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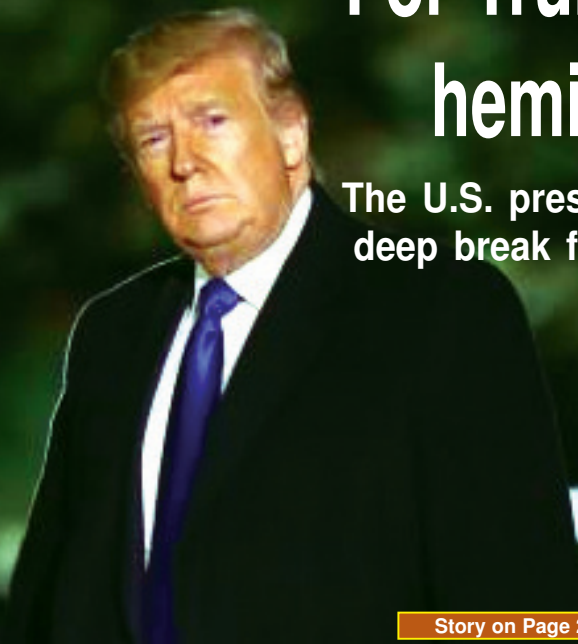
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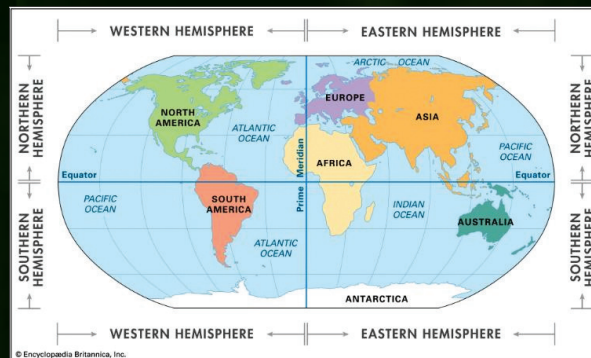
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For Trump, the entire Western hemisphere is America's

The U.S. president's "Donroe Doctrine" represents a deep break from modern national security thinking.



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US bars 7,000
truckers for failing
English tests;
Indian-origin
drivers hit hard



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'People are tired':
Democrats splinter
as shutdown nears
record



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NYC Mayor Elect Zohran Mamdani
announces transition team



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Indian-origin school friends become world's youngest self-made billionaires at 22

(By Our Staff Reporter) Three 22-year-old friends, including Indian-Americans, have become the world's youngest self-made billionaires after their AI recruiting startup Mercor raised \$350 million. The school friends surpassed Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, who first appeared on Forbes' billionaire list at 23 in 2008, to become the youngest billionaires. The two Indian-American friends are Adarsh Hiremath and Surya Midha. Hiremath and Midha, along with Brendan Foody, turned Mercor into a \$10-billion juggernaut, each holding roughly 22% of the stake in the company and vaulting past every previous record for youth-made wealth. The Indian-Americans, Hiremath and Midha, were raised in the San Jose, California area, and both attended Bellarmine College Preparatory in San Jose, an all-boys high school. It was at Bellarmine that they joined the policy debate team and became the first duo in history to win all three major national policy debate tournaments in the same year. Hiremath later enrolled Harvard University to study computer



science and worked as a research assistant in macroeconomics. During his sophomore year, he co-founded Mercor in his dorm room, convinced that labour-aggregation would be "the greatest opportunity of the 21st century". He subsequently dropped out of Harvard, moved to San Francisco, and became a recipient of the Thiel Fellowship. "The thing that's crazy for me is, if I weren't working on Mercor, I would have just graduated from college a couple of months ago," Hiremath was quoted as saying

by Forbes. All three founders are Thiel Fellows, members of conservative billionaire investor Peter Thiel's programme to dole out \$100,000 grants every year to young people in exchange for foregoing college, according to Forbes.

MERCOR WAS LAUNCHED TO CONNECT INDIAN TECHIES WITH US COMPANIES

Mercor launched in 2023 as a platform aiming to connect Indian engineers with US companies seeking freelance coders. Only a few weeks prior, 27-year-old Shayne Coplan,

founder of the cryptocurrency prediction platform Polymarket, made the billionaire list after a \$2-billion investment from Intercontinental Exchange, which owns the New York Stock Exchange. Before him, Scale AI's founder Alexandr Wang, 28, held the title for 18 months, while his co-founder Lucy Guo became the world's youngest self-made female billionaire at age 30, surpassing Taylor Swift. Even more notable is just how young they are: at age 22, they are all younger than Mark Zuckerberg was when he first became a billionaire at 23. Midha, whose birthday is in June, is the youngest of the co-founders by roughly two months. In September, shortly after Mercor debuted on the Forbes Cloud 100 list of top private cloud computing companies, Foody announced the company had hit \$500 million in annualised revenue run rate, up from \$100 million in March, Forbes reported.

WHO IS BILLIONAIRE ADARSH HIREMATH OF MERCOR?

Adarsh Hiremath was born in the US to an immigrant family

who migrated from India. He grew up in the Bay Area and attended Bellarmine College Preparatory for high school. According to his LinkedIn profile, at Harvard, he spent time taking CS (Computer Science) classes, conducting ML (Machine Learning) research, and thinking about macroeconomics as a research assistant to Larry Summers. He left Harvard after two years.

WHO IS SURYA MIDHA OF MERCOR, THE YOUNGEST BILLIONAIRE?

Surya Midha's parents immigrated to the US from New Delhi. He was born in Mountain View and raised in San Jose, California, according to his own website. He also holds a bachelor's degree in Foreign Studies from Georgetown University, at the same time that Hiremath was at Harvard. Brendan Foody was also at Georgetown, studying economics. The trio's parents were software engineers. Foody's mother worked for Meta's real estate team, and his father founded a graphics interface company in the 90s before turning to startup advising, according to Forbes.

"Why Acting Superior?" Indian Man Racially Attacked At Canada McDonald's

The clip shows a Caucasian Canadian, wearing a Toronto Blue Jays jacket, randomly approaching the brown man near the 'Mobile Order Pick Up' counter of a McDonald's outlet and attacking him.

(By Our Staff Reporter) Amid concern over the rising racism and xenophobia against immigrants in Canada, a disturbing video has emerged from Toronto, showing a visibly intoxicated man assaulting a brown man, believed to be of Indian origin, at a McDonald's outlet. The mobile phone footage, which is going viral on social media, shows that the attack was unprovoked. The clip shows a Caucasian Canadian, wearing a Toronto Blue Jays jacket, randomly approaching the brown man near the 'Mobile Order Pick Up' counter of a McDonald's outlet and attacking him. The intoxicated aggressor first pushed the man standing near the counter, sending his phone flying in the air. When the Indian



man calmly picked up his phone, the attacker rushed towards him, grabbing him by the collar and shoving him back. He was heard accusing the Indian of "acting

superior" in front of him as he held him by the collar. The Indian man tried to defend himself without any retaliation, but the aggressor did not back down until another

person, possibly a staff member, intervened and asked the two men to take their confrontation 'outside'. But the white man continued accusing the victim of

arrogance before being escorted out of the premises. NDTV could not independently verify the authenticity of the video. So far, police have not issued any statement on the matter, and the identity of the two men is not confirmed. But the incident reported occurred on November 1. The disturbing video came days after a 55-year-old Canadian-Indian businessman, Arvi Singh Sagoo, was fatally attacked by a stranger in Edmonton, Canada. Sagoo was attacked after he confronted the stranger for peeing on his vehicle. The man punched Sagoo in the head, causing him to fall unconscious. The attack occurred on October 19, and Sagoo succumbed to his injuries five days later, on October 24.

3 in 4 Indian student visa applications to Canada rejected in August: Report

Figures from Canada's immigration department show that about 74% of Indian applicants were denied study permits in August 2025, compared to 32% in August 2023.

(By Our Staff Reporter) Nearly three out of every four Indian applications for student permits to Canadian post-secondary institutions were rejected in August this year — a sharp rise from just 32% a year ago, according to a report by news agency Reuters citing government data. Figures from Canada's immigration department show that about 74% of Indian applicants were denied study permits in August 2025, compared to 32% in August 2023. In contrast, the overall rejection rate across all countries stood at about 40% in both years, while around 24% of Chinese applicants faced rejections in August this year. The steep jump in refusals has come alongside a decline in Indian applications, which fell from nearly 20,900 in August 2023 to just over 4,500 in August 2025. India, which has long been the largest source of international students in Canada,



also recorded the highest rejection rate among all nations with more than 1,000 approved applicants.

