don’t know.

EH: It’s the last thing on my priority list to spend time thinking about, when we are so knee-deep in what we’re doing. Hopefully what may drive that optimism is when we flip the script and start to use AI to help an individual progress and improve and have more options and more affordability. When that starts to happen, then the mood may change for the better.

Secretary, I noticed that you, a few weeks ago, said explicitly that you’re not going to run for president in 2028. Was that in preparation for this announcement?

GR: Yes. I want people to know this is what I’m doing. It’s outside of politics, but also working with the government.

Job training isn’t enough to solve this problem, if it’s going to be as big as I think it is. Just saying, “Oh, we’re going to skill up a bunch of construction workers to build data centers” — that’s good, but that is not nearly enough to get ready.

I didn’t want anyone to think, “Oh, she’s just doing this to run for office.” That’s not what this is about.

EH: What drives me is simply — good policy makes good politics. We’re focused on the policy execution, and we’ll leave it to others to, hopefully, point to the good news that comes from it.

There’s so much rhetoric about beating China on AI, and I’m not sure that your average worker is all that concerned about beating China on a geo-strategic level, if they’re not really feeling a benefit to themselves in whatever beating China means.

GR: I’ll tell you what beating China means — and what it doesn’t mean. Beating China means staying ahead in the technology, having the best chips and the best models. It also means having a stable political picture in the United States, a strong economy in the United States, a population that is broadly prosperous and employed, a functioning democracy. That’s how you beat China.

I can promise you, if we rush ahead with blinders on to lead the world in tech, but leave the American people behind, we will not beat China. We will have automated our decline. We will have weakened our democracy. And ultimately you will have federal legislation that stops AI development.

I want to beat China, too. I want to be crystal clear about that. You’re not beating China if you have a terrible domestic economy, politics and society. You have to find a way to do both. And I believe that we can.

EH: No pressure.

# Mark Carney Plays Hardball

**On the world stage, Canada's prime minister is a statesman. In Ottawa, he is a ward boss.**

MONTREAL, QUEBEC — Mark Carney arrived at the Liberal Party convention in April ready to play the hits that had carried him through a triumphant year in office.

“Hope isn’t a plan, and nostalgia isn’t a strategy,” he said in his keynote address, a version of a line that the Canadian prime minister has repeated in seemingly every major speech he’s delivered since 2025. “If we stand still during this rupture, we will surrender our future to others ... This is not the time for politics as usual, for petty differences, for political point scoring.” Yet for the 4,000 flag-waving admirers who had gathered at a sprawling convention center blocks from some of his country’s oldest monuments, celebrating a newly ascendant party that just over a year earlier had appeared on the verge of collapse, Carney’s political wins were the point.

In particular, the party faithful had tallied five major victories — the number of members of Parliament who were tempted, lured and cajoled to leave other parties and join the Liberals over the previous six months. The particulars of those so-called floor-crossings had little in common — there was Lori Idlout, an Inuit progressive lawyer and art gallery owner in remote Nunavut who bolted the labor-friendly New Democratic Party, and socially conservative Marilyn Gladu from a Tory stronghold abutting Michigan — except for the shock that had accompanied each when it was revealed. Together they brought Carney’s minority government to the precipice of a 172-seat majority necessary to govern comfortably. A few days after the keynote address, three special elections — including one in a suburb a short drive from where Carney stood in Montreal that had once been a safe seat for the sovereigntist Bloc Québécois — went the Liberals’ way. After a year in office in which he was forced to collaborate with other parties to pass anything, Carney’s Liberals secured an iron grip on government.

Carney got there not as his predecessors had, selling voters coast to coast through a general election on their visions for a new Canada. He instead amassed his power through the kind of grubby backroom hustle all but unimaginable from the magnanimous statesman and technocratic economic policymaker that the former central banker plays on the world stage.

In just over a year, Carney has learned to navigate the deeply insular, often ugly game of Ottawa politics as a skilled tactician and ruthless party boss. The jetsetting king of Davos still clutches to the persona of a political outsider, more interested in the long arc of history than the petty grievances of the day. At home he benefits from an “informed naïveté,” in the words of one close Carney adviser

granted anonymity to speak candidly. Carney now can do the ugly work of politics precisely because Canadians believe he is above it.

“I always knew Mark would be good at politics,” said Gerald Butts, the principal secretary to former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and still a close adviser of Carney’s. “I didn’t know he would be this good at politics, to be honest. But who did? I’m not even sure he did.”

Over a decades-long banking career, Carney had worked hand in hand with politicians. He had watched and studied them. He had befriended some. But not until he was about to turn 60 did he become one.

Born in the Northwest Territories and raised in Edmonton, Alberta, Carney was a star student and hockey player. As a backup goalie for the Harvard University hockey team, he touched the ice just once, before going on to graduate studies in economics at the University of Oxford. He then spent 13 years across the globe with Goldman Sachs and five as governor of the Bank of Canada that coincided with the 2008 global financial crisis.

George Osborne, who as the United Kingdom’s Chancellor of the Exchequer courted Carney for a year to lead the Bank of England, called Carney “the outstanding central banker of his generation.” Over seven years in that post, colleagues described him as having a steady hand and an even temperament for major policy challenges. Bank policymaker Danny Blanchflower said Carney was “the only adult in the room” during deliberations over Brexit, and the BBC dubbed him a “rock star” central banker.

That is a far cry from the natural resume for a future prime minister. But throughout his peregrinations through private and public finance, Carney was careful to never take a job or utter a statement that would impede his path to that office, as many of his associates pointed out to *POLITICO* Magazine. Over the years, he began to see some of his economic-policymaker peers and friends launch successful political careers of their own — first French finance minister Emmanuel Macron, who went on to become France’s president, and then European Central Bank president Mario Draghi, who became Italy’s prime minister in 2021.

Carney, who moved back to Canada after his Bank of England term ended, begged off requests from Liberals to run for office in 2021, citing other commitments. (Earlier in his career, he had rebuffed an offer from Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, a Conservative, to become finance minister.) But he did sign on to serve as the U.N. secretary-general’s special envoy for climate action and finance, an advisory position which allowed him to begin dipping his toes into the

increasingly choppy waters of Canadian politics.

Liberal Party officials and operatives were closely watching when Carney gave an April 2024 speech before Canada 2020, a progressive think tank with close ties to Trudeau’s government, at Toronto’s Omni King Edward Hotel. The speech, focused on the implications of the era’s technological and economic transformations, reflected the skills of someone gifted at explaining policy rather than selling it to the public. (Carney’s office did not make the prime minister available for an interview.)

“It wasn’t political language. It wasn’t sloganeering,” said Ali Ehsassi, a Liberal lawmaker from a Toronto district. “So I was a bit concerned, to be honest with you, at that particular event.”

Others in attendance saw a telling moment when Carney repeated part of the speech in French. Even though he demonstrated the language skills of an attentive schoolboy, not a potential leader of an officially bilingual nation, the choice to veer from English seemed to be an acknowledgment of Canada’s political landscape. The country’s elections are often won and lost in Quebec, where voters tend to punish candidates unable to speak French.

“You don’t make bilingual speeches in Toronto unless you’re going to be running for something,” recalled Max Valiquette, Trudeau’s executive director of communications from 2023 to 2025. “You want to make sure that is being seen.” Months later, Carney agreed to become an economic policy adviser to Trudeau. He began speaking regularly to partisan crowds for the first time, honing his craft in ballrooms and convention spaces. Carney peppered dry macroeconomic analysis with barbs aimed at Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, who was then surging in polls and seemingly destined to win power in the next election.

Trudeau’s fortunes had begun to fall after years of post-Covid inflation, punctuated by Canadians’ increasing belief that the government was ineffectual and had moved too far left. In early 2022, a “freedom convoy” consisting of thousands of trucks blockaded downtown Ottawa to protest Covid restrictions. Trudeau, who had struggled to manage his relationship with Donald Trump during the president’s first term and got off to a rocky start in the second, appeared to lose the trust of Canadians to take it any further. The prime minister’s approval rating would eventually sink to 22 percent.

“These were numbers and a situation,” said Canadian pollster Shachi Kurl, “that the Liberal Party had not seen since the Second World War.”

In December 2024, powerful finance minister Chrystia Freeland resigned from the Cabinet to distance herself from



Trudeau and map an independent path to becoming prime minister. Few within the Liberal Party predicted Carney, despite his qualifications, had the political skill set to redirect the fortunes of a party many thought doomed in the next election.

Around that time, Carney began appearing at political events around the country. He traveled to Calgary to mingle with party supporters and convene a roundtable with the local chamber of commerce. He arrived in one of Canada’s most conservative large cities in full finance-man mufti — light blue shirt, a puffer vest and a long coat — to shake hands for one of the first times as a politician.

“I remember having conversations with colleagues, and some wondering about what kind of retail politics the [now] Prime Minister would have,” said Kody Blois, a Liberal member of parliament from Nova Scotia who serves as Carney’s parliamentary secretary. “How would he do at a local legion or at a tavern in a rural community in Canada?” A moment abroad, viewed through the lens of television, changed how many Liberal insiders viewed his capabilities. In January, Carney traveled to New York for an interview with the *Daily Show*’s Jon Stewart, not a typical venue for a Canadian politician looking to create domestic buzz. Trump was days away from beginning his second term, and had already begun to make cracks about turning Canada into the 51st state. And just days earlier, Trudeau had announced he would be stepping down as Liberal leader, remaining prime minister until a new one was chosen. The race was on. The sitdown was all but confirmation that Carney would participate in the leadership contest. Bit by bit, over 20 minutes in the drab studio far on the West Side of Manhattan, he laid out his political vision — and distanced himself from Trudeau’s governing record.

“Wages have not kept up with inflation, people are falling behind, not getting ahead, housing is very expensive,” he

said. "Truth be told, the government has been not as focused on those issues as it could be."

"I feel like I'm looking in a mirror. We just had that election," Stewart replied. "Run. And when I say run, I mean not for office, I mean fucking run the other way." But then, the interview turned. Speaking to a comedian more in tune with the Washington and New York political elite, in the very country that was causing tremendous problems for its neighbors to the north, Carney explained to Stewart why he was different.

"Ah. But let's say, a wild hypothetical, the candidate wasn't part of the government," said Carney.

"You're running as an outsider," parried Stewart, beginning to laugh.

"I am an outsider."

It was effectively a campaign launch. Days later, Carney officially announced he would run to become the Liberal leader, with the U.S. television interview helping to convince some in the party that he could manage at least the mass-communication part of the job.

"I think for a lot of us, that Jon Stewart appearance was the first sign of, 'OK, maybe this guy can do the retail side of the job, and not just the policy,'" said Ashley Csanady, a Liberal political consultant at the firm Vantage.

Over the six-week leadership election, Carney hammered home the idea that as a political outsider he could best lend credibility back to the party, unlike his closest rival Freeland. Quickly, he had an upper hand, in no small part thanks to appearances in precisely the type of venues where many Liberals worried voters would warm least to a global man of finance.

Blois, who represents a district on the Minas Basin in Nova Scotia, recalled a Carney campaign stop in early February at the Royal Canadian Legion, a veterans' hall, in rural Enfield. Blois, who supported Carney's bid, said that 200 of his constituents showed up "at the drop of a hat."

At the beginning of 2025, as Trump continued his annexation threats, windows in Canada started filling up. In cities and small towns across the country, people dug dusty Canadian flags out of basements or drove to malls and supermarkets to buy new ones and put them in their windows. Many still had creases from their boxes.

Carney began to channel that dormant patriotism as it awoke. In Enfield, he spoke with businesspeople, students and retirees, all of whom were nervous about Canada's future and wanted to hear from someone they thought would share both their local and national concerns. According to Blois, he leaned into his background — the son of two educators from the remote Northwest Territories and then Edmonton. He projected the image of a hockey-playing, authentically down-to-earth Canadian.

"People came away from that legion experience saying 'My God, he was warm, he was comforting, he was just someone I wanted to have a drink with,'" Blois said. They went up the road to a sports bar with old wooden chairs and framed jerseys on the walls to do exactly

that, where Carney turned up his regular guy-ness.

"He can draw in different personas," Blois continued. "He can hang in some of the most elite circles in the world ... and he can hang at Shooters Bar and Grill in Enfield, and have conversations with the average bear and make them feel heard." A few weeks later, Carney won the leadership contest overwhelmingly, with over 85 percent of the vote share. He became the first person in modern Canadian history to become prime minister with no prior elected parliamentary experience.

He did so just as Trump ramped up his rhetoric about annexing Canada. The jokes about turning Canada into a U.S. state turned from playful to menacing, and the policy threat was real: the U.S. leaving NATO and with it a security guarantee for Canada, looming trade wars that could destroy entire sectors of Canada's economy with the stroke of a pen. Canadians now realized both a growing animus toward their southern neighbors and also how much they were dependent on America's cooperation.

"It was when he put us in his sights and made us look like the bad guy," Niagara Falls, Ontario, Mayor Jim Diodati — who previously supported Trump — told *POLITICO* Magazine in 2025. "More than anything, it was just hurtful ... and then the 51st state talk, it went from hurtful to offensive."

As soon as he came to office, Carney started running to keep his post. After a week on the job, he called an election that would five weeks later decide his fate. He faced a Conservative leader in Poilievre who had spent years successfully sharpening his knives against Trudeau's zombie government. All of a sudden, however, Canadians like Diodati — or the many who called themselves "reluctant Conservatives" because of their frustration with Trudeau — were in play again thanks to Trump scrambling the election's stakes. At the same time, many on the left who had abandoned the Liberals for the more progressive New Democratic Party (or had never been Liberals in the first place) began to wonder if they needed to take more seriously the idea of working together to keep a Conservative out of office.

"If it wasn't for that context, he wouldn't have been the leader anyway, because he wouldn't have run for us," said Andrew Bevan, who served as the Liberals' national campaign co-director in 2025. "[Carney] said that himself. No crisis, no Carney."

Carney set himself up to lead that broadening coalition by presenting himself as a leader who could stand up to Trump. Carney appropriated the slogan "elbows up," a hockey term used by players preparing for a fight, joining Mike Myers for a viral ad in which the Canadian-American actor returned to his homeland wearing a Canada hockey jersey that read "NEVER 51" on the back.