VISA CLAMPDOWN, STRAINED TIES

The surge in refusals follows Canada's ongoing effort to tighten controls on international student

permits for the second consecutive year. The government has said the move aims to curb the number of temporary migrants and tackle fraud related to student visas. Ties between New Delhi and Ottawa have also been tense for the past couple of years. In 2023, then

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau alleged that there were "credible allegations" linking the Indian government to the murder of a Khalistani terrorist, Hardeep Singh Nijjar. New Delhi dismissed these allegations as "absurd" and asked Canada to take action against anti-India elements

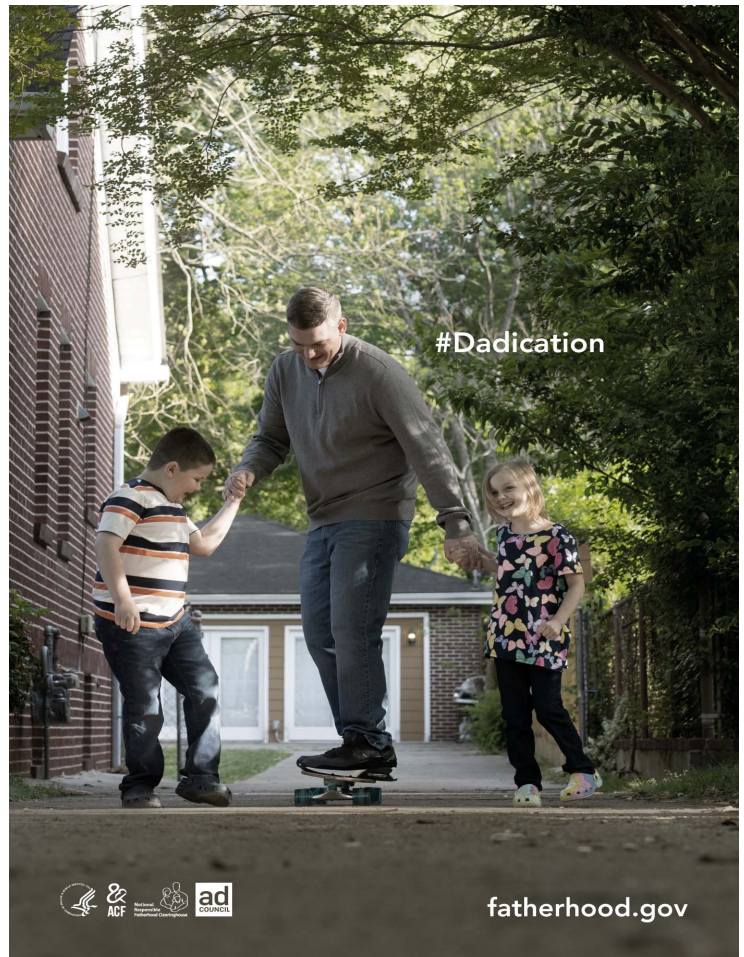
operating within its borders

. FRAUD CONCERNS DRIVE STRICTER CHECKS

Canadian authorities have been on high alert over fraudulent college admission letters, many of which reportedly originated in India. In 2023, officials uncovered nearly 1,550 fake applications linked to Indian students. A year later, enhanced verification systems detected over 14,000 potentially fake acceptance letters across all applicants, Reuters report mentioned. As part of the cleanup drive, Canada has tightened verification measures and increased the financial requirements for foreign students applying for study permits, the immigration department said in an emailed statement to Reuters. The Indian High Commission in Ottawa acknowledged that visa rejections had been brought to its notice, but emphasised that issuing study permits remained Canada's prerogative.

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Usha isn't converting: JD Vance hits back at critics, calls outrage bigotry



(By Our Staff Reporter) US Vice President JD Vance on Friday defended his remarks about his wife, Usha Vance's Hindu faith, saying she is "not a Christian and has no plans to convert," while rejecting criticism that he had "thrown her religion under the bus in public". In a strongly worded post on X, Vance called the backlash against his comments

"disgusting" and accused his critics of "anti-Christian bigotry". "What a disgusting comment, and it's hardly been the only one along these lines," Vance wrote, responding to social media users who accused him of disrespecting his wife's religion. "First off, the question was from a person seemingly to my left, about my interfaith marriage. I'm a public figure, and people are

curious, and I wasn't going to avoid the question." The Vice President's response followed intense criticism over his recent remarks at a university event, where he said he hoped his wife, Usha, might one day share his Christian faith. His comments, made while noting that she often attends church with him and their children, who are being raised Christian, drew backlash online for being dismissive of her Hindu background. Speaking at a Turning Point USA event at the University of Mississippi, the vice president had said he hoped his wife, Usha, who was raised Hindu, would one day embrace Christianity. "Most Sundays she will come with me to church. Do I hope eventually that she is somehow moved by the same thing that I was moved in by church? Yeah, I honestly do wish that," he had said. Asked during

the event whether he hoped his wife would eventually "come to Christ", Vance replied that faith was deeply personal and that differences in belief had never created conflict in their marriage. "But if she doesn't, then God says everybody has free will, and so that doesn't cause a problem for me. That's something you work out with your friends, with your family, with the person that you love," he said. Following the backlash, Vance took to social media to elaborate on his comments. "She is not a Christian and has no plans to convert, but like many people in an interfaith marriage, or any interfaith relationship, I hope she may one day see things as I do," he wrote. "Regardless, I'll continue to love and support her and talk to her about faith and life and everything else, because she's my wife," he added. He also

defended his decision to address the question publicly, noting that as a national figure, he could not simply dismiss questions about his family. "I'm a public figure, and people are curious, and I wasn't going to avoid the question," he wrote. The Vice President's response followed intense online criticism from commentators who said his remarks were insensitive to his wife's Hindu background. His clarification emphasised that it was Usha who had inspired him to reconnect with his Christian faith years ago. "My wife, as I said at the TPUSA, is the most amazing blessing I have in my life. She herself encouraged me to reengage with my faith many years ago," Vance said. He went on to condemn what he described as growing prejudice against Christians.

Hire Americans first: Florida ends H-1B visa hiring across state universities



(By Our Staff Reporter) Florida Governor Ron DeSantis bans H-1B visas at state universities, ordering institutions to hire Americans instead of foreign workers, citing visa abuse and prioritising local graduates for taxpayer-funded jobs. In a bombshell directive shaking up higher education, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis on Wednesday announced that state universities will no longer be allowed to hire foreign workers on H-1B visas, ordering institutions to prioritise American citizens and Florida residents for all university positions. "Universities across the country are importing foreign workers on H-1B visas instead of hiring Americans who are qualified and available to do the job," DeSantis

declared. "We will not tolerate H-1B abuse in Florida institutions. That's why I have directed the Florida Board of Governors to end this practice." "Why do we need to bring someone from China to talk about public policy?!" the governor asked pointedly. "We can do it with Florida residents or Americans! If we can't? Then man, we need to really look deeply at what's going on with this situation." The governor emphasised that Florida leads the nation in higher education, producing thousands of qualified graduates every year. "If any universities are truly struggling to find US citizens to fill their job openings, they ought to evaluate their academic programmes to determine why they cannot produce graduates who can be

hired for these positions," he said. According to a statement from the Governor's Office, the Florida Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) is partnering with federal authorities and the State University System to ensure compliance. The move also includes cancelling or repurposing millions in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)-related grants that were diverting funds away from core education priorities. The statement noted that universities are exempt from federal H-1B visa caps, allowing them to hire foreign workers year-round. "H-1B visas are allegedly intended to hire individuals for a speciality occupation, but many universities and institutions have hired foreign workers for jobs that could easily be filled by qualified Americans," the governor's office said. "Especially when you see in the news all these people being laid off by Amazon, UPS, all these companies — we need to make sure our citizens here in Florida are first in line for job opportunities," he said. Florida, he added, will now require all taxpayer-funded universities to "serve the American workforce, not to be used to import cheap foreign labor."

US courts halt deportation of Indian-origin man wrongfully jailed for 43 years



(By Our Staff Reporter) Two US courts have directed the immigration department to halt the deportation of an Indian-origin man, Subramanyam Vedam, who spent over four decades in prison on a murder charge that was recently overturned. The 64-year-old, fondly called 'Subu' by his family, has been kept at a detention centre in Louisiana that is equipped with an airstrip for deportations, AP reported. Last week, an immigration judge paused his deportation until the Bureau of Immigration Appeals decides whether to review his case -- a process that could take months. A district court in Pennsylvania also halted his deportation the same day.

WHY WAS SUBU CONVICTED

Vedam, who came to the US when he was 9 months old, was

arrested in 1982 for allegedly killing his friend Thomas Kinser in 1980. Kinser, then 19, went missing in December 1980. His body was found nine months later in the woods. Vedam was the last person seen with Kinser. During this period, Vedam, a legal permanent resident of the US, was also briefly detained on drug charges. Vedam was convicted in 1983 and sentenced to life without parole. He received an additional sentence of two-and-a-half to five years for a drug offence. His lawyers claimed that his conviction was based on circumstantial evidence, with no witnesses, motive or evidence. Throughout the years, his family made tireless efforts to prove his innocence. Inside the prison in Pennsylvania, Vedam earned three degrees, became a teacher, and mentored many inmates.

Joining US army best shot at citizenship? Indian Green Card soldier explains

(By Our Staff Reporter) Thirty-eight-year-old Shilpa Chaudhary, who is originally from Delhi, is an Indian citizen. But she is currently serving with the US Army. At an age when most civilians settle into midlife routines, Chaudhary chose to become a soldier in the US. As a Green Card holder, she was eligible to enlist in the US military. Chaudhary has been posting about her experience on her YouTube channel, and her Instagram and TikTok too. In the US, especially in US President Donald Trump's second term, an Indian, serving in the American army, may sound like an irony. Politics in the US has been filled with an anti-immigrant agenda. This provision stands in contrast to the Trump administration's stance. The Trump administration has hit Indians particularly hard, as the coveted H-1B visa has become even more elusive for first-time applicants due to the new Rs 88 lakh fee. Since January this year, the Trump administration has deported thousands of undocumented migrants, including over 2,700 Indians in the first nine months alone. On one hand, there's the case of Chaudhary, and on the other, the



US tightening immigration, almost feels like you're welcomed by Uncle Sam only if you're willing to die for America. So, how does the system work? How can Indian citizens work in the US military? Why does the US allow it? And how does the association of Indians in the US military, just like Chaudhary's, expedite the citizenship process for migrants?

HOW US ALLOWS IMMIGRANTS IN ITS MILITARY? WHAT ARE THE PERKS?

The US Department of Defense recruits lawful

permanent residents (Green Card holders) into the US military. Many Green Card holders apparently join the US Army, Navy and the Air Force, as it offers them an expedited path to citizenship. There are other perks of serving as well. In one of the videos, Chaudhary explains the various benefits and pay structure in the US Army, noting that an entry-level E1 earns about \$2,000 per month, with additional allowances such as Basic Allowance for Housing and Basic Allowance for Subsistence for married

soldiers. Chaudhary describes how promotions depend on clearing regular physical and marksmanship tests, and how the US Army provides an annual \$4,000 education benefit for both soldiers and their spouses, along with the Government Issue (GI) Bill, which covers full college or master's tuition after four years of service. The GI Bill mandates government benefits for veterans. As of February 2024 data on the US Congress website, more than 40,000 foreign nationals were serving in active and reserve components

of the United States Armed Forces. An estimated additional 1,15,000 foreign nationals residing in the US are veterans who have previously served on active duty.

WHY US ARMY HIRES IMMIGRANTS TO FIGHT FOR IT?

This provision of immigrants in the US military might primarily be in place because of the US military's recruitment shortfalls, The New Yorker noted in a report. In 2022 and 2023, the US Army fell short of its recruitment target by roughly 25%, missing about 15,000 soldiers each year. It managed to meet its 2024 goal only after lowering the target by over 10,000 recruits. The US Navy has faced similar struggles. It missed its 2023 target and met them in 2024, only after lowering entry standards, with almost half the new recruits scoring below average on aptitude tests, The New Yorker reported. The Army Reserve has reportedly not met its recruitment benchmark since 2016, forcing active-duty officers to take command of reserve units, sparking concerns that many of them may not be ready for deployment in a conflict.

Who is Neal Katyal? Indian-American lawyer taking on Trump's tariff at Supreme Court

(By Our Staff Reporter) Indian-American attorney Neal Katyal will appear before the US Supreme Court on Wednesday in a case that President Donald Trump calls one of the most important in American history. The hearing could decide how much power the president has to impose tariffs, and who controls US trade policy. The case centers on whether Trump overstepped his authority under the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act, which lets presidents act during national emergencies tied to foreign affairs. A ruling against him could curb one of his most aggressive tools — using tariffs to pressure nations and shape foreign policy. "If we win, we will be the richest, most secure country anywhere in the world — by far," Trump declared on Truth Social Sunday. "If we lose, our country could be reduced to almost Third World

status. Pray to God that that doesn't happen." Katyal, 54, a former acting US solicitor general under President Obama and one of the nation's most experienced Supreme Court litigators, will argue on behalf of a coalition of small businesses and Democratic-led states that say Trump's sweeping tariffs were unconstitutional. "The President's claim of authority here is breathtaking," Katyal wrote in an October 20 court filing. "The IEEPA never mentions tariffs, and in 50 years, no other President has used it for that purpose."

A LEGAL HEAVYWEIGHT STEPS UP

Katyal was chosen to argue the case after a coin toss between the plaintiffs' lawyers, according to Bloomberg. Rick Woldenberg, CEO of Illinois-based Learning Resources Inc.,

said his team was honored to be represented by Neal at this important moment. A Yale Law School graduate and partner at Milbank LLP, Katyal has argued over 50 cases before the Supreme Court, including landmark decisions such as *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld* and *Moore v. Harper*. Born in Chicago to Indian immigrant parents, a doctor and an engineer, Katyal has often clashed with Trump's policies, including his 2017 travel ban. He is also the author of *Impeach: The Case Against Donald Trump*. "This case isn't about politics," a source close to Katyal's team said. "It's about preserving the constitutional balance between Congress and the President — and making sure no one man controls the nation's economic fate."

TARIFFS AS TRUMP'S POWER PLAY



For President Trump, tariffs — or even the threat of them — have become the cornerstone of his second-term foreign policy. He has used them to pressure nations into ceasefires, curb drug trafficking, and even punish countries for political disputes. From Brazil to Canada, Trump's tariff strategy has blurred the lines between trade and presidential diplomacy. As one senior official put it, tariffs are "Trump's sanctions — faster, sharper, and entirely his own." Now, the

Supreme Court will decide whether that sweeping use of power goes too far. Trump initially said he planned to attend the hearing in person, but later reversed course, saying he did not want to distract from the importance of the decision. The Supreme Court's decision, expected early next year, could sharply curb presidential authority in trade policy — or solidify Trump's belief that tariffs are his ultimate instrument of power.

The Five Percent Power Play: Zohran Mamdani's Mandate and the Mountain of Promises

Zohran Mamdani's victory as the Mayor of New York City is more than a historic "first" for a Muslim, South Asian, and African-born leader; it is a masterclass in coalition-building and the potent arithmetic of a mobilized minority. The narrative of his triumph often points to his progressive platform and youth appeal, but a closer look at the voting data reveals how a community often overlooked—the South Asian electorate—played a disproportionately significant role. While South Asians constitute only an estimated 5% of New York City's population, their turnout in districts with high South Asian density surged dramatically, in some areas increasing by over 40% compared to previous mayoral primaries. This burst of engagement was not simply about identity; it was about recognition and specific policy resonance. Mamdani's campaign, notably his high-profile advocacy for South Asian-dominated taxi drivers during the medallion debt crisis, translated into a tangible, and crucially, mobilized vote. He successfully forged a broad coalition across nationalities (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, etc.) and religions, uniting them under a banner of economic fairness. When a race is decided by single-digit margins against established political heavyweights, a highly concentrated, activated 5% ceases to be a statistical footnote and becomes the fulcrum of victory.

The Unrealistic Scale of the 'Democratic Socialist' Agenda

Yet, as the euphoria of the historic win fades, the daunting challenge of fulfilling his ambitious, democratic-socialist platform comes into sharp focus. Mamdani ran on a bold promise to make New York "affordable again" with proposals that include: Rent Freeze: Freezing rents for all stabilized tenants. Free Transit: Making all city buses fare-free. Universal Childcare: Free childcare for every child from six weeks to five years old. City-Owned Groceries: Creating a network of city-owned stores to combat food costs.

Taxing the Rich: Implementing new taxes on the wealthiest New Yorkers and corporations to fund these plans. Individually, these are massive undertakings; collectively, they represent a monumental, perhaps impossible, shift in how the country's largest city operates. The feasibility of these promises runs into three inescapable roadblocks: governance, bureaucracy, and budget. First, the Mayor does not have unilateral power over many of these core issues. Rent freezes are determined by the Rent Guidelines Board and tax increases must be approved by the Albany state legislature. Mamdani must lobby and secure the support of the State Governor and a majority of the City Council, a notoriously difficult task, especially for tax hikes that face fierce resistance from the state's powerful economic lobby. Second, the plan to introduce

free buses will run into immediate and likely hostile resistance from the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), which controls the fares and has already questioned the wisdom of giving up hundreds of millions in revenue. Finally, the sheer cost of these proposals, while proposed to be covered by taxing the rich, places immense pressure on the city's \$100+ billion budget. While the proposals resonate deeply with working-class New Yorkers squeezed by the cost of living, turning radical campaign rhetoric into a solvent governing reality in a city where every policy change is met with a massive pushback from established interests is a recipe for political friction. Mamdani's election is a powerful symbol of generational and ideological change. However, his true test will not be in what he promised, but in how he manages the inevitable compromises and administrative grind required to deliver even a fraction of his transformative vision. The South Asian vote may have given him the keys to City Hall, but the institutional structure of New York City and State will make it a monumental task to navigate the path inside 2 A Necessary Evil or a Dangerous Precedent? Canada's Visa Cancellation Plan The news that Canada is "mulling large-scale cancellation of temporary visas" for nationals from countries like India—driven by concerns over systemic fraud and soaring asylum claims—is a watershed moment in Canadian immigration policy. On one hand, the government's pursuit of integrity within its visa system is understandable and arguably necessary. On the other, the introduction of a mass cancellation power, particularly one appearing to target specific nationalities, risks shattering Canada's reputation as an open, fair, and welcoming nation. Internal documents reportedly single out India and Bangladesh as "country-specific challenges" due to a spike in fraudulent applications and asylum claims, which have, in turn, strained processing times and resources. In an environment where the rejection rate for Indian study permits has skyrocketed—from 32% to a staggering 74% in just two years, according to some reports—it's clear that a crisis of confidence has taken hold. When a system is visibly breaking under the weight of genuine misuse, the government has an obligation to act decisively to restore order and protect its borders.

For years, the "study-work-stay" pathway was Canada's golden ticket for attracting global talent; protecting its integrity ensures the genuine students, workers, and future permanent residents aren't undermined by those who exploit loopholes. However, the proposed legislative mechanism—granting the power to cancel visas for an entire group of holders rather than on a case-by-case basis—is where the policy crosses a dangerous line.

By Sharanjit Thind

India turns away from Trump's America

When I traveled to India last February, I found a nation enthralled by America and its newly reelected president. It was a point of national pride that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the first foreign leader President Donald Trump welcomed to the Oval Office after his inauguration. And in contrast to opinion in Europe and elsewhere, polls showed a majority of Indians had confidence in Trump doing the right thing.

While traveling around the country, I met young people who yearned for the opportunity to study at American universities and build a better future for themselves and their families. Business leaders were on the cusp of expanding exports to the world's largest consumer market and building a stronger industrial base to compete with China, having been promised a quick trade agreement. Meanwhile, diplomats and military officers believed that mutual animosity toward China would bring the U.S. and India into a new strategic partnership.

After 25 years of steady bipartisan effort to expand America's relationship with India, Trump's return to power was widely viewed as the dawn of a bright future for everyone.

What could possibly go wrong? A lot, it turns out.

For all the optimism about a quick trade deal and stronger bilateral ties, things began to sour quickly after Modi's return from Washington. In late February, Indians watched as their fellow countrymen were deported by the U.S. Then, a month later, Trump announced his "Liberation Day" tariffs—socking India with a 26 percent duty on all imports into the U.S. But the biggest blow to the relationship came in May, after India retaliated against Pakistan for a terrorist attack that killed

26 tourists in Indian-controlled Kashmir. The fighting between the two countries escalated quickly, and by the third day, India was targeting a military base near the army division that oversees Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. This was hardly the first time the two countries came to serious blows—they have fought four wars in 75 years. But in the meantime, both nations have developed substantial nuclear arsenals, making any military confrontation that much more dangerous. At first, the U.S. feigned little interest in the conflict, with Vice President JD Vance telling Fox News: "We're not going to get involved in the middle of a war that's fundamentally none of our business." But once the fighting escalated, both Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio got on the phone to both countries, and a ceasefire was quickly concluded. Trump immediately claimed credit for engineering the end to fighting, suggesting he used trade to bring both parties to heel. "We stopped a nuclear conflict," the U.S. leader claimed. "I think it could have been a bad nuclear war, millions of people could have been killed, so I'm very proud of that." But while Pakistan was quick to give the White House the credit it wanted, India insisted the deal had been reached bilaterally. Eventually, as trade talks between India and the U.S. continued to stall over agriculture and other issues, Trump and Modi spoke on the phone in June. I have been told that during this call, the U.S. president insisted Modi publicly give him credit for ending the fighting in May, and that he invited the Indian prime minister to the White House when the Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan Asim Munir would also be visiting.