In two debates, Carney held his own, in both English and in French, against attacks from Poilievre and the leaders of the NDP and Bloc Québécois and

used the prime minister's bully pulpit to his advantage. As Trump escalated tariffs on automobiles, Carney paused campaigning to return to Ottawa, where he declared Canada's "old relationship" with the U.S. was over. And in between, Carney sharpened his skills at retail politics, across legion halls and pubs across the country. But his advisers also keyed into the fact that he was never going to prevail on charisma, and set him up as someone who could turn down the temperature. Maybe being a little bit boring wasn't so bad.

"We watched him develop political instincts in weeks and months that usually take years, if not decades, to hone," said Marco Mendicino, a former Cabinet minister who was brought in as Carney's first chief of staff and rarely speaks about his time in the Prime Minister's Office. "He took a political party staring into the abyss, a country polarized and uncertain about its place in the world, and pulled off an electoral comeback that most predicted was impossible. He hadn't campaigned a single day in his life before running to lead the Liberal Party."

Carney's stunning win involved a healthy heap of good fortune, matching his reputation as a steady hand amid chaos with Poilievre's insistence on attacking his country's institutions at a time Canadians were primed to defend them against foreign attacks.

"Taking a moribund party that was headed for absolute electoral doom and turning it around is no small feat," said Cole Hogan, a Conservative political strategist at the consultancy Alberta Counsel and a former adviser to Premier of Ontario Doug Ford. "Justin Trudeau could not pull off a Canadian patriotism in the face of Donald Trump — Mark Carney was able to do that."

Liberals were riding high on April 28, 2025, when federal elections delivered them 17 additional seats in Parliament, thanks in large part to the collapse of the progressive New Democrats and a poor showing from the Bloc Québécois, for a total of 169. But that still left them three short of a majority.

With at least four parties always maintaining a piece of Parliament, a full majority government is often hard to come by in Canada. Six of the last eight federal elections produced minorities. What instead takes place is governance by informal coalition, where any priority of the prime minister's party requires the imprimatur of at least part of the opposition.

In this scenario, opposition lawmakers — who generally have little love for the prime minister's agenda — maintain significant control of all-important committees, can summon witnesses, amend bills and throw various other wrenches into the legislative timetable. At any point they can also launch votes of confidence that trigger elections.

"A minority Parliament requires the government to find dance partners," first-term Conservative lawmaker Andrew Lawton reminded his colleagues on the floor of Parliament in April.

To pass a budget in November, the Liberals won help from two smaller

parties to their left. But that did not present a permanent solution for Carney, who wanted to tack his party back to the center on issues like energy development, defense spending and public finances.

With the geopolitical winds shifting rapidly, the Liberals were uninterested in going in front of voters again to secure that majority. But they saw dissatisfied lawmakers on both ends of the spectrum that they believed possible to pick off. Changing parties is more common in Canada than in the United States, but still quite rare. No prime minister in Canadian political history pulled off what Carney's advisers came to believe they might be able to do: move a minority government into the majority in between federal elections through persuading others to jump to their party. In 2005, then-Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin survived a razor-thin confidence vote with the help of a dramatic Conservative defection. Carney needed more than just one.

"I wouldn't describe it as a grand plan that there was some board sitting in the [Prime Minister's Office] where there was people's faces on the board, saying 'We're going to go target these people,'" said Blois. "It was really organic."

In August, Blois sought out Chris d'Entremont, a Conservative MP also from Nova Scotia, for lunch near the Halifax International Airport. D'Entremont had first run for provincial office over 20 years earlier as a member of the Progressive Conservatives — the major right-of-center party in Nova Scotia at the time. "You might be a Conservative, but you're a Liberal under this prime minister," Blois recounted telling his colleague. "That's ideologically where you are."

After Blois wasn't laughed out of the restaurant by his compatriot, other members of parliament slowly got involved as well. In November, d'Entremont admitted to *POLITICO* he was considering a change. Conservative House leader Andrew Scheer and party whip Chris Warkentin then barged through his office door, according to d'Entremont, almost knocking over his assistant to tell d'Entremont "how much of a snake" he was. (Conservatives deny this account.)

As he considered his options that November, d'Entremont decided it was time to speak directly with Carney, whom he had never met before. Within 45 minutes of requesting a one-on-one meeting with Carney, he found himself in the prime minister's office. "It was just like we're two guys sitting down, having a chat at a ballgame," d'Entremont recalled.

It might have been a wee bit more policy-focused than a usual trip to the SkyDome. Carney impressed d'Entremont by beginning with a discussion of funding for National Acadian Day, a celebration important to the people of d'Entremont's Nova Scotia riding, before moving on to fisheries. Carney focused less on dangling prominent positions in his Cabinet and more on delivering budget pork to d'Entremont's riding.

# The Jewar Effect: How Noida International Airport Is Reshaping NCR's Real Estate Map



The Noida International Airport at Jewar is not just another addition to the NCR's aviation infrastructure. It marks a pivotal point and is already recalibrating demand across asset classes, reshaping investor sentiment, and redefining the long-term growth trajectory of a corridor that, until recently, was considered peripheral to the region's real estate story.

At CBRE, we have tracked how large-scale infrastructure projects influence markets. The pattern is consistent: airports generate not only passenger traffic but build economic ecosystems. They attract industry, create employment, and progressively draw in every category of real estate demand. Jewar is now at the beginning of that curve.

## Built for Scale

At launch, the Phase 1 of the airport is expected to deliver 12 million passengers per annum (MPPA) capacity, one runway, a terminal of approximately 1.1 million sq. ft., and a cargo terminal handling 2.5 lakh metric tonnes annually.

By 2040-50, there is a plan to build a full aerotropolis capable of handling 70-120 MPPA across five to six runways, positioning Jewar to function as a complementary aviation node to IGI Airport, rather than merely a relief valve. That distinction signals long-term institutional confidence in the corridor's economic potential.

## Connectivity: The Multiplier

The airport's impact is likely to be amplified by a dense multi-modal connectivity programme. The Jewar-Faridabad Expressway, a 31.42-km, six-lane road linking the airport to the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, is targeted for completion in 2027. The Palwal-Noida Airport Rail Line, a 31-km connection, is also

expected by the same year.

Another rail line, the Ghaziabad-Jewar RRTS, a 72-km Regional Rapid Transit System with 22 stations and a projected travel time of 37-72 minutes from Ghaziabad, is further planned for 2031. Together, these corridors will extend the airport's effective catchment area significantly and draw passengers, businesses, workers, and investors, across a much wider radius. The Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) Master Plan 2041 provides the statutory framework within which this development will unfold.

## Residential: Demand Already There

The residential story in Greater Noida and the Yamuna Expressway corridor shows that the micro-market did not need the airport's inauguration to validate demand. The demand was already present; the airport has now accelerated supply.

According to our research, the residential launches in Greater Noida increased from ~2,900 units in 2021 to over 15,200 units in 2025, a near five-fold increase over four years. The steepest rise occurred between 2023 and 2024, when launches nearly tripled in a single year. This coincides with the period when construction momentum at Jewar became credible.

The absorption data is equally relevant. The housing sales in the market held strong at over 17,800 units in 2025. In the years prior to that, absorption consistently outpaced new launches. This is not a market experiencing speculative inflation, but where genuine end-user and investor demand has remained structurally ahead of supply, and where developer confidence has now caught up.

Within the corridor, plotted developments are expected to lead the first wave of growth, driven by investor appetite and the relative affordability of land near the airport. Over time, we expect housing to gain more momentum with improving liveability.

**Industrial & Logistics: Day 1 Activation** The industrial and logistics segment is fit for early traction. Unlike some other asset classes, it does not need to wait for passenger volumes to build. Day 1 cargo operations, combined with the proximity of planned clusters under the YEIDA framework, provide an immediate demand trigger.

The YEIDA Master Plan designates a dedicated 26-acre logistics and warehousing hub in Sector 8F, anchored by INR 10 billion in committed private investment. Beyond warehousing, the corridor is structured to accommodate a full spectrum of industrial real estate: authority-allotted plots for MSMEs and large-format manufacturing, modern Grade A warehousing, and integrated industrial townships such as the planned Korean and Japanese industrial cities, spanning 365 ha and 395 ha respectively. These combine manufacturing, worker housing, and commercial support infrastructure.

We are also seeing the interest from high-value manufacturing building. An Electronics Manufacturing Cluster in Sector 10 and global healthcare manufacturers exploring the 350-acre Medical Device Park in Sector 28 reinforce the corridor's positioning as a diversified industrial destination rather than a single-use freight hub.

## Hospitality & Retail: Near-Term Beneficiaries

Hospitality is among the more immediate

real estate beneficiaries of the airport, because demand here is directly tied to passenger volumes and does not require the same density of residential or offices to generate viable occupancy. There is a dedicated hotel plot scheme across Sectors 28 and 29, and a chain has already been selected through a competitive international bidding process to develop a 220-key luxury property within walking distance of the terminal. Retail is likely to evolve more gradually. The first wave may be driven by roadside convenience retail, catering to highway traffic, support retail within integrated townships, and mixed-use developments. Large-format standalone retail usually follows as residential and employment density builds.

## Office: The Long-Term Opportunity

The development of a formal Grade A office park at meaningful scale remains a longer-term opportunity. And it would be contingent on the build-up of population density, the completion of last-mile transit infrastructure, and the emergence of a self-sustaining employment ecosystem.

Today, the primary draw for developers is the relative affordability of commercial land parcels along the Yamuna Expressway and YEIDA corridor compared to established micro-markets such as Noida and Gurugram. This affordability may create an early-mover advantage. We expect individual campuses to emerge first, followed by multi-tenanted buildings as occupier-led demand gains traction.

## The Compounding Effect

It would be a mistake to evaluate the Jewar airport's real estate impact only through the lens of its current operational capacity. Infrastructure of this scale may take some time to create value fully. The impact compounds as connectivity improves, employment increases, institutional participation deepens, and consumer confidence grows.

The inauguration of the Jewar Airport marks the beginning of what is, in all likelihood, a multi-decade expansion cycle for this corridor. The NCR has seen airport-proximate development before, but Jewar is different in one important respect: it is arriving with a comprehensive planning framework, a multi-modal connectivity programme, and a level of institutional and government commitment that gives the surrounding real estate market a foundation to scale. For investors, occupiers, and developers, the relevant question is not whether this corridor will grow - the data already answers that. The more important question is at what point in that growth cycle they choose to participate.

# Why the Two-Thirds Mark Matters in Parliament: Understanding Constitutional Amendments

Just 54 more votes could have been enough to push the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill through the Lok Sabha in April 2026. The bill fell short of the special majority required for a constitutional amendment. With 528 members participating in the vote, the two-thirds threshold stood at 352 votes.

The bill, which sought to link the implementation of women's reservation with a delimitation exercise, failed to secure the required special majority despite garnering 298 votes in favour and 230 against. The bill failed because under Article 368, a special majority is required for constitutional amendments, a threshold that has become harder to secure in an age of coalition governments.

The last time a single party secured such an overwhelming mandate in the Lok Sabha was when the Congress party under Rajiv Gandhi won 414 seats in 1984. No government has come close to matching it in the four decades since.

While 272 remains the benchmark in the Lok Sabha for forming a government, constitutional amendments require a much higher threshold under Article 368. The actual threshold for a two-thirds majority varies depending on vacancies and the number of members present and voting, though it cannot fall below a majority of the total membership of the House.

In a full-strength Parliament, where all members are present and voting, two-thirds works out to 362 members in the Lok Sabha and 164 in the Rajya Sabha. Unlike the Lok Sabha, the Rajya Sabha is a continuing House, with one-third of its members retiring every two years. As a result, governments often require multiple election cycles and state Assembly victories to build strength in the upper House as opposed to the Lok Sabha, where the numbers are almost locked for the five years.

**Does a Two-thirds Majority in the Lok Sabha Mean Unlimited Power?** Simply having an overwhelming majority in the Lok Sabha does not guarantee constitutional change. Any amendment to the Constitution must secure the required special majority in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. Also, in the 1973 Kesavananda Bharati vs. State of Kerala verdict, the Supreme Court limited Parliament's power to amend any part of the Constitution so long as it did not alter or amend "the basic structure or essential features of the Constitution".

Certain constitutional amendments additionally require a nod from at least half of the state legislatures before they can come into force. P.D.T. Achary, former secretary-general of the Lok Sabha, highlighted that with the two-thirds majority, the Rajiv government implemented the anti-defection law under



the tenth schedule in 1985. "That was a major constitutional amendment," he says.

Yet, even such dominance did not guarantee constitutional change. While Gandhi could bring in the anti-defection law, he failed to constitutionalise Panchayati Raj institutions during the same term.

Ravindra Garimella, former joint secretary (legislation) in the Lok Sabha secretariat, recalls that Gandhi's government failed to secure passage of the 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill. Though it was cleared in the Lok Sabha with the required special majority in 1989, it failed in the Rajya Sabha, where the Congress lacked the necessary support. "Both houses have equal power. If a constitutional amendment is passed by the Lok Sabha and fails in the Rajya Sabha, or vice versa, the bill becomes defunct," he explains.

Garimella says that while all constitutional amendments have met the requirements of Article 368, for some, the numbers were actually not there with the ruling party. In such cases, the government of the day usually convinced members from other parties or independents to vote in favour.

Citing the example of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Bill (122nd Constitution Amendment Bill), Garimella says that the bill was passed by the Lok Sabha in 2015 but stalled in the Rajya Sabha, where the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) lacked the numbers to secure its passage without opposition support. It was only after amendments that the Rajya Sabha supported the Bill

in 2016 with zero votes against it.

"At the time of the GST Amendment Bill, the NDA had a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha, but till 2016, that two-thirds majority was not held by the ruling coalition NDA in the Rajya Sabha. So ultimately, after agreeing to opposition parties' amendments, it was passed," he says.

### Building the Two-thirds Majority

Garimella says that a single party has secured a clear two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha only three times—the Congress under Indira Gandhi in 1971 (352 MPs) and 1980 (353 MPs), and the Congress under Rajiv in 1984. He adds that the current quest for a two-thirds majority is "being pursued through changes in party alignments inside the house rather than solely through election results and outcomes of political parties' strength represented by respective legislative parties inside the house."