By Ivo Daalder Politico.com

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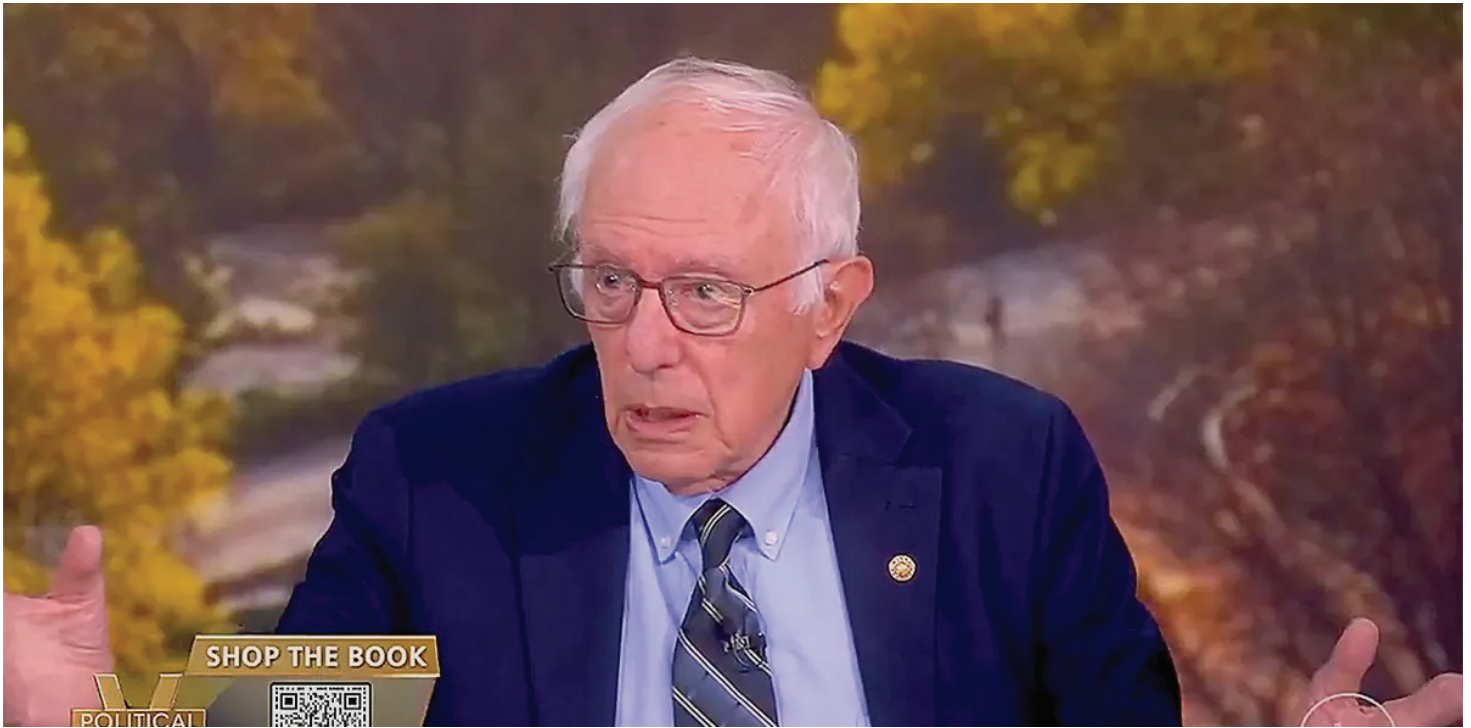
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AI layoffs could spark a socialist surge if America ignores the warning signs



What if Sen. Bernie Sanders is right and Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell is wrong? What if the AI revolution causes mass layoffs of American workers, as the Vermont senator warned in a recent Fox News op-ed? And what if Powell is wrong that the softening labor market is due primarily to supply issues — lower immigration and a lower labor participation rate — rather than AI-produced “efficiencies”?

What will be the response of policymakers? What should it be?

AI will soon become a political battleground. Democratic socialist Sanders, ever the class warrior, has already questioned whether AI will help all Americans or only “a handful of billionaires.” Like the trade deals that sent millions of jobs overseas, Sanders worries that the massive investment flowing into AI could result in up to 100 million Americans losing their jobs over the next decade. He could be right; imagine the repercussions.

Young people are already losing faith in capitalism and cozying up to socialism. Two-thirds of Democrats now view socialism more positively than capitalism. Nothing could undermine our capitalist system faster than widespread job losses stemming from a tech breakthrough cheered by the investor class.

This is the critical issue of our

day — one getting scant attention, even from self-described “data-driven” Powell, who is perennially looking backward rather than forward. In his latest press conference, Powell answered one question about employment by saying, “The supply of workers has dropped very, very sharply due to mainly immigration, but also lower labor force participation. So, and that means there’s less need for new jobs, because there’s — there isn’t this flow into the pool of labor where people need jobs.” Excuse me, what? The economy is growing, yet hiring is declining. Though the government shutdown has blocked the usual monthly labor reports, plenty of data suggests the job market is weakening. Companies are increasingly citing AI investment as a factor in lower headcounts. Corporate America is spending tens of billions of dollars on AI, promising shareholders great gains in productivity. But where will that productivity come from, other than reducing headcounts? Certainly, people armed with artificial intelligence can deliver information and analyses more rapidly, making themselves and their organizations more productive. But ultimately, it will also make some people redundant and slow new hiring. The

impact on America’s labor market will be profound — and is largely being ignored.

Amazon recently announced it was laying off 14,000 employees. A top human resources official at the firm sent a note titled “Staying nimble and continuing to strengthen our organizations.” She wrote that “the world is changing quickly. This generation of AI is the most transformative technology we’ve seen since the Internet, and it’s enabling companies to innovate much faster than ever before.”

What kinds of workers are at risk? Factory workers and truck drivers, for sure, who are already being replaced by robots and AI — but also white-collar employees. Fortune notes that the Amazon layoffs “show it’s coming for middle management first.” The world’s largest retailer employs about 1.5 million people; 14,000 is a drop in the bucket. But the trend is worrisome — and for those 14,000 people, devastating.

Amazon is not alone. UPS recently announced it has cut 48,000 jobs this year — 14,000 management positions and 34,000 in operations. UPS started the year with about 500,000 employees. Target also made headlines recently, saying it will cut 8% of its corporate workforce — its first significant layoffs in a decade.

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JOBS THAT ARE MOST AT RISK FROM AI, ACCORDING TO MICROSOFT

Outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas cites market and economic conditions as the main reason for most corporate layoffs to date but also points to AI. That makes sense. After all, the economy is growing briskly — second-quarter real GDP growth was 3.8%, and it looks like we’ll see robust expansion for the third quarter as well. There has never been a faster adoption of new technology. Already, an estimated one-third of Americans use AI; ChatGPT receives 5.4 billion visits per month. Global AI revenues are expected to total \$391 billion this year and could reach \$3.5 trillion by 2033. These estimates may be optimistic, but top tech firms are investing about \$400 billion this year alone to expand capacity, according to The Wall Street Journal. They clearly believe the projections. Bernie Sanders aside, no one should want to halt the AI revolution. Artificial intelligence promises extraordinary advances in medicine and other sciences — and could radically improve education for America’s children. It’s also largely American companies that

will benefit from the explosion in AI spending, reaping the profits and influence that come with global dominance of a new technology. Rising productivity will spur hiring in certain industries and boost real wages.

It will also allow for the retirement of the 20-plus million baby boomers still working. But there may well be a period of adjustment when layoffs exceed job creation. Unemployment may rise, fueling anger at the innovations producing more out-of-work Americans and resentment toward the companies behind the disruptions.

Lawmakers and financial leaders need to be prepared for this possibility — one that could deepen voters’ growing affection for socialism and rejection of capitalism. That would be a disaster for a country that has outperformed every other nation on Earth, producing unprecedented opportunity and wealth. Otherwise, it will be Bernie Sanders and his left-wing colleagues dictating the response.

Sanders advocates a 32-hour workweek with no loss in pay, giving workers significantly more power and imposing a “robot tax” on big tech companies. Such measures would slow American competitiveness and growth, as they have in Europe.

By LIZ PEEK

President Trump's historic peace plan could reshape the Middle East – but we need to act fast



It's no exaggeration to say that the Middle East is in a completely different place than it was this time last year – and that is thanks entirely to the indefatigability of the state of Israel and President Donald Trump's judicious application of American power.

With the living hostages released, and an (albeit shaky) ceasefire in place, we have a window of opportunity to implement the rest of President Trump's 20-point peace plan. It's going to be difficult and will require quick, decisive action and continued pressure on Hamas and its patrons in Iran to have any chance of success.

Hamas did not agree to the first phase of this plan because they wanted peace: they did so because they were backed into a corner. Since the ceasefire went into effect, they've turned their fire on their own people to purge any political rivals and terrorize the population into accepting their continued rule. And Hamas leaders are hoping that the ceasefire and the difficulties involved in en-

forcing the peace plan will give them the space they need to regroup and live to fight another day.

That outcome is unacceptable. Israel will not, and cannot, return to the status quo that made Oct. 7 possible, and the United States would lose the international credibility and deterrence that President Trump has restored if we fail to see through this plan.

Our most pressing task is to disarm Hamas and prevent the group from having any role in governance. That doesn't just mean making sure they don't have access to weapons: it means destroying the labyrinthine tunnel system and building a security apparatus that prevents any materials that could be used to wage war on Israel from entering Gaza. President Trump has and must remain committed to that condition to deliver a lasting peace.

Cooperating with our partners from the Arab and Muslim world to implement this part of the plan is particularly important. The U.S. will need to unite the coalition behind

this objective and must be prepared to apply pressure where necessary to keep things on track – especially in relation to erstwhile Hamas supporters Qatar and Turkey.

In both the short and medium term, we must focus relentlessly on continuing to weaken the regime in Iran so that it cannot reconstitute its "Ring of Fire" around Israel, rebuild its nuclear weapons program or reassert itself as a regional power. Defanging Iran was the X factor that enabled this peace plan to come together. Without Israel taking the fight to Iranian proxies across the region and to Iran itself – culminating in the decimation of Iran's nuclear program by the U.S. and Israel – there can be little doubt that Hamas would be far stronger than it is today, and that those hostages would still be suffering in the tunnels.

Tehran is now the weakest it has been in years – but without sustained pressure, the regime will recover at least some of its strength, especially with the help of autocratic friends like China and Russia. We must resume the maximum pressure cam-

paign of the first Trump administration and explore all available means to exert pressure on this decrepit regime so that it can no longer export terror and destabilize the region.

We can also enhance the prospects of success by cultivating new opportunities for Muslim countries to normalize relations with Israel. In President Trump's first term, I had the privilege of husbanding the groundbreaking agreements known as the Abraham Accords, which normalized relations between Israel and multiple Arab nations, including the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco.

By incentivizing Muslim nations to pursue peace and prosperity, we were able to show the futility of continuing to wage war against Israel, and the bright future that awaits any nation that seeks peace. This laid the groundwork for the coalition behind the Gaza peace plan, and I have every confidence that we're in a strong position to further expand the accords.

And finally, we must ensure that the United States

continues its "No Daylight" policy toward Israel. The Gaza peace plan would not have been possible without the unprecedented close cooperation between the U.S. and Israel. By giving Israel the space it needed to win this war on its own terms and supporting them at critical junctures, President Trump turned the failed approach of the previous administration on its head, and finally created space for peace through this show of strength. That is ultimately how the Abraham Accords success can be expanded to other countries in the region. The United States and our coalition partners have an historic opportunity to reshape the entire region for the better, but time is of the essence. Keeping up the pressure on Hamas and its backers in Iran will determine whether this plan succeeds in the long term. It won't be easy, but given the determination and leadership shown by the U.S. and Israeli governments, there is every reason to hope that it may just be achievable.

By Michael R. Pompeo

The Trump Doctrine Returns To Africa



When Donald Trump publicly threatened possible US military intervention in Nigeria over the alleged "massacre of Christians", he reignited an old debate about America's moral duty versus its strategic restraint. His declaration—to cut all US aid and perhaps go in "guns-a-blazing"—landed with the blunt force of vintage Trumpism: dramatic, populist, and politically combustible. This is no mere outburst. Nigeria has now been re-designated a "Country of Particular Concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act, reviving a label that could justify sanctions or military pressure. If Trump's words translate into action, Washington could find itself on the edge of its first major African war of the 21st century.

THE MORAL IMPERATIVE: PROTECTING THE PERSECUTED

Trump's supporters frame his threat as an overdue stand for global religious freedom. Islamist militants like Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province have targeted churches, kidnapped girls, and razed Christian villages in Nigeria's northeast for over a decade. To many evangelical voters and human-rights advocates, this is a moral red line the world has ignored too long. They argue that the Nigerian state has failed to protect its own citizens. If sovereignty becomes a shield for inaction, then intervention—even forceful—may be the only language that stops the bloodshed. In this telling, Trump's bluntness is not

recklessness but righteous clarity: a superpower finally willing to act where others have watched.

MIRAGE OF A SIMPLE WAR

Yet the opposite view warns against mistaking complexity for clarity. Nigeria's violence is not a singular "Christian persecution" but a tangled web of insurgency, ethnicity, and poverty. Thousands of Muslims have also been killed in the same conflicts; many perpetrators are criminal gangs, not ideologues. To flatten this into a binary of "Muslim killers" versus "Christian victims" risks inflaming sectarian division and misdiagnosing the disease. The Nigerian government, for its part, rejects the label of religious intolerance and insists that foreign threats undermine its sovereignty.

Military intervention, critics say, could unleash a new cycle of instability worse than the disease it seeks to cure.

SOVEREIGNTY, STRATEGY & THE SHADOW OF EMPIRE

Beneath the moral framing lies an uncomfortable geopolitical question: who decides when a nation has failed its people? Nigeria is not a protectorate—it is Africa's largest democracy, its biggest economy, and a cornerstone of regional security. A unilateral American strike would echo colonial memories and raise legal questions under international law. It would also complicate relations with African Union partners and global powers like China and Russia,

both of whom have growing stakes in West Africa. In short: one man's humanitarian rescue could look, from Lagos or Abuja, like another man's

imperial adventure.

BETWEEN AID AND ARMS: THE HARD CHOICES AHEAD

If the US truly wishes to protect civilians, it has tools beyond war. Conditioning aid on human-rights reform, sharing intelligence, strengthening Nigeria's overstretched military, or building interfaith peace networks could achieve far more than airstrikes. A measured strategy would marry pressure with partnership—supporting Nigeria's efforts without dictating them. For Nigeria, that means confronting corruption, rebuilding trust in the army, and addressing the root causes of insurgency: unemployment, inequality, and environmental decay. Guns alone will not fix ghosts born of history. **THE CROSS AND THE**

FLAG Trump's Nigeria gambit distills a timeless dilemma: when does the defence of faith become the assertion of power? The instinct to protect the persecuted is noble, but war—especially one fought in God's name—is rarely merciful in practice. If America marches into Nigeria, it would not be the victory of Christian conscience but the return of crusade-style geopolitics in a world that can ill afford it. Yet doing nothing while civilians die also feels intolerable. The answer lies, perhaps, not in choosing between action and apathy but in choosing how to act—with humility, precision, and partnership rather than spectacle. For in the end, Nigeria's peace will not be won from the sky; it must be built on the ground, by Nigerians, with the world's support, not its crosshairs.

By : Griha Atul

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The return of antisemitism should shock and appall Americans

Antisemitism — hatred of Jews because they are Jews — is sometimes referred to as "the ancient evil," because it is indeed ancient, dating at least to the third century BC in Hellenistic Egypt.

The Greeks and the Romans were both suspicious of Jewish communities of the ancient world simply because they refused to adopt the religious and social customs of their conquerors, and the rulers especially resented the strict monotheism of the Jews.

As a people "set apart," the Jews maintained their communities according to the rules of their faith and were persecuted as a consequence by the dominant powers and empires.

At least three times, the Jewish people were carried away en masse as captives and slaves: the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom around 722 BCE, the Babylonian captivity of the southern kingdom of Judah starting in 597 BCE and the Roman captivity beginning in 70 CE. Christianity, of course, begins with the person of Jesus, who is Jewish and born of Mary, also Jewish. The earliest Christian communities were planted by Jews, including the original apostles and Paul. Almost all of Christian Scripture is certainly authored by Jews, and what Christians call the "Old Testament" is exclusively of Jewish authorship.

It should be obvious to Christians that antisemitism is in conflict with their beliefs. But, for hundreds of years that was not the case. The first three hundred years of the Christian faith were marked by persecution of their own communities by various rulers and especially the Romans, until the Edict of Milan in 313 AD, when the Emperor Constantine ordered religious tolerance throughout the Roman Empire. Again, having been persecuted, Christians ought to be suspicious of persecuting any people different from themselves.

The Bishop of Rome gradually emerged as first among equals among the bishops, beginning with the Council of

Nicaea in 325. The "pope," as the bishop of Rome came to be called, was accorded special authority in subsequent ecumenical councils including Constantinople I in 381 and the Chalcedon council in 451. The role of the pope would eventually be crucial to reconciliation of the two faiths.

Before very recent history, the Roman Catholic Church (of which I am a part) institutionalized antisemitism, especially from the Middle Ages through Vatican II, the great modernizing council which opened in October 1962 and concluded in December 1965. Among the products of the Vatican II Council was the issuance of "Nostra aetate" which proclaims in part that the Church rejects "every persecution against any man, [and that] the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone."

So while the Roman Catholic Church was complicit in antisemitic persecution of the worst sort for centuries, for the past 60 years it has condemned it. People and institutions can change. So Catholics, at least, are obliged to condemn and wholly reject antisemitism. St. John Paul II, often referred to as St. John Paul the Great, oversaw the Great Fundamental Agreement that was signed in December 1993, recognizing the State of Israel and leading to the exchange of ambassadors between the Vatican and Israel in June 1994. While Pope John Paul II worked ceaselessly to reorder relations between Christians and Jews and the Vatican and Israel. He also acknowledged and sought to repair the damage the Church had done to Jews through the centuries. His successor, Benedict XVI, carried on that work. Like John Paul II, Pope Benedict visited Auschwitz. In 2006, Benedict went to the infamous death camp, called it a "place of horror" and declared

it as well as "a place of memory, it is the place of the Shoah."

"The past is never simply the past," Pope Benedict continued. "It always has something to say to us; it tells us the paths to take and the paths not to take." (The text of Benedict's remarks is here.) Benedict's vast intellect is a good beginning place for people of all faiths as they contemplate the alarming rise of anti-Semitism on the left and the far-right in America. He called on all to join with the Catholic communities of religious near the death camp in the prayer "that remembrance will foster resistance to evil and the triumph of love." It is a call best understood to be a duty on all free people.

Catholics and all Christians ought to be very slow to accuse anyone of the mortal sin of anti-Semitism — "judge not, lest you be judged" — but still quick to condemn its embrace when its hideous face emerges in unmistakable form. Some revel in that identity rooted in hate. Most who truly draw their identity from the ancient evil are mentally ill, in need of conversion and care. But, some make the choice to hate Jews for various reasons which cannot be easily traced to mental illness, and they should receive clear condemnation as this particular hatred can be considered contagious given how long it has endured and how often its apparent eradication does not actually stick.