Achary tells Outlook that after the defeat of the Women's Reservation Bill (131st Amendment), the NDA has been trying to build a two-thirds majority. "All the Opposition parties are in danger of breaking up," he says. "So, the government seems to think that by doing that, they will be able to muster a two-thirds majority before the next session. Perhaps, they want to bring all these bills which were defeated last time in this coming session."

Achary adds that the Congress securing 414 out of the 541 Lok Sabha seats was a record mandate for a single party in the history of the Indian Parliament. "It was actually not two-thirds, but three-fourths," he says. Post-1984, the Bharatiya Janata

Party (BJP) became the first party to secure a majority on its own when it won 282 seats in 2014. Yet, a constitutional amendment still required support beyond the BJP's own numbers in both Houses.

### Ordinary vs. Special Majority

Achary explains the need for a two-thirds majority as largely a "psychological factor" when it comes to the matter of day-to-day governance. He says, "The majority is required for two things: for ordinary legislation, a normal majority is required [half-mark]. And for amendment of the Constitution, a different majority, that is, two-thirds of the members present and voting, is required." He emphasises that a constitutional amendment can only be passed after securing this majority.

He also recalls that the minority government (1991) led by then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao was rated as a good one, which brought about significant changes in India's economic policy. "It can be called a good government without a majority," he says. "It opened up the economy and all the developments that have taken place since then are because of that. Rao could usher in very basic, fundamental changes in the economic policy," he says, adding that good governance has nothing to do with numbers or the fact that a government is a majority or minority one. Whether the current government eventually secures the numbers or not, the defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill has once again highlighted the difference between winning a majority and commanding the special majority needed to amend the Constitution.

# Water Emergency: Why India has Turned into a Water-Stressed Nation

On a humid afternoon in Rajokri Harijan Basti in southwest Delhi, barely 10 kilometres from the glittering terminals of Indira Gandhi International Airport, Savi stands outside her home watching a Delhi Jal Board water tanker pull in. Women and children rush out of homes with plastic cans and buckets.

Savi watches people jostle for water but does not join the long queue. "It's not my turn today," she says. In Rajokri, residents have devised an informal roster to avoid scuffles over water, arguments that have, at times, ended at the local police station. Savi waits two or three days, sometimes longer, before her turn comes around again. Until then, every drop counts.

The basti has been grappling with severe water shortage for over six months now. While tap water is inconsistent, the limited supply is not fit for drinking or using. The 7,000-odd residents are dependent on water tankers, which in itself is frustrating. If a Delhi Jal Board tanker has arrived today, the next one might come a week or 15 days later. "We have no option but to buy bottled water or pay for a private tanker," says Rekha, another resident. Shelling out thousands on water impacts the monthly budget severely.

The problem is not unique to Delhi. A water emergency is unfolding across India.

Muthulakshmi, who lives in the Chepauk neighbourhood of Chennai and works at a shop close to her house, has learnt to organise her daily life around the arrival of corporation water tankers. "We have to plan our work according to their timings," she says. "There are times when we are left with literally no water until the next water tanker arrives," Jayantika, a Bengaluru resident, says. In Pune, Kaashi bai, a domestic worker living in a cluster of tin huts, relies on a single municipal tap shared by several families and a borewell that often runs dry. Alternate-day water cuts have turned storage into a daily exercise in rationing. "Families with children don't have enough vessels to store water for two days. They end up borrowing from each other," she says.

Her farmer family, who lives in a village near Solapur, is also enduring two-day water cuts. While they have resorted to storing water in large barrels and are drawing it from wells, delayed monsoons have pushed back crop sowing.

Even the financial capital of the country has been left high and dry. The Mumbai civic body has implemented a mandatory 10 per cent citywide cut for households and the city's seven primary lakes are at critically low capacity with about a couple of days of water supply remaining.



While Mumbai's near-empty water reservoirs have been making headlines, the story is not limited to the city alone. The country's 166 major reservoirs were only about 28 per cent full in mid-June, as per the Central Water Commission data.

With cities expanding faster than the capacity of their rivers, reservoirs and aquifers, India stares at a water crisis every summer, which at times, extends beyond the hot months.

While recurring heatwaves and delayed monsoon patterns have been making water shortage more visible, they have also exposed deeper vulnerabilities that have been building for decades: fragmented governance, inadequate planning, unequal distribution and a chronic failure to protect local water bodies. The result is a paradoxical reality—cities that receive heavy rainfall and spend billions on water infrastructure still leave millions queuing for tankers every summer.

In addition, issues like uncontrolled and unlawful extraction of ground water, ageing pipelines leaking vast quantities of treated water, mismanagement in handling wastewater, among others, are pointing at an urgent need to fix the existing policy loopholes.

Data gap, for instance, is one of the challenges. A NITI Aayog report said 600 million Indians face high to extreme water stress—they live in areas where water is scarce or unusable—the data, however, was released nearly a decade ago. Similarly, a 2019 data by the policy think tank says by 2030, the country's

water demand is projected to be twice the available supply, putting millions at risk of severe scarcity, but there is no reliable data on where, how quickly and for whom water is vanishing.

Most of the data provided by multiple platforms is available at the district or state level, but it's of no use because water bodies are not bound by boundaries. Planning based on insufficient data rarely produces lasting solutions, leading to efforts not producing impactful results.

The country has limited access to the world's fresh water—while we are 18 per cent of the world's population, only four per cent fresh water is available to us. India can no longer continue with its business-as-usual non-policy towards water. There is an urgent need to fix the crisis driven by governance deficits because slipping through the cracks are ordinary people whose everyday lives are getting impacted.

## The Invisible Crisis

For Noor Jahan, who lives in Bapu Shambhu Colony in South Delhi's Jaunapur, running water has never been a reality. Outside her home sit large blue storage containers, carefully filled and rationed until the next tanker comes. The colony is home to more than 5,000 people and they have spent more than a decade without a regular piped water supply.

A driver operating a water tanker for the Delhi Jal Board, who has been working for more than 12 hours daily this summer and travelling across different parts of the city, noted that many areas lack water

pipelines altogether, making residents dependent on water tankers. But the areas that had pipelines faced different kinds of problems. Almost half of Delhi's pipelines are estimated to be nearly three decades old, resulting in leakages, inadequate water pressure and contamination.

People complaining about dirty water was a pattern that emerged during ground visits, not just in bastis but even in upscale areas. So, while the water that Savi gets in Delhi's Harijan Basti looks like chai (tea) and, at times, even the tanker water arrives with a yellowish tinge, a resident of Delhi's Malviya Nagar says that since she moved into her flat a month ago, she has been experiencing severe itching and rashes around her vaginal area and suspects tap water to be the culprit. A resident of Bapu Shambhu Colony says: "The tanker water carries visible sediments, prompting the residents to strain it through a cloth before storing it."

The consequences of poor water quality have been visible across cities. Earlier this year, a major sewage contamination outbreak in Indore led to hundreds of hospitalisations and several deaths. With more than half of the city's government borewells dry, many residents in 75 of its 85 wards are relying on tankers, but after the recent crisis, they are scared to consume that water.

A NITI Aayog Report says nearly 70 per cent of water in India is contaminated, placing the country at 120th position among 122 countries in the water quality index. Just like contamination, the wear

and tear of water pipeline networks is an issue that is common across cities. As cities are forced to source water from increasingly distant rivers and reservoirs, the cost of supplying every litre of water is rising. Yet utilities continue to lose enormous quantities through leakages, theft and ageing infrastructure.

"If we spend Rs 100 to bring 100 litres of water but receive only 60 litres because of losses, the cost of every litre increases significantly," says Subrata Roy, director of the Water Programme at the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE).

Most urban local bodies do not recover the full cost of producing and distributing water. Water tariffs often remain politically sensitive and utilities struggle to generate enough revenue to maintain pipelines, repair infrastructure or invest in new systems. This creates a vicious cycle: underfunded utilities fail to maintain infrastructure, leakages increase, non-revenue water rises further and cities face water scarcity.

Delhi illustrates the challenge. According to available estimates, nearly 58 per cent of the water entering the city's network is lost before it can be billed. "No utility can sustainably function when more than half of its water never generates revenue," says Sagari Gupta, an independent policy researcher.

#### The "Waste" Paradox

India's water crisis is also being deepened by the way it handles its waste. India produces millions of litres of sewage per day, enough to fill 30,000 Olympic-sized pools, but treats only 28 per cent. The disposal of domestic sewage from cities and towns is the biggest source of pollution of water bodies, says the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

Cities are expanding rapidly, but infrastructure is developing at a slower pace. Take the IT hubs of Hyderabad and Pune, for instance. A CSE data says, in Hyderabad, only 30-40 per cent of expanding areas have sewer networks; although 95 per cent of Pune is covered by sewer networks, collection efficiency is only 64 per cent. Both cities are treating only a small share of the sewage they are generating.

Far away in Jammu, a petition filed by environment activist Raja Muzaffar Bhat led to the National Green Tribunal directing the setting up of sewage treatment plants to prevent untreated wastewater from flowing into drinking water sources. Illegal sand and boulder mining has contaminated major water sources such as Dal Lake and the Dudhganga River.

According to the CSE, wastewater generation will increase by about 80 per cent by 2050, highlighting an urgent need to significantly scale up wastewater treatment infrastructure.

Presently, a majority of urban wastewater is directly discharged into open water bodies, leading to another vicious cycle—cities pollute nearby lakes and rivers and then spend enormous sums transporting water from

distant sources.

Roy estimates that roughly 80 per cent of the water used by households eventually returns as wastewater. "If we manage wastewater properly, we can manage drinking water better as well." Experts estimate that treated wastewater could potentially meet between 20 and 30 per cent of urban demand over the next decade. "The question policymakers need to ask is not where the next new source is, but why the existing water cycle is so incomplete," says Gupta.

Experts also argue that cities need to fundamentally rethink how they manage water. Rather than treating it as a one-way resource that is extracted, consumed and discarded, urban centres must adopt a circular approach by treating wastewater, protecting lakes and recharging groundwater, says Roy. "We are not facing a crisis because there is no water. We are facing a crisis because we are not managing water properly."

#### Depleting Ground Water

Over the past 50 years, the number of borewells has grown from 1 million to 20 million, making India the world's largest user of groundwater, says a World Bank report. Half of urban India's water supply comes from groundwater. In rural India, the figure rises to nearly 85 per cent. The Central Ground Water Board's 2025 assessment classifies around 26 per cent of India's 6,762 groundwater blocks as over-exploited, critical or semi-critical.

Gupta says borewell depths that once stood at 50 or 100 feet now routinely exceed 600 or even 1,000 feet in many cities. Water drawn from these depths frequently contains fluoride, arsenic, nitrate and salinity beyond safe limits. "So urban India is increasingly extracting groundwater that is both harder to reach and unsafe to drink without treatment. It is paying more for a worse product from a shrinking source," she says.

For cities that have expanded beyond their original boundaries, groundwater has become the default source of water. Hyderabad, for instance, now imports drinking water from as far as 225 km (Godavari).

"The speed of expansion of cities is far greater than the speed of expansion of water supply lines," Roy says. In Bengaluru, for instance, despite a year of above-normal rainfall and the expansion of water supply through the Cauvery Stage V project, several parts of the city continue to rely heavily on groundwater. According to the Groundwater Assessment Report 2025, extraction levels in some areas have reached 378 per cent of sustainable limits.

Depleting groundwater is also leading to land subsidence. A 2025 study published in Nature Sustainability found that more than 2,400 structures in Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai are at high risk of damage.

"More concretisation means less space for water to percolate into the ground," says Roy. Instead of replenishing

aquifers, rainwater now rushes into drains and rivers. "It increases flooding and reduces groundwater recharge. Gupta points to Mumbai's disappearing catchments, Bengaluru's lost lakes and Chennai's shrinking wetlands as examples of cities dismantling their natural water-storage systems.

Even Jammu and Kashmir, long regarded as a water-abundant region, is beginning to show signs of water stress. Repeated years of below-normal snowfall, shrinking glaciers and drying springs have weakened drinking water sources. A recent Comptroller and Auditor General of India report found that nearly half of the lakes and water bodies in J&K have disappeared.

#### Existing Policies

The Centre has rolled out a range of initiatives to tackle India's water challenges, from the rural drinking water-focused Jal Jeevan Mission and groundwater conservation under the Atal Bhujal Yojana to urban water security through AMRUT 2.0 and river rejuvenation under the Namami Gange programme.

However, experts say the problem lies less in policy design and more in implementation. Weak governance, poor coordination among agencies and inadequate monitoring have often prevented these schemes from translating into lasting improvements on the ground.

Despite an outlay of Rs 2.77 lakh crore under AMRUT 2.0 and more than Rs 1.19 lakh crore worth of water supply projects already approved, implementation has struggled to keep pace. Government data shows that across AMRUT and AMRUT 2.0, projects worth Rs 2.74 lakh crore have been sanctioned, but works worth only about Rs 1.12 lakh crore have been completed so far—highlighting the gap between allocations and execution.

"If we want to address the problem of water, we have to understand that water is one. Whether it is groundwater, surface water or wastewater, all these forms are interconnected," says Roy.

Yet the country manages each through different departments and agencies that often work in silos. "More collaboration and joint action are required. It is not really a matter of policy that we are lacking. It is more in implementation, development and management," says former Central Water Commission chief S. Masood Husain.

Until that happens, people will continue to put their lives and livelihoods on hold. While Adith, an IT professional from Bengaluru, has been dependent on water tankers for five months now, Sonu, a driver employed by a family, often skips work to make sure his household has enough water, risking the job that keeps them afloat. "It's a dilemma, but who cares?" he says.

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# The Ayodhya Ledger: Ram Temple, Missing Donations and the Politics Ahead of UP Elections



With less than a year left for the Uttar Pradesh (UP) Assembly elections, the Ram temple in Ayodhya has once again become the centre of political contestation. Unlike previous elections, when the temple served as the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP's) most powerful political symbol, it is now being discussed because of allegations that crores of rupees in devotees' offerings may have gone missing. The issue has emerged barely two years after the temple's pran pratishtha (consecration of the idol).

The controversy began after Pawan Pandey, a former Samajwadi Party (SP) MLA from Ayodhya, alleged that at least Rs 7 crore in donations had been siphoned off. The allegations found force after photographs and videos allegedly showing currency notes in a washroom near the donation-counting centre and irregularities in the donation-counting process circulated on social media and television news.