Public figures should avoid the proponents of vocal antisemitism, never elevating it without condemnation and also always quick to distance themselves from it. Because attention itself is a reward for antisemitism of the worst sort, and refusing to acknowledge their vile propaganda is the best tactic, while serious history is the best antidote to exposure to it. Social media has allowed the ancient evil to gain new traction and spread into corners that used to be considered dark and are now apparently lucrative.

But no one aspiring to lead

should be anywhere near its poisonous pools. So, always condemn antisemitism in all its forms, but be slow to accuse anyone of antisemitism. If an antisemite insists on being known for their hatred, shunning is the best response. Not argument or debate, simply shunning.

To engage is to reward, and only evil can come from that. Hugh Hewitt is host of "The Hugh Hewitt Show," heard weekday mornings 6am to 9am ET on the Salem Radio Network, and simulcast on Salem News Channel. Hugh wakes up America on over 400 affiliates nationwide, and on all the streaming platforms where SNC can be seen. He is a frequent guest on the Fox News Channel's news roundtable hosted by Bret Baier weekdays at 6pm ET. A son of Ohio and a graduate of Harvard College and the University of Michigan Law School, Hewitt has been a Professor of Law at Chapman University's Fowler School of Law since 1996 where he teaches Con-

stitutional Law. Hewitt launched his eponymous radio show from Los Angeles in 1990.

Hewitt has frequently appeared on every major national news television network, hosted television shows for PBS and MSNBC, written for every major American paper, has authored a dozen books and moderated a score of Republican candidate debates, most recently the November 2023 Republican presidential debate in Miami and four Republican presidential debates in the 2015-16 cycle. Hewitt focuses his radio show and his column on the Constitution, national security, American politics and the Cleveland Browns and Guardians. Hewitt has interviewed tens of thousands of guests from Democrats Hillary Clinton and John Kerry to Republican Presidents George W. Bush and Donald Trump over his 40 years in broadcast, and this column previews the lead story that will drive his radio/TV show today.

By Hugh Hewitt

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Five Ways Pakistan Is Trying To 'Hide' Its Own Blunders In Afghanistan

Pakistan is working to shift the global narrative in its favour amid ongoing tensions with Afghanistan and uncertainty regarding peace negotiations with the interim Taliban government. To achieve this, Islamabad is portraying itself as a victim of cross-border terrorism, calling the Taliban uncooperative, seeking external support from Western and friendly Islamic nations on the issue, justifying aggressive military actions in Afghanistan, and blaming India for the rift with the Taliban. All these factors also contribute to Pakistan's attempts to hide its "strategic depth" policy failure in Afghanistan and coerce the Taliban leadership to fall in line or face consequences. Riding high on renewed ties with the United States and a growing diplomatic role in the Middle East, Pakistan believes it can reshape the perception about Afghanistan. While this tactic may work in the short term, Islamabad risks alienating the Taliban in the long run.

Pak Plays Victim

First, Pakistan is presenting itself internationally as the victim of cross-terrorism allegedly originating from Afghan territory. Islamabad has repeatedly accused the Taliban-led interim government of harbouring the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other militant groups that attack Pakistani armed forces. In the most recent round of talks in Istanbul (with mediation from Turkey and Qatar), Pakistan initially declared: "The dialogue...ended without any workable solution" and accused the Afghan side of being "indifferent to Pakistan's losses". However, the recent negotiations were extended due to third-party mediation efforts and finally concluded on October 30, with plans to hold the next round on November 6 in Istanbul. By emphasising its own sufferings and sacrifices, Pakistan is now portraying itself as a responsible, peace-seeking neighbour whose diplomatic overtures have been rejected due to the Taliban's intransigence. This victim narrative gives Islamabad moral cover in international forums.

A 'Peace Warrior'

Second, by pointing the finger at the Taliban and declaring its own peaceful credentials, Pakistan can claim the role of the peace warrior. The Pakistani side has claimed that the country had

"always desired, advocated and immensely sacrificed for peace and prosperity for the people of Afghanistan" and warned that "Pakistan's patience has run its course". Whereas Pakistan's army chief, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, warned the Afghan



Taliban to choose between "peace and chaos", and stated in January 2024, "when it comes to the safety and security of every single Pakistani, the whole of Afghanistan can be damned". In doing so, Pakistan presents itself as both a willing negotiator and a powerful military force that reserves the right to act. This matters because the international community generally favours diplomatic negotiations over military solutions. Therefore, Pakistan's argument that it engaged with the Taliban in Doha and Istanbul, but that the latter allegedly backtracked on commitments, gives Islamabad a diplomatic advantage and allows it to shift the blame away from itself and onto Kabul for bilateral tensions.

Look At What It Says To The World

Third, the failure of negotiations helps Pakistan mobilise external support from the West and some Islamic countries to pressure the Taliban. Islamabad has long argued with Washington that Kabul cannot be stable unless Pakistan's security concerns (especially the TTP) are addressed. With the Taliban's limited role in controlling militancy in Pakistan, which it considers the latter's "internal problem", Islamabad may use the uncertainty around peace talks as an example of the Taliban's unreliability and solicit financial aid, intelligence, and military cooperation, or diplomatic backing from Western capitals on the issue. Notably, Pakistan remains a close counterterrorism partner of the United States and has strengthened bilateral security

cooperation under the Donald Trump administration. With renewed support from Washington and ongoing tensions between the US and Afghanistan over the issue of the Bagram airbase control, Islamabad sees an opportunity to bolster its external sup-

port and portray the Taliban as a threat to regional and global security.

Justifying Its Aggression

Fourth, the diplomatic impasse gives Pakistan a convenient justification for an aggressive military strategy against Afghanistan under the pretext of counterterrorism operations against TTP and its affiliates. For example, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif threatened Afghanistan that Pakistan did not need "even a fraction of its full arsenal to completely obliterate the Taliban regime" if provoked further. The temporary breakdown of diplomacy between the two countries may lead to Pakistan using force and carrying out more and deeper strikes inside Afghanistan, such as in Kabul or Kandahar. In Pakistan, there are growing calls for 'open war' or redrawing the Durand Line by forcefully capturing some territories in eastern Afghanistan. Other options include increasing airstrikes on so-called militant hideouts, decapitation of top TTP leaders, and even attempts at regime change or a reshuffle in the current Taliban administration in Kabul. These options are possible as Pakistan is working to shape a global narrative that, if the ceasefire fails and peace talks with the Taliban break down, it reserves the right to take escalatory actions against Afghanistan.

Blaming India, As Usual

Fifth, Pakistan is also using the deadlock with the Taliban to further its propaganda that India is supposedly interfering via Afghanistan by supporting certain militant outfits. In its recent narrative,

Islamabad is increasingly blaming India for influencing the Taliban regime to allegedly destabilise Pakistan's western region. While Islamabad has failed to provide any evidence proving India's involvement, this narrative serves the purpose of Pakistan's military establishment: shifting attention away from its own counterterrorism policy failures, pressuring the Taliban, and placing India in the role of a destabiliser in the region. Pakistan is unsettled after the recent multi-day visit of the Acting Foreign Minister of the interim Taliban government, Amir Khan Muttaqi, to India. Muttaqi lauded India as a "close friend" that provides humanitarian aid, and announced Afghanistan's desire for "mutual respect, trade, and people-to-people relations" with India. Additionally, New Delhi recently agreed to upgrade its "technical" mission in Kabul to a full embassy. For Pakistan, the burgeoning India-Afghanistan relationship under the Taliban regime in Kabul is a clear failure of its decades-old "strategic depth" policy. To express its disapproval and frustration, Pakistan carried out airstrikes in Kabul, allegedly targeting key TTP leaders, during Muttaqi's visit to India. This shows Pakistan will not accept growing diplomatic ties between Kabul and New Delhi and may intensify pressure on the Taliban through military strikes and narrative warfare against India. Nevertheless, these tactics will not solve Pakistan's core issues with the Taliban administration, improve the internal security situation, or address deep ethnic divisions within the country. By combining these reasons, Pakistan may extract short-term gains from ongoing tensions with the Taliban. The third-party mediation from Qatar and Turkey provides Pakistan with an additional advantage to pressure the Taliban and shape the global narrative and outcomes of the talks in its favor. Here, Pakistan's aim is to change the Taliban's behaviour in its favor, limit Kabul's ties with New Delhi, and use regional instability as a time-tested tool to garner international attention. However, this approach also poses certain risks to Pakistan. By leaning heavily on military operations and coercive diplomacy, Pakistan may further alienate the Afghan Taliban, reduce its influence, and increase the probability of a broader armed confronta-

tion. The Taliban may turn away from Pakistan and cultivate new partnerships within the region and outside. Unlike the first Taliban regime in the late 1990s, Taliban 2.0 does not want to accept Pakistan's policy directives and expects respectful treatment from its neighbour. On the other hand, Pakistan is not ready to accept the Taliban's independent policy lines, especially Afghanistan's growing ties with India, and would continue to push for a malleable leadership in Kabul. Even after four years, Islamabad has still not officially recognised the Taliban regime as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. This has generated serious mistrust in Kabul regarding Islamabad's intentions and is one of the key reasons for tensions between the two sides. 'Disappointment' Is The Word Since August 2021, Pakistan's policy toward Afghanistan has shifted from one of triumph to one of disappointment. As the Taliban refuse to accept blatant subordination from Islamabad, Pakistan has decided to use coercive diplomacy, military measures, and the cross-border terrorism issue to create a narrative in its favour, which will allow it to justify its hard actions against Afghanistan in the future. This strategy may benefit Pakistan in the short term, as the Taliban's international reputation is already struggling with credibility issues. However, Pakistan faces the following risks: losing influence over the Taliban in the long term, intensifying anger among Afghans, especially refugees and those impacted by Pakistani military actions, rising local militancy, and possibly consolidating the disgruntled members of the Pashtun community on both sides of the border. Therefore, what remains to be seen is whether Pakistan's aggressive policy on Afghanistan would ultimately pressure the Taliban and bring long-term peace to the two countries, or whether the regional instability would again help garner international attention and material support for Islamabad. One thing is clear: under Munir's leadership, Pakistan's military establishment is likely to use rising tensions on both its eastern and western borders as justification to further consolidate its power and deflect any calls for public accountability for its recurring counterterrorism failures and destabilising regional policy.

By Sarraj Sharma

Delhi Breathes Dust Year-Round: Why Do We Panic Only On Diwali?

Each winter, Delhi transforms into a city under siege. The crisp October air quickly turns into a suffocating haze, and the world's attention shifts once again to a familiar headline: Delhi – the most polluted city on Earth. Schools shut, outdoor life collapses, and the simple act of breathing becomes hazardous. Every year, the blame game begins. And almost predictably, Diwali firecrackers are declared the primary offender. But this is a convenient fiction. Even a cursory look at data reveals that the true causes of Delhi's smog are far more structural, far more chronic, and far more ignored. Fireworks may dominate narrative battles, but five real pollution giants determine whether Delhi breathes clean or chokes: road dust, vehicular emissions, biomass burning, diesel generators, and seasonal farm fires. On the streets of Delhi, the biggest polluter does not come from a tailpipe. It lies beneath our feet.

Almost every road edge is an open dust bank-unpaved soil, broken pavements, leftover construction material. Vehicles churn this reservoir into the air every second. Scientific studies have consistently shown that road dust contributes around 40% – sometimes even more – to Delhi's PM pollution levels. By comparison, vehicles typically contribute about half that share. This means that if Delhi simply ensured no roadside had exposed soil – if every shoulder were paved or greened – the city could reduce particulate matter significantly in a single year.

The consequences of roadside dust reach beyond the lungs. Dust makes walking deeply unpleasant; a commuter leaving the metro must choose between ruined clothing and auto-rickshaws or personal vehicles. This drives up car dependency, worsening congestion and emissions. Dust-coated market areas repel customers, hurting street vendors and accelerating class-based segregation of public space. Environments that are dusty become garbage dumping grounds, further degrading living conditions. Fixing dust pollution does not just clean the air-it dignifies the city.

Vehicles Alone Cannot Explain the Crisis

Delhi's vehicle count is huge, but its vehicle-related pollution is secondary when compared to the dust and external smoke that define the worst smog episodes. Cleaner fuels, phasing out old vehicles, electric mobility



and congestion reduction are essential, yet improving vehicles alone cannot solve a problem dominated by non-vehicular sources.

Biomass & Waste Burning: The Night-Time Killer

For many lower-income residents, burning biomass is an unfortunate necessity – whether for warmth during freezing nights or for cooking when LPG affordability becomes uncertain. These countless fires emit ultrafine particles that accumulate overnight under winter inversion conditions. Hospitals see the results each morning. Eliminating biomass burning requires not just policing, but alternatives-affordable heating and reliable waste management.

Diesel Generators: Pollution at Breathing Level

Diesel gensets are an invisible pollution powerhouse. They operate even where electricity is stable, often due to habit or convenience. Their exhaust is not up in industrial chimneys-it hits children in schoolyards and shoppers in markets. Solutions exist: solar rooftops, battery storage, and strict retrofit compliance. What is missing is urgency.

Tsunami

For roughly twenty days each year, Delhi's air turns from unclean to unlivable because winds carry smoke from crop fires, primarily in Punjab and a few in parts of Haryana and Western UP. Peak contributions can hit 40-

50% of Delhi's pollution. These short bursts inflict long shadows: they establish the toxic baseline on which Delhi's other pollutants accumulate. The region has solutions: machinery subsidies, crop residue management systems, residue buy-back policies, and stricter enforcement. Haryana and Western UP have shown strong improvement; Punjab needs to follow at the same pace to prevent these annual smog tsunamis.

Firecrackers: A Soft Target

The dramatic spikes seen on Diwali night undoubtedly affect air quality. But what matters for public health is persistence. Firework emissions typically dissipate within 12-24 hours when winds shift. That is uncomfortable but not catastrophic. The catastrophe is what follows-when relentless dust, biomass fires and incoming stubble smoke take over for the next 60-90 days. Banning crackers scratches a visible surface but leaves the tumour untouched. Symbolic moves are easier than systemic reforms. And a cultural festival makes an easy villain for the assorted gang of activist and 'secular' politicians. Just a common sensical approach would have made it amply clear that Diwali fireworks have negligible to zero impact on Delhi's pollution crisis in October-November every year. Crackers have been used since centuries. Yet, the yearly smoke chamber phenomenon in Delhi has become a re-

ality only since 2014-15. Surely it could thus not be crackers but something new which was added to the mix. That 'new' was the stubble burning smoke, the season of which shifted by two months due to the law passed in Haryana and Punjab in 2009, the full effects of which started manifesting a few years later. But the toxic nature of secular politics prioritised, for a decade, in villainising Diwali, rather than handling the toxic fumes from stubble fires. Delhi Can Breathe Again If Priorities Shift Delhi's air crisis is not nature's curse or geography's destiny. It is a governance challenge. A three-tier action plan can deliver clean air within a few years: One year to eliminate road dust by fixing pavements, greening verges, enforcing construction norms and deploying mechanized sweeping.

Two years to end stubble burning through machinery support, residue utilization markets and collaborative enforcement across state borders including raising awareness among the farmers themselves.

Three years to phase out diesel gensets, eradicate biomass burning through access to clean energy and reform transport emissions. Delhi's smog is man-made-and therefore, solvable. All it needs is lesser toxic politics of the secular kind and more action on the ground – in Delhi and around it.

By Akhilesh Mishra

Everywhere All At Once Makes India A Safe AI Bet

Everyone is looking for the next big AI bet. They're searching for energy-rich places that can run data centers cheaply, for bottlenecks in the semiconductor supply chain that will earn massive profits, or for companies that might own the next breakout algorithm.

Usually, India doesn't feature in these conversations. It isn't going to be a chipmaking superpower any time soon. And, although a couple of big data-center projects have been announced, high energy costs and land scarcity limit its ambitions. And yet India may be the biggest, safest bet in the age of artificial intelligence. Not because it will build the models, but because it will use them.

The large language models players already suspect this. In recent months, three companies have rolled out free access to their paid tiers exclusively in India. OpenAI Inc.'s lightweight ChatGPT Go plan will be available at no cost to Indians for a year; Alphabet Inc.'s Gemini Pro will be provided to every single one of Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd.'s 505 million subscribers for 18 months; and Perplexity AI Inc. will offer its Pro version to Bharti Airtel Ltd.'s 350 million users.

That two of the three are going with telecom providers is partly to build scale. Nobody gives you numbers like India does. And young Indians are particularly ferocious adopters of technology.

The telcos, for their part, are always looking for products to bundle with their subscription plans. But some analysts have pointed out that it's different this time: Instead of an entertainment package, they're selling their AI add-ons as a utility.

We are on the cusp of a planetary-scale social experiment: What happens when you push free, unlimited, cutting-edge AI onto a billion-plus peoples' phones? Indian officials know what answer they're hoping for. This might be how the country finally breaks out of the low-skill, low-productivity equilibrium it has been trapped in. Growth numbers look impressive. But they're driven by a few high-output sectors; the vast majority of people work for themselves or for informal enterprises, and according to the International Labor Organization are only half as productive as the average. Last month, the government think tank NITI Aayog argued in an AI-focused report that it could triple the productivity of India's informal workers in the next decade, taking it from \$5 an hour to \$15 an hour. The officials said that their calculations showed widespread adoption would add between \$500 billion and \$600 billion to India's output by 2035.

New Delhi is an upbeat town, and



this figure is almost certainly exaggerated by the most flattering possible assumptions. The brutal fact is that every other attempt to give India's hundreds of millions of young people the skills they need to compete has failed. And, as my colleague Andy Mukherjee has argued, entry-level white-collar jobs are as much at risk in India as they are anywhere else. But official optimism about this technological transformation isn't entirely unfounded. Youths here are not just enthusiastic about tech, they are unusually verbal users. The reason why almost every explainer on YouTube is made by and for Indians is because many of us search for answers on video sites first.

This sort of curiosity is almost designed for an era defined by language models that let you talk your way into competence. The one thing that we know about LLMs is that they seem to flatten the skill curve. Someone who has never coded a line of Python can suddenly create halfway-decent websites, and her friend without any experience of this country's Byzantine regulatory environment can suddenly navigate opaque government forms.

Some of this is already visible online. Look at X, for example. ChatGPT's characteristic syntax of LLMs is identifiable in tens of thousands of blue-tick accounts from India. And those posts are getting the engagement they crave, nevertheless. It's irritating. It's depressing, even. But it's working.

A similar dynamic will play out in the real world. Indians will break down instructions they earlier couldn't understand. They will teach themselves new systems step by step, transcending their flawed educational and skilling system. Speakers of Hindi or Marathi will see their horizons expand now that they're able to navigate different languages in a multilingual society and world. They will be able to provide services that cross deep cultural divides.

What OpenAI and the others seem to have realized is that there's more than one way for a country to provide AI infrastructure. Data centers, power plants, semiconductor fabs - sure. But the last and most essential ingredient is people. And people India has. That's why the biggest AI play in the world might be India itself - not as a chipmaker or algorithm owner, but as everything else. Not in any one sector, but in all of them. If

language models really lower the barrier to achieving competence, if they really work as enablers for the unskilled and disconnected, then this country's hundreds of millions of underperforming workers become the world's most consequential growth story. India's government has failed to empower its people. It has failed to grant them skills. Perhaps it's time to let the LLMs try.

By Mihir Sharma, Bloomberg



The Busan Consensus: Is 'Chimerica' Dawning?

The recent meeting between US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the APEC Summit in Busan, South Korea, was, by all accounts, a significant event. Hailed as "amazing" and a "12 out of 10" by President Trump, the summit appears to have yielded a crucial, if tactical, trade truce - and perhaps something more. Trump's use of the term "G2" to frame the gathering - implying a global co-management role for Washington and Beijing - has raised profound questions about the future architecture of international relations. Does it mark the dawning of "Chimerica", a powerful, bilateral condominium carving up the world?