This was quickly amplified by the SP, whose chief Akhilesh Yadav repeatedly raised questions about the handling of devotees' contributions and demanded accountability. "This is an extremely sensitive piece of news for devotees of Lord Ram across the entire world: crores of rupees in offerings to the Ram temple have been found missing. This is an utterly shameful situation for the temple trust. No one is coming forward to offer any explanation," Yadav wrote on X on June 7. He added: "There is a demand for the court to take suo motu cognisance, as this is directly linked to the deep faith in Lord Ram held by the entire Sanatan society at a global level."

Several senior SP leaders told Outlook that Yadav has continued to raise the issue because it allows him to challenge

the Yogi Adityanath government's claims of probity while questioning whether the BJP can protect the institution most closely associated with its ideological project. The strategy is part of the SP's effort to move beyond its long-standing image as a party representing primarily Muslims and Yadavs. In recent years, Yadav has increasingly adopted a softer Hindutva stance while simultaneously advancing the pichhda, Dalit, alpsankhyak (PDA) political coalition. The party hopes that this issue will help it in the 2027 UP elections to elect 403 members of the state Assembly.

Senior SP leader Sudheer Panwar says the controversy has punctured the BJP's claim to moral authority on the Ram Temple issue. "This is one of the worst things to have happened in Hinduism. Mandir me chori [looting in the temple] under the nose of the people who won elections in the name of Ram!"

When asked if it will help the SP, he says, "The BJP has been exposed in the true sense that it can no longer take the moral high ground on the Ram temple. This episode proves that the BJP only knows how to exploit the name of Ram for votes. It can't safeguard the Ram temple from acts of wrongdoing."

Yet, the strategy remains politically risky. Memories of the October-November 1990 police firing on kar sevaks under the Mulayam Singh Yadav government continue to shape perceptions among sections of Hindu voters. BJP leaders continue to invoke the episode whenever the SP attempts to engage with issues linked to Ayodhya and the Ram temple.

## The Developments

After the allegation of missing funds surfaced, the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust strongly denied any

financial irregularity. Trust general secretary Champat Rai said regular audits were being conducted and that no discrepancies had been detected. The trust subsequently approached the UP government seeking an impartial investigation, alleging that misinformation was being spread on social media to tarnish the image of the temple and hurt devotees' sentiments.

Acting on the request of the trust, the UP government constituted a three-member special investigation team (SIT) on June 13 comprising Lucknow divisional commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant, inspector general of police Kiran S. and finance department special secretary Neel Ratan. The SIT has now submitted its preliminary findings to the state government. According to sources, the 20-page report recommends registration of a first information report (FIR), restructuring of the trust's administrative framework and appointment of a senior government officer as the temple's chief executive officer. Sources say the report raises questions regarding supervision, recruitment of personnel involved in counting donations and monitoring mechanisms governing temple finances. The report is also understood to have flagged alleged negligence.

An FIR was subsequently registered and eight people were arrested. The probe has reportedly examined the role of nearly 14 individuals connected with temple administration and financial management, including trust member Anil Mishra, administrator Gopal Rao and Ram Shankar Yadav alias Tinnu. Champat Rai, general secretary of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, resigned from his post after the FIR was registered. Rai has not been named in

the FIR. Trustee Mishra has also submitted his resignation.

Even as the SIT completed its preliminary inquiry, CM Adityanath alleged that Ayodhya was being targeted as part of a larger "conspiracy" and urged people not to rush to conclusions until the investigation was completed.

Trust chairperson Nripendra Misra too cautioned against premature conclusions. He publicly acknowledged serious administrative and surveillance failures within the temple management system. "My firm opinion is that the entire management structure should be reorganised and entrusted to experienced professionals," he added.

A retired Indian Administrative Service officer who served as principal secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his first term, Misra heads the construction committee of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust and remains one of the most influential figures associated with the temple project.

Rakesh Tripathi, BJP spokesperson, says that the party had nothing to do with the administration of the trust and emphasised that the trust itself had sought an investigation. "The Ram Mandir Trust approached the UP government seeking a probe," he says. "We are taking every allegation seriously. It would be immature to speak before the SIT report is made public. We have ensured that every allegation is investigated." Tripathi adds: "The SP should be the last party to comment on this issue. Those who ordered firing on Ram bhakts and kar sevaks have zero credibility."

Whether the controversy ultimately damages the BJP will depend on what the final investigation establishes and whether opposition parties can sustain public attention on the issue until the Assembly elections in UP. For the SP, this offers a rare opportunity to challenge the BJP on terrain that once appeared politically impregnable. Analysts caution against assuming that public anger will automatically translate into electoral losses for the BJP. Mahendra Kumar Singh, who teaches political science at Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gorakhpur University, says that the allegations could complicate the BJP's efforts to consolidate non-Yadav Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and non-Jatav Dalit voters under its Hindutva umbrella. "Theft at the Ram temple will affect UP politics. The BJP is taking it very seriously because politically it is a major issue," he says. He argues that the controversy has the potential to undermine the BJP's broader project of combining welfare delivery with cultural nationalism to build support among sections of OBCs and Dalits, and bring them into the Hindutva fold. At the same time, he believes there are limits to the political fallout. "I also think that all followers of Lord Ram are extremely hurt and angry. But I highly doubt that they will leave the BJP because of this matter," he says.

# The corporate sleight of hand behind X's journey into SpaceX

The merger of X into xAI and then SpaceX means investors can no longer assess the social media platform as a standalone business.

In 2022, Elon Musk took Twitter private because public markets, he argued, could not appreciate its long-term vision. Four years later, Twitter—or rather X—has returned to public markets. Not through its own IPO. Not because it became profitable. But because it has been folded into one of the world's most valuable private companies, SpaceX, which went public earlier this month.

Ordinarily, when a company returns to public investors after years in private hands, investors get to value that company and decide whether its turnaround succeeded or failed. In X's case, that moment never arrived. Instead, the company disappeared into xAI, and xAI disappeared into SpaceX.

This is not the first time markets have seen unrelated or weak businesses packaged with stronger ones. Bankers have long understood that difficult assets become easier to sell when they are pooled with better ones. Mortgage-backed securities worked on precisely that intuition: investors bought the pool rather than each underlying loan. Corporate finance has its own version. Combine an underperforming business with an exceptional one, encourage investors to value the package rather than its constituent parts, allowing the weaker asset to acquire a valuation it might never have commanded on its own.

Folding an underperforming, founder-controlled social media platform into one of the world's most valued space and satellite companies has important governance implications for the shareholders of SpaceX and the consumers of X, arguably the world's most influential social media platform.

## The promise to revive Twitter

After Musk bought Twitter promising to revive its fortunes, he overhauled the product, renamed it X, introduced paid features, restricted previously free functionalities and repeatedly assured users and investors that a turnaround was underway. Yet, X emerged as a platform that many users found to be more expensive and far less enjoyable, even as its financial performance remained under a cloud. As the user experience deteriorated due to the type of content promoted on the platform and glitches with the interface, millions of users left the platform. Instead of demonstrating that X could once again stand on its own, Musk has chosen to bundle it with SpaceX.

The chronology is instructive: Musk ac-



quired Twitter for roughly \$44 billion in 2022 and took it private. Over the next few years, advertising revenues reportedly fell sharply, the company underwent repeated restructuring, banks struggled to syndicate acquisition debt, and Musk continued to promise that profitability was around the corner. In 2025, X was merged into xAI. From that point on, X effectively ceased to exist as a separately observable business. In 2026, xAI itself was merged into SpaceX.

Twitter generated over \$5 billion of revenue before Musk acquired it. By 2023, while audited financial statements were no longer available, industry estimates suggested revenues had fallen to roughly \$3.4 billion. In 2024, Fidelity — a key institutional shareholder in Twitter — had repeatedly marked down its investment until it implied a valuation close to 20 per cent of Musk's purchase price. By 2025, when it was merged with xAI, valuing the social media platform by itself became almost impossible.

SpaceX's filing too does not disclose X's financial performance separately. Instead, it aggregates X with Grok, enterprise AI offerings, subscriptions, APIs and data licensing into a single AI segment.

## Who bailed out X?

Conglomerates have long argued that combining businesses creates economies of scale, scope and capital allocation efficiencies. This is the fundamental logic of corporate mergers and restructuring, which allows both the creation and re-distribution of value. SpaceX bundles a range of businesses including launching rockets, providing wireless connectivity through space satellites, building AI data centers in space, training foundational AI models, and also running the social media platform, X.

The bundling of unrelated businesses tends to raise questions about the value

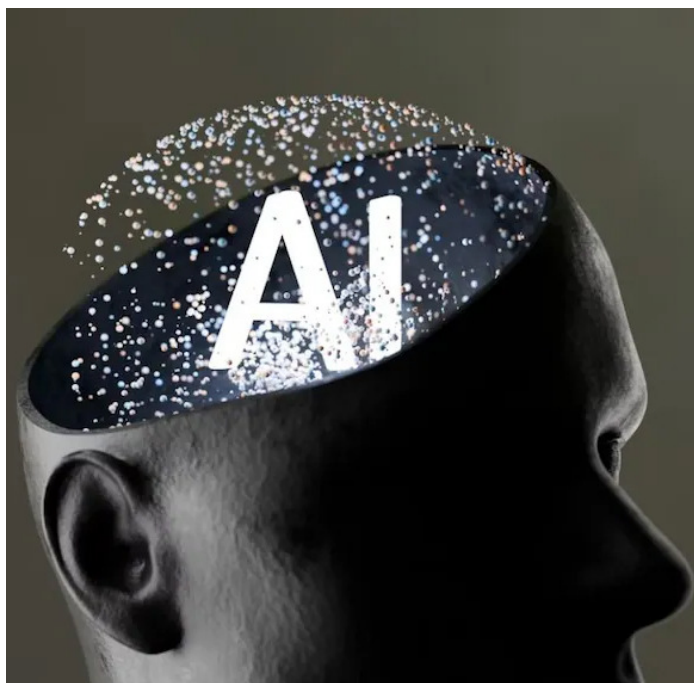
associated with the bundled business verticals. In particular, bundling X with SpaceX stands out because, unlike the typical public merger, both X and SpaceX are substantially founder-owned. This gives it much more of a bail-out flavour. Had SpaceX acquired X from an unrelated seller, the transaction would have been negotiated at arm's length and investors could have judged whether SpaceX overpaid. But common-control mergers work differently. Because the same controller sits on both sides of the transaction, there is no independent market price against which outsiders can evaluate the exchange. That makes disclosure far more important. Given the absence of standalone financial disclosures and the resulting opacity around the value that each business brings to the table, the jury is out on whether the public shareholders of SpaceX, in effect, subsidised the owners of X.

## Can X remain an independent public square?

Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter has always posed a key governance question for the social media platform: to what extent are X's moderation policies influenced by Elon Musk's personal preferences or his other financial interests. The bundling of X into SpaceX intensifies this governance conflict. Twitter and X built their reputation as a platform for unconstrained speech and scepticism of government power. SpaceX, by contrast, depends heavily on government contracts, licences, security clearances and regulatory approvals. One business historically claimed to challenge government; the other depends on maintaining close relationships with them. Whether those incentives can comfortably coexist within a single listed company has received remarkably little attention. **Over-selling founder-led eco-systems** Fi-

nally, one of the dominant characteristics of the SpaceX IPO filing is its irrepressible techno-optimism. In some sections, the document reads more as a science fiction vision for the future and less like a set of disclosures before an IPO; very much in line with Musk's public rhetoric. The 300+ page document starts out with over ten pages of pictures of space and rockets. The company's mission is "...to build the systems and technologies necessary to make life multiplanetary, to understand the true nature of the universe, and to extend the light of consciousness to the stars." The vast majority of SpaceX's Total Addressable Market seems to depend on Enterprise Applications of its AI technology, with a special focus on orbital data centres, none of which exist right now. A truly staggering number of low probability events (technological breakthroughs, regulatory approvals, exponential growth of AI services demand, etc.) would have to occur sequentially for all of these forecasts to become reality. Simultaneously ambitious and delusional, the filing tells a compelling story of what SpaceX could become if everything goes right.

Investors in SpaceX did not buy just a rocket company, a satellite company, or a social media platform. The promise is that rockets launch satellites, satellites generate cash, X provides distribution and real-time data, AI monetises both, and each business reinforces the others. In fact, the thesis that these businesses are synergistic is yet to be proven. Even if these synergies are real, no one can confidently measure the value generated by each. That said, the "commanding heights" of SpaceX's trillion-dollar valuation suggests that investors are comfortable buying into a founder-led ecosystem. This surge of confidence in founder-led ecosystems creates new challenges for securities regulators. For decades, they have focused on whether promoters moved money between companies they controlled. The SpaceX IPO suggests the next generation of governance problems may arise before any money moves at all. In an age of founder-led ecosystems, the most consequential corporate governance decision may simply be deciding which companies belong inside the listed entity—and who should pay for them. As the world watches the rocket contrails behind Twitter's launch into space, those left standing in the remains of its public square will be forced to think about whether such organizations should be subjected to such astronomical aspirations.



# The Great AI Writing Trap: Why Everyone Suddenly Sounds The Same

I was at a business conference recently, listening to some of India's brightest minds speak one after another. It was the kind of event where you come prepared to be bored and awed in the same day. One after another, speeches written with corporate jargon, waiting for that one moment in each speech that was clearly written to be remembered.

But this time, I found myself getting bored faster than I used to. Not because the speakers were bad, they really weren't, but because somewhere in the middle of it all, I realised every speech was following a pattern. Every speaker sounded way more similar than they used to. I started paying attention after that to this pattern. Speeches, articles, social media posts by people with verified accounts and decades of experience - all of it carried a rhythm, like it's a template - the same way of building tension and arriving at a conclusion. So, I did something that we all do these days when we have a thought: I asked ChatGPT why this was happening. The irony of doing that is not lost on me.

The answer, to its credit, was way more honest than I expected. It admitted that it is obsessed with the contrast framing of sentences. It is rhetorical and takes control of the reader's mental model.

AI has become a genuinely useful writing tool. It fixes grammar, tightens arguments, and helps organise thought. For people writing in a second or third language, it does something more valuable still, bridging a gap that used to require years of immersion or an editor with the time and patience to help. That is a real benefit, and an underappreciated one. But the same tool is producing a problem that is harder to see when you're writing, but obvious to a reader or a listener: it is making intelligent people sound identical. The evidence is in the constructions we can all now identify. "This is not a challenge; it is an opportunity." "India is not a market, it is a mission."

"Immigration is not about borders. It is about identity." "AI is not about technology. It is about power."

"Manufacturing is not about factories. It is about sovereignty."

"The question is no longer whether, but how."

Once you start noticing these formulations, you cannot stop. They are in speeches, opinion pieces, annual reports, social media threads, and television de-

bates. The first time, they sound persuasive. By the hundredth time, they are furniture. And increasingly, they are something worse than furniture. AI writing is no longer just identifiable. It has become something people laugh at, and the people producing it are often the last to know.

The reason is an unexpected one. The problem with AI writing is not that it is bad. It is that it is too perfect. Too free of the hesitations and instincts that make writing feel like it came from a person working something out. Human thinking and, by extension, writing, is a product of friction. The odd stumble, the sentence that goes somewhere unexpected, the argument that admits its own uncertainty. AI writing has none of this. Every sentence arrives fully formed. Every problem becomes a clean contrast. Every paragraph strains toward profundity whether or not it has earned it. Readers have started to feel this frictionlessness as a tell, and once they feel it, the mockery follows naturally. Underneath the style problem is a thinking problem, and this one is harder to paper over.

AI-assisted writing does not just reveal writing habits; it reveals intellectual habits. A person with strong ideas will use AI to sharpen and organise them, and the output will be better for it. A person with weak ideas will use it to dress them up, and the dressing will not hold. The machine amplifies whatever is already there. If the underlying thought is thin, robot-written linguistic polish alone can't carry it for long.

What ChatGPT very honestly explained to me was this perfection in speech is part of how AI functions and not something you can override with the help of prompts, as some LinkedIn influencers would like you to believe. The reason this happens is mathematical. Large language models are prediction engines. At every step, they calculate the most probable next word based on billions of examples. If millions of speeches use the construction "not just X but also Y", the model learns it is a reliable way to sound persuasive. If thousands of articles end with "the real question is", the model learns that is how opinion pieces close. Words like "transformation", "purpose" and "future-ready" accumulate high probability scores because influential people keep using them, and the model keeps feeding them back. It is not trying to be original. It

is trying to be statistically correct.

The kind of conference where you arrive expecting to hear something that could only have come from a particular person, a specific observation, an argument built from lived experience, is exactly where this AI writing falls apart.

The best thinkers and writers have always worked against statistical probability. They choose the unexpected detail, a raw emotion, the description of reality as they see it rather than as the pattern predicts. That instinct is not something AI can replicate. It can only reflect what has already been said, more smoothly than before. Which is why the people who use it will

never let it speak for them; they let it assist them but not drive them.

AI can be an editor, a researcher, a tool for helping you think or even sharpen your ideas with the right words. But those who let it do the thinking will find its limits soon enough, probably in the form of an audience that has quietly stopped believing them.

Before hitting generate, there is one question worth sitting with: what do I know, or see, or understand, that the machine cannot access? That is the only part that is original. The rest is AI homogenisation, full of clichés and, finally, stylistic collapse.

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# America 250: Declaration of Unalienable Rights, Backed by Sacred Honor and Rockets' Red Glare

By Ravi Batra

July 4, 1776, was born out of Christianity's grace, and need to culminate the journey for Rights and Liberties, known as Freedom, famously started by Moshe, who we know and lose as Moses, demanding: Let my people go! The Declaration of Independence serves as victory of God's Light over immoral Darkness of Tyrants. The Star-Spangled Banner is a reminder that the fight for American Freedom is the battle between Light and Darkness. That the fight is perpetual, and each generation must, to paraphrase my favorite Founding Father-Hero, Thomas Jefferson: refresh the Tree of Liberty from time to time with the blood of patriots & tyrants.

The Declaration is a uniquely American fight: to be humanity's best, and to be able to do so in our own sovereign land. Of course, if the other 192 member nations of the United Nations were to agree to join our Union, even as a protectorate, we could lift more of humanity right where they are, without diluting America and Americanism. This would allow the Blessing of America be bestowed upon them right where they are. We do need, as I reminded Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni last September, to preserve and enforce Saint Ambrose's command, issued in 387 A.D. when he was Archbishop of Milan: "Do in Rome, as the Romans do."

This remains a necessary key for protecting our own sovereignty. Our recent 14A Birth-Citizenship debate, started by President Donald J. Trump, SCOTUS Order being recently issued, has served to highlight our need to recalibrate, at least culturally, by insisting upon the return of the great "American Melting Pot," use of English in the public square, and only those who love America to stay in America. Most precious of citizens are those who wish to honor our root with their "sacred honor." Unwanted are those, who wish to make America in the image of what they left behind.

I am so grateful to my late great parents, in particular, my Father, Hon. S.N. Batra, the greatest man I have ever known and who



lived his secular life effectuating the principles of Saint Francis of Assisi, until he retired and took the cloth. He is the only one I know who left India to become poor and embrace poverty, so he could teach me. That I resonated with, and responded to, Sir Edmund Burke's call to action: "all that is necessary for evil to triumph is for some good men to do nothing" in conjunction with the Torah's "Justice, justice you shall pursue" has made me a work in progress. That he chose to migrate to these United States of America is his biggest bequest, for America is, and must always remain, Humanity's last best hope of, and for, actual Freedom enjoyed by actual Patriots who love America.

On July 4, 1776, the Founding Fathers assembled in Philadelphia, and signed a Declaration of Independence. By doing so, they valiantly exceeded the limitation in the Bible: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Gospels of Matthew 22:21, Mark 12:17, and Luke 20:25). Even Jesus wished for a peaceful accommodation and payment of taxes.

Not so, for our intellectually giant Ancestors. They claimed "natural right," granted by our Creator, to effectuate European Enlightenment, a powerful wave created by Thinkers that included, the horse-hair habit wearing German Monk, Martin Luther, and his Protest to corruption, especially, judicial and ecclesiastical corruption, including, sale

of papal indulgences.

Our Founding Fathers left the Magna Carta of 1215, at Runnymede, in the dustbin of history, as that instrument acknowledged that it was the King, who held all power, but was abdicating some of it to his then-feudal lords in that Instrument. Our Founders went straight to God for our Rights and Liberties, and asserted from that from us did a government arise, or would fall if it violated the rights and liberties of her citizens. The state of the union is in present-day trouble, as state governments are experimenting with unlawful and Godless Communism, in direct violation of our Founding Documents, and the former discredited Senator McCarthy has started to look appealing to many. Absent clear action, we will be in the ICU of history.

In fact and law, our Founding Fathers embedded our Declaration in the Natural Rights granted by our Creator. So Lincoln, at Gettysburg, was merely restating in easier language: "government of the people, by the people, for the people" what our Founders relied upon on July 4th, 1776 to so Declare.

So, "we the people," American citizenry, was therefore the first in humanity's competing thirst for power, between Shepard and Sheep, to win for everyday Americans based upon God's Grace. What the Founding Fathers did, they did it honorably in their Declaration. Back then, there was honor even in war. So, they stated

their intentions. They stated their causes. They stated their basis and right to do so, to wit:

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America, When in the Course of human events...and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation";

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness";

"That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed";

"The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world. ..."

"We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies

are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States;"

"And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor." (Emphasis added)

After the failed Articles of Confederation, our unique co-equally separated powers regime, the Constitution, followed in 1787 and became effective on June 21, 1788. Still, it has pockets of absolute power. Then, the first Ten Bill of Rights were ratified on December 15, 1791, which mostly delivered on the Declaration's assertion of Natural Rights held by the American Citizen.

In 1814, Francis Scott Key, seeing our Flag kept being raised up to fly over Fort McHenry, despite heavy English bombardment, wrote not just our national anthem, but our destiny laced prophecy - which is our need to perpetually defend America:

And the rockets' red glare, The bombs bursting in air Gave proof through the night That our flag was still there."

Freedom needs to be defended, always, from enemies foreign and domestic. Foreign Agent Registration Act is insufficient.

Finally, after Gettysburg, and Civil War with suspension of Habeas Corpus, the glorious Fourteenth Amendment was ratified on July 9, 1868. It singularly delivered on the entirety of the promise in our Declaration of Independence: rights and liberties, in equal mea-

sure, to all Americans, both in process due and protection of law. For the first time, every American's natural rights, enshrined in the Bill of Rights, was legally effective in pushing back against over-reach by both federal government as well as every state of our union. Thurgood Marshall and Connie Baker Motley effectively used the Fourteenth Amendment in *Brown v Bd. of Ed.*, in 1954, to desegregate education, Later, in hospitality: restaurants and hotels. It's mainly died since then. I intend to revive "separate but equal, is unequal" in other fields, such as transportation so that a person walking in a crosswalk in Staten Island is treated equally as one walking across Park Avenue in Manhattan, and the mother lode of all, in New York State Court System, to remind the State Judiciary that when they take an Oath to honor the U.S. Constitution they must honor the federal constitutional rights of litigants without issuing tyrannical orders that are a travesty of justice. Presiding Justice Diane Renwick recently reminded the lower court of its unconstitutional behavior by setting aside a fine of over \$454 Million against citizen Donald Trump as being "excessive" and in violation of the Eight Amendment's prohibition of "excessive fines."

Still, today we have many unresolved issues: like birth citizenship; and lack of national uniformity for presidential elections, lack of uniformity among the states for election of senators and congress-members. But, worst of all, is the Ninth Amendment. Instead of its over-shadowing constitutional power, it has shrunk and is deeply misunderstood. Most mis-think it as a mere rule of construction; a place holder. Others are lost in its vast embrace of history and common law, a "black hole," and so misunderstood, that its nearly ignored in the courts, hence, losing its protection of the unenumerated constitutional rights and liberties, we have and own, as our unalienable rights.

My contribution today in soulfully celebrating our Republic, especially today, on "America 250," has one motive, and is three-fold:

1. to shed light on the Bill of Rights' "Black Hole," the Ninth Amendment, with a simple recipe that demystifies it, honoring Justice Clarence Thomas desire to explain "a



\$20 Idea in a 10 Cent Sentence," and akin to Lincoln's at Gettysburg;

2. prove that the internally contradicting "3/5th Compromise" was actually the first step towards abolition of slavery, well before Sir William Wilberforce in 1807, and hence, humanizing of slavery; and

3. East India Company's role in Boston Tea Party and British India squeezed to death, after George Washington secured the Articles of Capitulation from Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown and Cornwallis was sent as Viceroy of East India Company's "British India" where he ruled "harshly."

#### **Ninth Amendment Rights Need to Come out of the Black Hole's Darkness.**

Shedding huge luminosity into the Black Hole and lighting it up for its usefulness, after mostly being asleep for 250 years, use Sir William Blackstone's "Commentaries on the Laws of England" to search for all of the well-defined rights and liberties that are in the Ninth Amendment. Blackstone's Commentaries were published between 1765 and 1769, well before 1776 and 1791, and each of our Founders were aware of Sir Blackstone's weighty contribution to codify stray laws and rights of citizenry. By so doing, the un-enumerated rights and liberties become enumerated, and useful to every American who wants a full measure of justice.

#### **The 3/5th Compromise.**

The 3/5th Compromise came about to limit the number of South-

ern States' members of congress. As it was population based formula. More the people, more the representatives. To end slavery, the Abolitionist North wanted not to count slaves as human being at all. The Slave owning Southern States wanted to count each Slave as a full human being! Had South won its demand, the Congress would be controlled by the slave-owning South. Hence, the 60% of a person, 3/5th compromise, was to actually the start the abolition of slavery in America. Something we can all be proud of. Therefore, Critical Race Theory, is both factually false, power-dynamic ignorant, and inflammatory to be seditious and destructive of American unity and rightful pride.

Every American can be proud that we struck the first blow against the trade of slaves, with the 3/5th Compromise in 1787. Slave trader John Newtown debut his "Amazing Grace" in 1773. England outlawed slavery in 1833, but invented indentured servitude, which was not much better.

#### **Book Ends of the American Revolution: East India Company and India.**

The Boston Tea Party starred tea from East India Company in 1773, when the American Revolution started. When George Washington won at Yorktown, Lord Charles Cornwallis returned to London humiliated. Whenever a great loss occurs, those blessed by corrupt power are always rewarded with a promotion, while the rest are punished on the merits. So, Lord

Cornwallis was corruptly promoted to be East India Company's Viceroy of India and he squeezed India to make up for the losses of revenue from the now-free and sovereign Thirteen united States of America. The history of the Empire in India only went from "bad" to "worse."

Incredulously, or perhaps Indians, having been unfairly subjugated by the same British Empire, just as the Irish were and love America, the 1.4B Indians celebrate American freedoms and America as their own, more than any nation or people on earth as they truly book-ended in history the start of the American Revolution in Boston and after the Capitulation on October 19, 1781 at Yorktown, they were squeezed with starvation and paying more taxes to Empire so as to cover her losses. The linkage between United States and India spans centuries, and the love of Freedom burns equally bright. In fact, the perpetualness of the fight between Light and Darkness, as Jefferson referenced in his Tree of Liberty, is ancient as it is uniquely Indian with her own festival of Diwali. That metaphorical victory of "Light" over "Darkness" is now also a natural Thomas Jefferson American asset. This history joinder occurred, as Ranju Batra, my wife, worked tirelessly over seven years as Chair of the Diwali Stamp Project, with lots of help from

lots of good and great people, across all ethnicities, as it is what every good human being wants, and then Ranju succeeded in getting United States Postal Service to issue a Forever Diwali Stamp depicting a brightly lit Diya on October 5, 2016, as she invited others to join her in the Stamp Dedication.

Two months later, twenty four nations at the United Nations honored her and her journey, as her process was consistent with the highest ideals of the UN Charter, and Manhattan USPS Postmaster joined. Then, a year later in 2017, as part of Americanism's core contribution to humanity, victory of Light over Darkness - as the Declaration of Independence actually personifies the highest of Diwali Light - world class diplomats are annually honored at the United Nations with a USPS "Diwali Stamp - The Power of One Award." Such that these awards have become known as the Oscars of Diplomacy, help keep Hope alive, and promote peace by enhancing the role diplomacy. Today, July 3, 2026, every American must declare here and now to preserve America and Americanism forever, and swear: "And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

Happy birthday America!  
Here's to Lincoln's prediction at Gettysburg: America1000!  
Ec dc\America250: Declaration of Unalienable Rights Backed by Sacred Honor and Rockets' Red Glare

## The Metabolic Blueprint: Addressing Diaspora Insulin Resistance

TORONTO — For decades, standard medical guidelines for managing cardiovascular health and Type 2 diabetes were calibrated primarily using data from Western demographics. However, a growing coalition of South Asian physicians is challenging these generalized metrics, pointing to a stark, genetically distinct reality: the South Asian metabolic blueprint requires a completely specialized approach to fitness and nutrition. Clinical data indicates that individuals of South Asian descent exhibit a higher percentage of visceral fat—the deep fat surrounding internal organs—even at a lower Body Mass Index (BMI). This unique body composition significantly amplifies the risk of insulin resistance and metabolic syndrome at much lower weight thresholds than

other ethnic groups.

**The BMI Disconnect:** Standard medical charts classify a BMI of 25 as overweight; for South Asians, metabolic risks escalate dramatically at a BMI of just 23. **Muscular Adaptations:** Ancestral adaptations mean South Asians typically carry less skeletal muscle mass, making heavy resistance training far more critical than long-distance steady-state cardio for metabolic regulation. Medical practitioners are shifting their advice away from generic calorie-counting toward progressive strength training and precise macronutrient timing. By building lean muscle tissue, individuals can fundamentally improve their baseline insulin sensitivity, directly combating the unique genetic vulnerabilities of the diaspora.

## A Possible 'Missing Link' in South Asian Heart Risk

TORONTO - By Insider Health Desk

Researchers at Unity Health Toronto and the University of Toronto have identified a potential biological clue to why South Asians develop heart disease early and aggressively. In a study published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, South Asians with heart disease or diabetes were found to have fewer vascular regenerative and reparative cells than white European patients.

These cells help grow new blood vessels and repair damaged ones. A deficiency, the researchers suggest, points to weakened vessel-repair capacity that may help explain the community's excess cardiovascular risk - a link the study's co-lead described as previously unrecognized.

The work is early and based on a modest sample, but it adds to a growing body of research treating South Asian heart risk as a distinct clinical problem rather than a footnote. Readers concerned about family history should raise it with their doctor.

### 'Type 5 Diabetes' Recognized: A Neglected Diagnosis Tied to Undernutrition

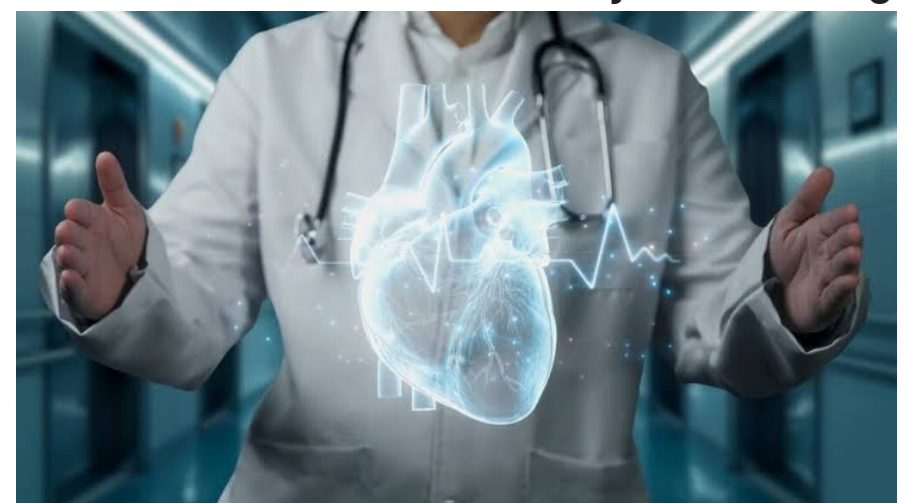
By Insider Health Desk

A landmark consensus reached in 2025 formally recognized a distinct form of the disease, termed type 5 diabetes, seen in lean individuals with a lifelong history of undernutrition. Endorsed by the International Diabetes Federation, the classification revives attention to a phenotype first described in 1955 and long overlooked. Type 5 is thought to result from malnutrition-related impaired pancreatic development and is largely found in low- and middle-income countries, with an estimated 20 to 25 million people affected worldwide. Crucially, standard treatment protocols for type 1 and type 2 diabetes are considered inadequate for it, meaning patients need a tailored approach. For a region carrying an enormous diabetes burden - India alone accounts for tens of millions of cases - the recognition could reshape how lean, undernourished patients are diagnosed and treated. This is a sensitive topic; individual medical decisions belong with a qualified clinician.

By Insider Health Desk : The statistics that circulate in South Asian cardiology clinics are sobering: by longstanding estimates, a quarter of heart attacks in young South Asians occur before age 40 and half before 50, with coronary artery disease developing up to a decade earlier than in the general population.

Cardiologists attribute the pattern to a cluster of factors - high rates of insulin resistance and diabetes, central weight gain, and genetic predisposition - that combine to accelerate disease. The practical implication is that the community's risk clock runs faster, and screening timed to general-population guidelines may start too late.

The encouraging counterpoint is that



much of this risk is modifiable through diet, activity and early monitoring. Readers are encouraged to treat a routine summer physical as an opportu-

nity to ask about cardiovascular and metabolic screening. Anyone with symptoms or concerns should seek medical advice promptly.

## Monsoon-Season Wellness for Families Visiting India

By Insider Health Desk

For the many families making the summer trip to India, a little medical preparation goes a long way. Travel-health specialists advise reviewing routine and recommended vaccinations well before departure, packing a basic medication kit, and planning around the monsoon's heightened risk of waterborne and mosquito-borne illness. Simple habits matter most: drink sealed or boiled water, be cautious with raw and street food

during the first days of adjustment, and use mosquito protection in the evenings. Travelers managing chronic conditions should carry medications in original packaging with a copy of prescriptions, and confirm that any needed drugs are permitted at their destination. A pre-travel consultation with a physician or travel clinic - ideally four to six weeks out - remains the single best step. This is general information, not medical advice; individual needs vary.



## Prediabetes at 45: New Study Flags an Early Warning for South Asians



DALLAS - (By Insider Health Desk) South Asian adults in the United States show cardiovascular risk factors strikingly early, according to a study published in February 2026 in the Journal of the American Heart Association. At age 45, South Asian men were nearly eight times more likely - and South Asian women about three times more likely - to have prediabetes than their white peers. The findings draw on the MASALA Study, based at Northwestern University and the University of California, San Francisco, which has followed participants tracing their ancestry to Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The message for the community is one of vigilance rather than alarm: risk that appears early can be caught early. Clinicians increasingly urge South Asian patients to begin metabolic screening well before the ages at which general guidelines kick in. This is a sensitive health topic; readers with personal concerns should speak with their physician about individualized screening.

## Heart Attacks Before 50: The Case for Early Screening

# BIMSTEC & The Bay of Bengal Century: Shifting Regional Maritime Alliances



COLOMBO — For decades, economic cooperation in South Asia was choked by the geopolitical paralysis of continental pacts. However, this quarter's trade data confirms a massive structural pivot. The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is officially taking center stage, transforming maritime trade lanes into the region's primary economic engine. Driven by aggressive port modernization projects in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and India, trade volumes within the Bay of Bengal have surged by 22% over the last fiscal year. This shift comes as land-based trade routes remain plagued by customs bottlenecks

and political friction. Logistics firms are capitalizing on new deep-water terminals, slashing shipping times between Chennai, Chittagong, and Colombo by nearly 40%. The business community is responding rapidly. Private equity is pouring into maritime logistics and cold-chain infrastructure along the coastlines. "The future of South Asian commerce is wet, not dry," notes Kabir Ahmed, a supply chain analyst based in Dhaka. As continental trade remains unpredictable, the maritime corridors of the Bay of Bengal are establishing a resilient, highly lucrative trade network that will define the next decade of regional growth.

# Sensex Slides 10.3% in First Half as Foreign Investors Retreat

MUMBAI - By Insider Business Desk : India's benchmark Sensex closed the first half of 2026 down 10.3 percent, weighed down by persistent selling from foreign portfolio investors, even as small- and mid-cap indices outperformed on the strength of domestic investor support. Analysts expect a gradual recovery in the second half, with attention shifting to domestic cues. For non-resident Indian investors watching from North America, the divergence between large-cap weakness and broader-market resilience is the story to track. The retreat of foreign money has hit the index heavy-

weights hardest, while domestic mutual-fund inflows have cushioned the mid- and small-cap tiers. Whether the indices can recover to new highs by December remains an open question that technical analysts are debating. As always, readers should treat market commentary as information rather than investment advice and consult a licensed adviser before acting.



# India's Global Capability Centers Power Through 227,991 Hires by Midyear

BENGALURU - By Insider Business Desk : India recorded 227,991 hires at global capability centers through June 2026, an 11 percent increase over the same period last year, according to staffing platform foundit. With roughly 2,120 such centers now operating in the country, the firm projects total GCC hiring will reach 510,452 jobs by year-end, a 12 percent rise over 2025. The nature of these centers has shifted, industry executives say.

Companies are no longer establishing GCCs simply to cut costs but to build the artificial-intelligence, engineering and product capabilities that run their global operations - and the pull of Tier 2 cities shows how far that talent now extends beyond the traditional metros. The trend dovetails with the reverse-migration story the Insider has followed closely, as skilled professionals weigh opportunities at home against a tightening U.S. visa environment.



## Rs 4.7 Trillion IPO Pipeline Sets Up a Busy Second Half

MUMBAI - By Insider Business Desk : A wave of public offerings estimated at ₹4.7 trillion is building for the second half of 2026, with marquee names including the National Stock Exchange and Reliance's Jio in focus. If the pipeline clears as expected, it would rank among the most active stretches for Indian primary markets in years.

The scale of the pipeline is a vote of confidence in domestic demand at a moment when foreign investors have been net sellers. For diaspora investors, several of these listings will be accessible only through specific NRI-eligible channels; eligibility and tax treatment vary and warrant professional guidance. The Insider will track the calendar as filing and pricing details firm up.

# Venture Funding Into Indian Startups Grows 21% in First Half



By Insider Business Desk : Venture capital funding into Indian startups grew 21 percent year-on-year in the first six months of 2026, lifting hopes of a durable revival in capital inflows after a subdued stretch. The rebound spanned sectors, from cleantech and elder-care platforms to specialty-materials and gold-loan lenders. Recent rounds illustrate the breadth: Gurugram-based BatX Energies raised ₹105 crore in a

Series A led by IvyCap Ventures, while Age Care Labs, parent of the Emoha and Epoch elder-care brands, secured about ₹85 crore in Series B1 funding. Serial founder Bhavin Turakhia also launched an AI-native work platform, Neo, backed by a \$30 million investment. For diaspora entrepreneurs and angel investors, the numbers suggest the funding winter may be thawing - though selectivity remains the watchword.

## FICTION - THE DIASPORA SHELF

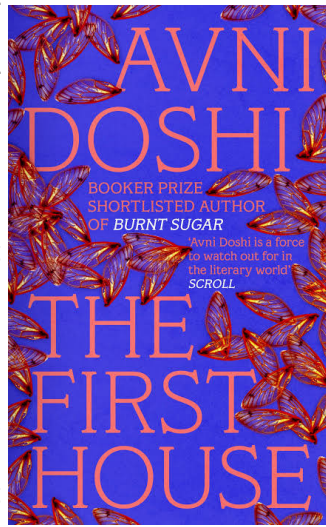
### Avni Doshi Returns With 'The First House,' a Novel of Rupture and Rebirth

By Insider Books Desk

Six years after *Burnt Sugar* carried her onto the Booker Prize shortlist, Avni Doshi is back with a second novel that trades the mother-daughter battleground of her debut for the quieter devastation of a marriage coming apart. *The First House* opens with a husband walking into the bedroom the couple has shared for thirteen years to announce he no longer wants to be married. What follows is a single summer of unraveling, set against a looming cicada horde and marital memories that intermingle with the old myths of headless women and vengeful goddesses.

Doshi, who was born in New Jersey and now lives in Dubai, has described the book as a work of "domestic horror" - a post-mortem of relationships that insists a broken home is not only one a man walks out of, but one where issues are brushed aside to build a makeshift peace. Early praise has been considerable, with novelist Katie Kitamura calling Doshi among the finest prose stylists working today.

For readers in North America, a note on timing: the novel publishes first in the United Kingdom on July 16, 2026, through Hamish Hamilton, with the U.S. hardcover from Simon & Schuster scheduled to follow in November. Diaspora readers eager for a summer copy can order the U.K. edition now or pre-order stateside for the fall.



## COMMUNITY - READING CALENDAR

### South Asian Heritage Month Arrives

#### July 18: A Curated Reading List

By Insider Books Desk

South Asian Heritage Month, marked internationally from July 18 to August 17, offers families a ready-made occasion to put diaspora writing at the center of the summer reading table. The observance spans the literatures of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldives and Afghanistan, and this year's catalogue is unusually deep.

Our recommended starting points range from established landmarks - Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*, Salman Rushdie's

*Midnight's Children* - to contemporary voices reshaping the field, including Deepa Anappara's *Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line* and the new wave of South Asian literary crime fiction. For younger readers, several 2026 middle-grade titles trace displacement and return in verse. Libraries and community centers across the tri-state area typically program author talks and reading circles during the month; we will publish a regional events roundup in next week's edition.



## FICTION - FIRST READS

### A Tamil Refugee Family, a Day-Trading Scam and the Cost of Survival

By Insider Books Desk

Among the summer's most talked-about literary debuts is a novel following a Tamil refugee family who steal from corporations to stay afloat, only to have their fragile security upended when a day-trading scheme threatens what little they have left. Released in June by Flatiron Books, the book arrives as diaspora fiction increasingly turns its attention to the economics of migration - the precarity, the improvisation and the moral compromises that rarely make it into celebratory immigrant narratives. The premise lands with particular force for South Asian readers in the West, for whom stories of arrival are often told as triumphs. Here the register is different: survival is conditional, and belonging is something the family must engineer rather than inherit. The Insider will carry a full review in a coming issue. Readers who have finished the book are invited to write in with their responses for our letters page.



## FICTION - GENRE WATCH

### Postcolonial Crime and the Rise of the South Asian Literary Thriller

By Insider Books Desk

The mystery aisle has become one of the most vital corners of South Asian writing, and 2026's releases confirm the trend. Nina McConigley's *How to Commit a Postcolonial Murder* headlines a year in which crime fiction is being used to interrogate empire, migration and identity rather than merely to entertain.

The lineage is well established - Abir Mukherjee's *Wyndham* and Banerjee novels set in colonial Calcutta, Vaseem Khan's *Malabar House* series featuring India's first female detective in post-Partition Bombay - but the newest entrants push further, folding the diaspora experience directly into the whodunit. The result is a genre that carries serious cultural freight beneath its propulsive plots.

For readers who want their summer page-turner to do double duty, this is a rich season. We will spotlight individual titles in the weeks ahead.

### The Postcolonial Moment in South and Southeast Asia

Edited by Gyan Prakash, Michael Laffan & Nikhil Menon



BLOOMSBURY

## The Weight of Our Mothers: How a Viral Translation Rekindled the "Eldest Daughter" Dialogue

NEW YORK — When Sanjana Rao first picked up the English translation of *The Weight of Our Mothers*, she expected a standard multi-generational family drama. Instead, the 28-year-old software engineer found herself staring at a mirror of her own life. Originally a runaway bestseller in Taiwan, the novel's translation has taken the South Asian diaspora by storm, sparking a massive cross-cultural reckoning over what sociologists call "Eldest Daughter Syndrome."

The novel follows the life of Min-Ji, a first-generation daughter who quietly absorbs the financial anxieties,

emotional burdens, and logistical management of her immigrant household, all while sacrificing her own ambitions. For young South Asian women, the parallels are uncanny. The book subtly dissects the invisible tax paid by eldest daughters who act as translators, emotional anchors, and surrogate parents before they even finish high school.

"In South Asian households, collectivism is a beautiful thing, but its weight is disproportionately borne by the eldest female child," says Dr. Anjali Mehta, a cultural psychologist based in London. "This book gives

a vocabulary to a form of burnout that our community has long normalized as mere filial piety."

Literary critics praise the translation for retaining the sharp, unsparing prose of the original text. The author avoids turning the parents into caricatures of immigrant cruelty; instead, the tragedy lies in the systemic pressures that make emotional inheritance unavoidable. *The Weight of Our Mothers* is more than a literary triumph—it has become a catalyst for difficult, necessary conversations at dinner tables across the diaspora.

# The Hidden Hunger of AI

## South Asian Tech Hubs Confront Infrastructure Crises



BENGALURU — As South Asian tech giants race to deploy localized, indigenous generative AI models, the digital revolution is colliding head-on with ecological reality. Data centers powering these complex neural networks are consuming unprecedented amounts of electricity and water, forcing

ing municipalities to re-evaluate their infrastructure priorities.

A single advanced AI data cluster can consume as much electricity as a mid-sized town, requiring millions of gallons of water daily to prevent processor meltdowns. In cities like Bengaluru and Hyderabad, which al-

ready grapple with seasonal water scarcity, the expansion of tech infrastructure is triggering intense local debates. Tech firms are being forced to justify their heavy resource usage at a time when local groundwater reservoirs are under strain.

In response to strict municipal warnings, major cloud providers are investing in closed-loop liquid cooling systems and signing direct power purchase agreements with solar farms in neighboring states. However, experts warn that the transition to green AI infrastructure cannot happen overnight. Tech hubs must find a way to balance their computational ambitions with the physical boundaries of the local environment.

## Tech Job Openings Fall 8% as Bengaluru Leads a Cautious Recovery

**BENGALURU - By Insider Tech Desk**

Active technology job openings in India fell 8 percent year-on-year in July 2026 and sat 11 percent below the volume last recorded in March, according to specialist staffing data - a signal that the sector's hiring engine remains in a low gear even as some green shoots appear. Bengaluru topped the country with about 24,000 openings, a 20 percent jump month-on-month, though that figure was still down 43 percent from a year earlier. The tech sector's share of India's total active talent demand has stayed below 50 percent for four straight months. For the many diaspora families with relatives navigating the Indian tech job market - or weighing a return from the United States - the data counsels patience. Recruiters describe a market that is stabilizing rather than surging.

## From Cost Centers to AI Labs: How India's GCCs Are Being Rebuilt

By Insider Tech Desk : The global capability center, once a byword for back-office cost savings, is being reimagined as the place where multinationals build their most advanced capabilities. Executives now describe GCCs as engines for artificial-intelligence, engineering and product work that runs global businesses - not merely support functions. The shift has geographic consequences. Where earlier waves concentrated in Bengaluru,

Hyderabad and the National Capital Region, the growing pull of Tier 2 cities shows how far India's technical talent pool now extends. Firms are chasing depth of talent at scale, and finding it well beyond the traditional hubs. The rebuild helps explain why GCC hiring has held up even as broader white-collar demand stayed subdued - and why the segment has become central to the reverse-migration conversation.

## Bhavin Turakhia Bets on 'AI-Native' Work With \$30 Million Platform Neo

**By Insider Tech Desk**

Serial entrepreneur Bhavin Turakhia, known for building and selling a string of internet businesses, has launched Neo, an AI-native work platform backed by a \$30 million investment. The move places him among a growing cohort of Indian-origin founders racing to define how artificial intelligence reshapes everyday productivity software.

The pitch reflects a broader thesis sweeping the industry: that the next generation of work tools will be built around AI from the ground up rather than bolted on to legacy products. Whether Neo can differentiate in a crowded field will be the test.

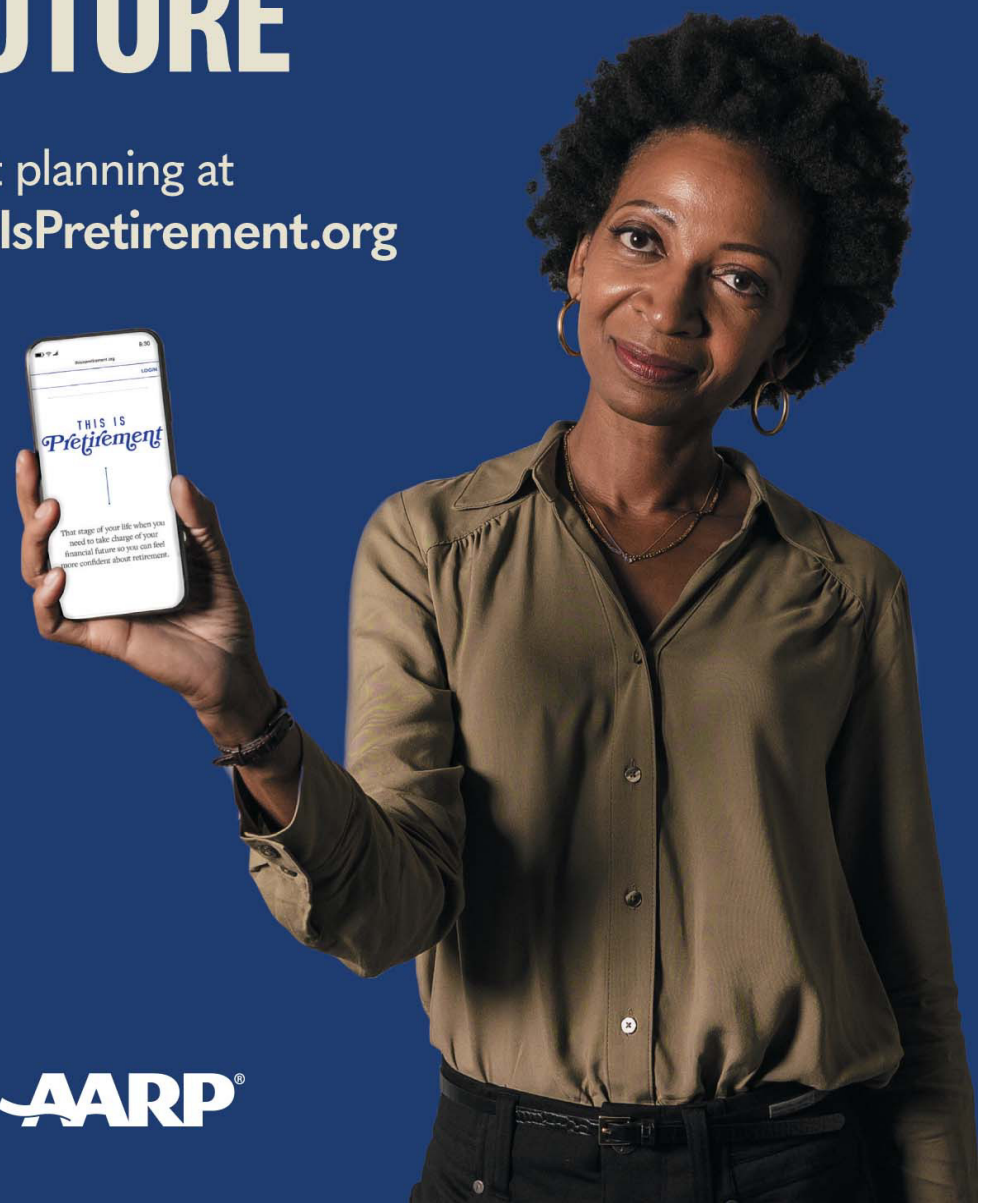
For diaspora technologists and



investors, Turakhia's track record makes the launch worth watching as a barometer of where Indian founders are placing their AI bets.

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## Shoulder Season Mastery: Diaspora Travelers Reject Peak-Summer Tourism

MUMBAI — The traditional mid-summer family holiday is rapidly becoming a relic of the past for the South Asian diaspora. Driven by extreme summer heatwaves across both the Indian sub-continent and Southern Europe, coupled with soaring peak-season airline pricing, travelers are collectively shifting toward "shoulder season" bookings—specifically targeting the September-October window. Travel agencies report a 35% drop in summer bookings from diaspora hubs in New York and London, mirrored by a corresponding surge in early autumn reservations. Destinations like Rajasthan, Kerala, and the Mediterranean are seeing an extended tourism calendar, with travelers citing cooler weather and significantly lower density at historic sites as primary motivators.

Industry Insight: Booking family travel during the autumn shoulder season yields an average savings of 40% on luxury accommodations and international airfare compared to July or August travel windows. Furthermore, luxury hospitality brands are adapting their calendars to accommodate this shift, offering curated cultural retreats and wellness packages tailored specifically to the autumn climate. For the modern diaspora traveler, waiting out the summer heat is no longer just a budget hack—it is a mandatory strategy for comfortable, intentional experiential travel.

## India in the U.S. Visa Waiver Program? Why the Talk Outpaces the Facts

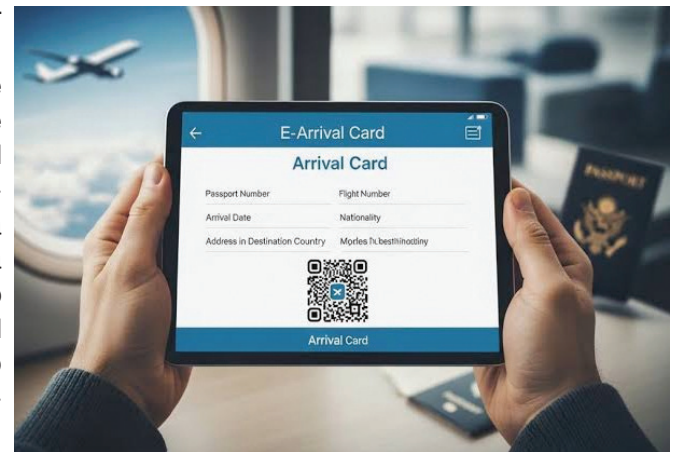
By Insider Travel Desk : Speculation has circulated in travel-industry circles that India could join the U.S. Visa Waiver Program, which would let citizens make short visits to the United States without the traditional visa interview. The prospect is appealing - but readers should treat it with caution.

As of this writing, there is no official confirmation from either government that India has been admitted to the program, and India does not currently meet several standing requirements, including the low visa-refusal-rate threshold. The chatter appears to originate largely from travel-sector commentary rather than a formal announcement.

The Insider will report any genuine development the moment it is confirmed through official U.S. or Indian government channels. Until then, travelers should assume the existing B-1/B-2 visa process remains in force.

# Flying Home This Summer? The E-Arrival Card Is Now Mandatory

By Insider Travel Desk : Every traveler heading to India this summer should know one rule before packing: as of April 1, 2026, all foreign nationals and Overseas Citizen of India cardholders entering the country must complete a digital E-Arrival Card before departure. The online form has permanently replaced the paper cards once handed out on flights. The form must be filed on the official portal or the Su-Swagatam app in the window between 72 and 24 hours before a scheduled departure. There is no fee, and completing it generates a QR code required for immigration processing. Travelers should keep a digital or printed copy of the confirmation. The change is designed to shorten immigration queues, but it adds a step that is easy to forget in the rush of departure. Families traveling with elderly relatives or children should build the filing into their pre-trip checklist.



## U.S. Visa Wait Times From India, Decoded for Summer Travelers



By Insider Travel Desk : For families planning cross-border travel, the current visa math is more forgiving than it was a few years ago - but timing still matters. In 2026, dropbox renewals from India typically take two to six weeks, while first-time B-1/B-2 interviews can run 100 to 250 days depending on the city and category. The single most useful rule for flexible travelers: avoid the May-to-August window for any category other than student visas, which are prioritized year-round for summer admissions. Applicants may generally attend an interview at any of the five consular posts regardless of home city, which can help when one location's queue is longer. H-1B renewals via dropbox often turn around in two to four weeks. As always, the official CGI Federal portal carries live appointment availability and should be checked before booking travel.

## India's e-Visa Overhaul: New Fees, Reciprocal Pricing and 51 Entry Points

By Insider Travel Desk

India has revamped its electronic-visa framework for 2026, moving to a reciprocal, country-by-country pricing model and expanding the list of authorized entry points. For U.S. passport holders, the five-year e-Tourist Visa currently carries a fee of \$160, per the official schedule.

The government has also broadened the e-Visa categories available online and expanded designated airports and seaports for entry. Fees now vary by nationality, and a card-processing surcharge applies. Because the schedule was last revised in February 2026, travelers should confirm current rates on the official Bureau of Immigration portal before applying.

The e-Visa remains the simplest route for OCI-adjacent family members and U.S.-citizen relatives visiting India - provided applicants also complete the separate E-Arrival Card before departure.



## Beating the Heat: Hill Stations and Monsoon Escapes for a July Trip

By Insider Travel Desk : Summer in India is not only about the scorching plains. For families timing a July or August visit, the country's hill stations and monsoon-washed coasts offer a cooler counterpoint - from the tea-clad slopes of the Nilgiris and the Western Ghats to the Himalayan foothills of Himachal and Uttarakhand. The monsoon reshapes the map of where to go. Kerala and the Konkan coast turn lush and dra-

matic, while Rajasthan's desert cities are best left for the cooler months. Travelers should watch regional weather advisories, as heavy rain can disrupt hill-road travel. For diaspora families introducing American-raised children to ancestral regions, the season can be a gift - greener landscapes, thinner tourist crowds and softer light for the photographs that end up on the mantel back home.

## Beyond the Cream: The Chef-Led Movement to Reclaim Regional Authenticity



launching a culinary movement to restore the sharp, vibrant, and acid-forward flavor profiles of authentic regional cooking. At modern establishments across London and New York, rich textures are no longer achieved through dairy shortcuts. Instead, kitchens are returning to traditional methods: slow-emulsified poppy seed pastes, stone-ground cashew milks, and yogurt whipped with precision heat control. The result is a menu that prioritizes the complexity of the spices rather than masking them in dairy fat. "Cream was used to make our food palatable to a timid Western palate," says Chef Rohan Joshi, whose Michelin-starred kitchen focuses on coastal Maharashtrian cuisine. "Our food doesn't need to be softened anymore. People want the brightness of real kokum, the heat of peppercorns, and the natural body of slow-reduced gravies." This movement is fundamentally altering how global diners perceive the refinement of South Asian gastronomy.

LONDON—For generations, Western menus defined South Asian cuisine through a heavy shroud of heavy cream, sugar, and food coloring—a legacy of the mid-century adaptation of commercial curry houses. Today, a clean break is underway. A new vanguard of diaspora chefs is entirely banning heavy cream from their kitchens,

## Chaat Goes Mainstream: Samosa Chaat Leads a Snacking Wave



By Insider Food Desk  
Chaat, India's riot of a street-food category, is crossing into the American mainstream. Consumer interest in chaat is up 9 percent, with the samosa-chaat combination specifically up 14 percent - a pairing that sits at the exact crossover of the fast-casual snack trend and the Indian street-food wave, according to Tastewise data. Chaat's appeal is structural: it is

portable, layered and boldly flavored, exactly the profile that younger diners chase. Supporting ingredients are trending too, with sev, the crunchy chickpea-noodle topping, up 19 percent. For operators, the format is unusually flexible - equally at home in a QSR line, a supper-club pop-up or a festival stall. The Insider expects chaat counters to multiply across the tri-state area this year.

## America's South Indian Moment: Filter Coffee and Chicken 65 Surge

By Insider Food Desk

The American appetite for Indian food is broadening well beyond butter chicken, and the data points south. Filter coffee is trending at 54 percent growth, while Chicken 65 - deep-fried, spiced and built for sharing - is up 17 percent, according to food-intelligence platform Tastewise. Together they signal that the South Indian food moment now extends into the cup as well as the plate.

The shift is being driven by a growing Indian diaspora and a Gen Z appetite for authentic global flavors, analysts say - not by nov-



elty. Dosa counters and filter-coffee menus that were once neighborhood secrets are becoming familiar fixtures across urban markets.

For restaurateurs in the New York

and New Jersey corridor, the numbers describe an opening: South Indian formats carry high consumer recognition and genuine demand that many operators have yet to fully claim.

## Kerala Lands on the American Menu as 2026's Cuisine to Watch

By Insider Food Desk

Food-intelligence firm Datassential named Kerala food its "Cuisine to Know for 2026," and the label is proving apt. Some 39 percent of U.S. consumers say they are interested in trying the cuisine, drawn by its seafood, rice, coconut and veggie-forward dishes and its signature spices - curry leaves, turmeric and the pungent, savory asafoetida.

Kerala is not alone. Culinary experts expect Goan, Naga, Assamese and Himalayan cooking to steal the spotlight next, as American diners grow more ad-



venturous and chefs lean into open-fire techniques and clean, sustainable thalis.

The takeaway for the diaspora dining scene is a welcome one:

the flattening of Indian food into a handful of creamy North Indian curries is finally giving way to the subcontinent's true regional range.

## Michelin Stars and Goat-Neck Biryani: Regional Indian Goes Upscale in New York

NEW YORK - By Insider Food Desk

A new generation of chefs is elevating regional Indian cooking to the level of French, Italian or Japanese fine dining - and New York is at the center of it. At Semma, chef Vijay Kumar earned a Michelin star cooking the food of his native Tamil Nadu, a first for a U.S. Indian restaurant, with unapologetically authentic dishes like snail curry. Nearby, restaurants such as Dhamaka have built menus around India's overlooked provincial classics - goat-neck biryani, chili-spiked Rajasthani rabbit - the kind of dishes once found at a roadside dhaba but rarely on a white tablecloth. The through-line is confidence: these chefs price their food as a destination experience, not a

cheap takeout option. For the community these restaurants draw from, the recognition



is affirming. Cuisine long dismissed as too "ethnic" for the mainstream is now collecting the industry's highest honors.

## The Gentle Boundary Movement: Reshaping the Collectivist Family Dynamic

CHICAGO — Individualism and collectivism have long been the twin opposing forces pulling at first- and second-generation South Asian households. However, a quiet behavioral shift is taking root among young professionals. Dubbed the "Gentle Boundary Movement," this lifestyle philosophy seeks to introduce modern mental health practices into traditional family units without severing vital cultural ties. Historically, family structures in the region operated on a model of absolute emotional accessibility, where personal privacy was often misconstrued as a rejection of family loyalty. The modern movement, championed by diaspora therapy collectives, teaches individuals how to communicate personal limits regarding

career choices, marriage timelines, and financial expectations while actively remaining participating members of the family network.

"Setting a boundary isn't an eviction notice; it's an invitation to a sustainable relationship," notes family counselor Priya Shah. "We are moving past the toxic cycle of total compliance followed by total estrangement." Through structured communication templates and communal support groups, young adults are successfully navigating these complex family dynamics. By replacing defensive silence with calm, clear limits, the movement is successfully demonstrating that protecting individual mental health can actually strengthen, rather than weaken, ancestral bonds.

## Marking South Asian Heritage Month at Home and in the Neighborhood

By Insider Lifestyle Desk

South Asian Heritage Month, observed from July 18 to August 17, offers families a structure for passing culture to the next generation. Community organizations across the region typically program food festivals, film screenings, storytelling evenings and heritage-language activities through the month.

At home, the observance can be as simple as cooking a regional dish together, revisiting family migration stories, or building a small

reading shelf of diaspora authors. For second- and third-generation children, these rituals do quiet work - anchoring identity in something specific rather than abstract. We will publish a regional events calendar in a coming issue. Readers organizing community programs are invited to send details for inclusion.

## Raising Bilingual Kids: Keeping Punjabi and Hindi Alive in American Homes

By Insider Lifestyle Desk

For diaspora parents, the summer is prime season for heritage-language learning, as gurdwara and temple programs, community classes and family visits create natural immersion. Keeping Punjabi, Hindi and other mother tongues alive in American-raised children is a common aspiration - and a genuine challenge against the pull of an English-dominant world. Educators who work with bilingual families offer consistent advice: make the language useful and joyful rather than a chore. Songs, cooking, video calls with grandparents and age-appropriate books do more than flashcards. Consistency matters more than perfection. The reward extends beyond communication. A shared language carries jokes, blessings and idioms that simply do not translate - the connective tissue of family life across generations.



## The Second-Generation Sabbatical: Young Indian Americans Take 'Roots Trips'

By Insider Lifestyle Desk

A quiet trend is taking shape among young Indian Americans: the deliberate journey back to an ancestral village or city, undertaken not as a family obligation but as a personal reckoning with identity. These "roots trips" pair naturally with the summer travel season and, increasingly, with a stretch of time carved out between jobs or degrees. The motivations vary - curiosity about grandparents' lives, a desire to place oneself in a longer story, sometimes a search for belonging that neither American nor Indian labels fully capture. What travelers describe on returning is rarely tidy, but often clarifying.

The Insider is collecting first-person accounts of such journeys for a future feature. Readers who have made the trip are invited to share what they found.



## Ayurveda Meets American Wellness: Sorting Tradition From Marketing



Foods and practices inspired by Ayurveda rank among the top U.S. wellness trends of 2026, from turmeric lattes to adaptogens and gut-friendly ferments. For a community that has lived with these traditions for generations, the mainstream embrace is both gratifying and, at times, a little disorienting. The opportunity is real: renewed interest can deepen appreciation for a sophisticated system of eating and living. The caution is equally real: wellness marketing has a habit of stripping tradition of context and repackaging it at a premium. Readers are wise to separate genuine practice from the branded version on the shelf. As with any health trend, claims outrun evidence in places. Those considering significant dietary changes should consult a qualified professional.

## Summer Wedding Season, Diaspora Style: Venues, Budgets and the Fusion Baraat



By Insider Lifestyle Desk : Wedding season is in full swing across the tri-state area, and the South Asian celebrations that fill hotel ballrooms and banquet halls this summer reflect a community confidently blending tradition with American practicality. The multi-day format endures, but families are increasingly mixing regional customs, fusion menus and hybrid ceremonies to honor more than one heritage under a single mandap. Costs remain a candid conversation. Venue availability in the New York and New Jersey corridor tightens sharply in peak months, and couples are booking further ahead and negotiating harder. Many are trimming guest lists while investing in the experiences guests remember - food, music and décor. The Insider welcomes readers' own wedding stories and photographs for a future community feature.

## Bollywood Books a Record First Half, Led by 'Dhurandhar: The Revenge'



MUMBAI - By Insider Entertainment Desk  
Bollywood closed a record-setting first half of 2026, and one film towered over the rest. Dhurandhar: The Revenge, directed by Aditya Dhar and headlined by Ranveer Singh, contributed nearly half of the industry's total collections and emerged as the highest-grossing Hindi film ever in India, crossing ₹1,000 crore worldwide within its first week and going on to gross more than ₹1,800 crore. The spy-action sequel, released in March, drew

both blockbuster numbers and controversy over its violence and politics, and was banned across Gulf Cooperation Council countries. Beyond it, the half yielded hits in Border 2 and Bhooth Bangla, with Akshay Kumar featuring among the period's most bankable stars.

After several lean years for theatrical Hindi cinema, the first-half tally reads as a genuine rebound - if one heavily concentrated at the very top of the box-office chart.

## Vijay's 'Jana Nayagan' Reportedly Eyes a July Release After Long Delay



CHENNAI - By Insider Entertainment Desk  
One of the year's most anticipated Tamil films may finally reach theaters. Jana Nayagan, starring Thalapathy Vijay and directed by H. Vinoth, was originally slated for January 2026 but stalled for want of censor certification. It has now reportedly received an 'A' certificate and is said to be targeting a July release.

The Insider stresses that this remains a report: no official release date has been confirmed by the makers as of this writing. The film's large ensemble includes Pooja Hegde, Bobby Deol, Prakash Raj and Priyamani, with cameo appearances rumored from several leading directors.

The stakes are heightened by context, as the film carries added significance in Vijay's career. We will confirm the date the moment the production makes it official.

## Imtiaz Ali's 'Main Vaapas Aaunga' Builds a Quiet Second-Half Run

MUMBAI - By Insider Entertainment Desk  
Not every box-office story is a thunderclap. Imtiaz Ali's Main Vaapas Aaunga has been steadily climbing toward the ₹50 crore mark in its third week, the kind of slow-burn trajectory that depends on word of mouth rather than opening-weekend spectacle. Whether the film ultimately clears the hit threshold will depend on how well it holds in the coming weeks against fresh competition. In a first half dominated by a single mega-blockbuster, its persistence is a reminder that mid-budget cinema can still find an audience the long way around. The Insider will report the film's final standing once its theatrical run winds down.



## 'Cocktail 2' Crosses Rs 100 Crore Worldwide - Yet the Math Is Complicated



MUMBAI - By Insider Entertainment Desk

Homi Adajania's Cocktail 2, starring Shahid Kapoor, Kriti Sanon and Rashmika Mandanna, has crossed ₹100 crore at the worldwide box office and become Shahid Kapoor's highest-grossing release since the pandemic - reaching roughly ₹88 crore net in India by its thirteenth day, released June 19 on an 'A' certificate.

Yet the headline number tells only part of the story. Against a re-

ported budget near Rs 150 crore, the film was classified a commercial underperformer in the industry's half-year report, and it drew mixed-to-negative reviews. The spiritual sequel to the 2012 favorite delivered the kind of urban rom-com opening the genre had been waiting for, then faded through the weekdays.

The result captures Bollywood's current bind: even a franchise title with big stars can post respectable collections and still struggle to clear a heavy budget.



## Desi Stars in America's Summer: Screens, Stages and East Coast Tours

By Insider Entertainment Desk

As summer entertainment ramps up, Indian-origin talent continues to widen its footprint across American screens and stages, and diaspora-favorite artists routinely route concert tours through the East Coast during these months. For community audiences, the season often brings a steady calendar of live shows within driving distance of the tri-state area.

Because specific tour dates and venues shift frequently - and are sometimes announced on short notice - the Insider is holding a listings roundup until dates can be confirmed against official promoter and artist channels.

Readers who want a particular act or festival covered are encouraged to write in. We will publish a verified summer events guide in an upcoming edition.



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Today, we aren't just celebrating another 4th of July. We are marking the **250th Birthday** of the **United States of America.**

Think of the generations who walked before us to protect this grand experiment. The dreamers, the builders, the innovators, and the brave service members who sacrificed everything to keep our flag flying high.

Our history isn't perfect—it is a story of constant striving, of overcoming deep trials, and working, generation after generation, to form a more perfect union.

Look around today. See the stars and stripes catching the wind. Listen to the roar of the fireworks. Feel the shared heartbeat of millions of people from every walk of life who call this beautiful land home. We are the stewards of this incredible legacy, and the authors of its next chapter.

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AND THE BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD.



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