Trump, who tweeted (in his usual CAPSLOCK style) that "THE G2 WILL BE CONVENING SHORTLY!" before his meeting with Xi, enthusiastically posted after it: "Just wrapped up a HISTORIC G2 meeting with President Xi in Busan. 12/10. Tariffs down, soybeans up, fentanyl flow STOPPED. Peace through strength. America FIRST!"? He added: "China understands now: we want fair trade, safe borders, and NO DRUGS. Great progress. Great respect. Great deal coming!"? And he told his followers on Truth Social that "My G2 meeting with President Xi of China was a great one for both of our countries. This meeting will lead to everlasting peace and success. God bless both China and the USA!"

?His Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth?, claimed that the relationship between the US and China "has never been better". He too went public on social media, announcing his "Positive meeting with Admiral Dong Jun, China's Defense Minister. We agreed: peace, stability, and good relations are the best path forward."? and adding "Admiral Dong and I also agreed to set up military-to-military channels to deconflict and de-escalate any problems that arise. Peace through strength!"

The three key takeaways from the Xi-Trump meeting were a partial trade truce, rare earth supply assurances, and a toned-down tariff regime. But the more consequential news was the American enthusiasm at the highest levels for a strategic reset with China.

The Trade Deal

First, on the volatile trade relationship. President Xi clearly emerged as the more confident player, having skilfully maximised China's economic and strategic advantages to secure significant wins. The key victories China secured included tariff relief (a reduction in existing levies and an agreement to hold off on imposing new ones) and export safeguards (the suspension of fees on Chinese vessels and, crucially, a pause on new US export controls that threatened to block more Chinese companies from

accessing American technology). At the same time, the deal allowed President Trump to claim a win domestically, primarily by announcing the restart of Chinese purchases of US farm goods like soybeans. In essence, China had brilliantly allowed the US to declare victory simply by restoring the prior status quo, demonstrating President Xi's clear understanding of the domestic political requirements of his American counterpart. This outcome highlights a crucial dynamic: China holds powerful, asymmetric leverage against the US - tools like its near-monopoly on rare earth minerals, which are indispensable for almost all modern, high-tech industry and could severely cripple US manufacturing, and its vast purchasing power over commodities such as American soybeans (as Indian policymakers realise, this sort of decisive economic clout is currently not available to India in its strategic dialogue with the US).

China's successful use of economic counter-pressure highlighted its capacity to deliver a powerful strategic message. Beijing can use its global supply chain dominance and its massive market size as effective weapons. In its official summary of President Xi's statements, Beijing framed the trade tensions as a crucial "lesson", implying that Washington should avoid a self-destructive cycle of mutual escalation. China had the upper hand because the US lacked a cohesive, long-term strategic objective, instead relying on short-term tactical measures. While the US aim was purportedly to address fundamental, complex trade imbalances, China's response was described as a successful game of "Whack-A-Mole". Beijing's tactics forced the US administration to constantly shift focus - from soybeans to rare earths to technology companies - without ever resolving the core issues.

This successful demonstration of turning a perceived weakness (being the target of tariffs) into a strategic advantage showcases the high level of coordination in China's statecraft. It ultimately enables Beijing to shape the terms of engagement and remain magnanimous, having proven its ability to dictate the scope of the agreement.

Is Chimerica Dawning?

Second, the emergence of a US-China condominium. With the "G2" narrative, Trump, in his characteristic over-the-top style, has offered China a symbolic elevation, granting Beijing the appearance of equality in managing global affairs in exchange for economic concessions. The two statements issued by Trump and Hegseth following the summit with Xi mark an extraordinary volte-face in the administration's China policy. Just a few years ago, and indeed until quite recently, the Trump

doctrine treated China not merely as a competitor but as a strategic adversary to be confronted, contained, and, if necessary, defeated.

From the outset of his first term in 2017, Trump's rhetoric on China was laced with hostility. Beijing was accused of "ripping off" the United States, "stealing" intellectual property, manipulating its currency, and flooding American markets with cheap goods. The Covid-19 pandemic only intensified this antagonism, with Trump repeatedly referring to the coronavirus as the "China virus" and blaming Beijing for unleashing it on the world. The administration's posture hardened further during his second term, with tariffs, tech bans, and military posturing in the Indo-Pacific becoming hallmarks of a confrontational strategy.

"An Existential Threat"

This adversarial framing was not confined to political rhetoric. As recently as May this year, CIA Deputy Director Michael Ellis declared, "China is the existential threat to US security in a way that we really have never confronted before." That assessment reflected the prevailing consensus within the national security establishment: that China's rise posed a systemic challenge to American primacy, demanding vigilance, decoupling, and deterrence. Against this backdrop, the tone and content of the "G2 summit" communiqués are nothing short of astonishing. Trump's effusive praise of the meeting suggests not just a tactical pause but a rhetorical rehabilitation of China's global role. Hegseth's parallel statement, highlighting "positive" talks with the Chinese Defence Minister and the establishment of military-to-military deconfliction channels further underscores the shift from confrontation to coordination.

Why The Shift?

What explains this dramatic recalibration? Some observers still see it as a transactional pivot: a temporary thaw to stabilise markets, secure rare earth supplies, and reduce fentanyl inflows ahead of a volatile political season. Others interpret it as a strategic recalibration, acknowledging that unrelenting hostility toward China has yielded diminishing returns and heightened global instability. Whatever the rationale, the implications are profound. If China is no longer cast as an existential threat but as a partner in peace and trade, then the entire scaffolding of Trump-era foreign policy begins to wobble. Allies who aligned with Washington's hard line may now find themselves adrift. Domestic constituencies primed for confrontation may feel betrayed. And Beijing, long accustomed to American unpredictability, may see

this as an opportunity to recast itself as a responsible stakeholder - without conceding on core issues like Taiwan, the South China Sea, or technological self-sufficiency. For India, the message is mixed. On one hand, a cooling of US-China tensions may reduce regional volatility and open space for economic recalibration. On the other, it may signal a return to great-power accommodation that sidelines regional or "middle" powers like the EU, India and Russia. New Delhi, which has invested in strategic convergence with Washington partly on the basis of shared concerns about Beijing, will need to watch closely whether this G2 deal is fleeting, or the start of a new equilibrium. In either case, the transformation from "China is the enemy" to "God bless both China and the USA" is not just a shift in tone - it is a reminder that in Trumpian geopolitics, today's existential threat can become tomorrow's indispensable partner. The challenge for allies and adversaries alike is to discern whether this is a tactical feint or a strategic reset. "Chimerica", the term coined (by historian Niall Ferguson) to describe the symbiotic economic relationship between the two giants in the pre-trade war era, suggests deep, structural interdependence and shared strategic vision about everything from geopolitics to global macroeconomics. The current relationship, even after Busan, instead remains defined by deep-seated strategic competition. Core issues - China's industrial policies, intellectual property rights, technological rivalry, and geopolitical tensions over Taiwan and the South China Sea - remain fundamentally unresolved. The underlying rivalry for global technological and geopolitical supremacy persists. China's vision of development, as Xi Jinping stated, may not "contradict" Trump's "Make America Great Again", but it certainly challenges the core of American global primacy. And yet, it may be too early to come to such a complacent conclusion. There are growing signs that the US may be reorienting its strategic worldview toward a hemispheric focus - prioritising homeland security, border control, and dominance in the Americas - while tacitly conceding greater influence to China in the Indo-Pacific under a loose "G-2" framework. Such a shift would mark a return to spheres-of-influence thinking, with Washington seeking stability through selective engagement rather than global primacy. To sum up: the idea of a G2 condominium carving the world into spheres of influence is undermined by the persistence of the New Cold War's structural faultlines - unless Trump is in the process of redrawing those faultlines and ending the strategic competition we all took for granted.

By Shashi Tharoor

Zohran Mamdani got campaign funds from Hamas-linked outfit: Mentor Linda Sarsour

Palestinian-American activist Linda Sarsour has claimed that the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), under congressional scrutiny for alleged Hamas ties, funded Zohran Mamdani's campaign for the New York City mayoral polls. Sarsour, who is Mamdani's political mentor, said CAIR gave him \$120,000, becoming its biggest funder.



including Elise Stefanik (R-NY) and Tom Cotton (R-AR), who have urged the US Treasury to examine whether the nonprofit might be bankrolled by Hamas. The allegation casts doubts on Mamdani for accepting funds from an outfit that is under investigation. The nonprofit was allegedly provided "seed money" by Hamas, according to evidence presented in a congressional

hearing, the New York Post report stated.

LINDA SARSAUR VOWS TO REVEAL DETAILS OF MAMDANI'S CAMPAIGN FUNDING AFTER POLLS

In a separate video that surfaced Monday, Sarsour, known for her support of Hamas, suggested she might reveal details about Mamdani's swift rise in politics and the financial

backing he received from the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) once the election concludes, according to the report. Sarsour, 45, who is a member of the Democratic Socialists of America alongside Mamdani, insisted that her posse would speak out if the Democratic nominee and front-runner in the heated race didn't follow through with his Marxist promises, the

US Vice President to George W Bush, Dick Cheney, dies at 84

(News Agency) Dick Cheney, the former US Vice President, who served during the George W. Bush era, died at 84, due to complications related to pneumonia and cardiac and vascular disease. His family said in a statement. Cheney played a significant role in the US decision to invade Iraq in 2003 in an attempt to disarm the Iraqi government of weapons of mass destruction. He is also considered one of the most powerful Vice Presidents in the history of the US by the country's presidential historians. As reported by the news agency Reuters, the Republican, a former Wyoming congressman and Secretary of Defence, had established himself as a towering political figure in Washington when Bush chose him as his running companion for the 2000 Presidential Election. During his tenure as

Vice President from 2001 to 2009, Cheney worked rigorously to expand the power of the presidency, after feeling that it had been eroding since the Watergate scandal that drove Richard Nixon, the former US President, and Cheney's one-time boss, from office. His vice presidency also marked significant controversies, as he often clashed with various Bush administrators, including Secretaries of State Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice. He also flagged a controversy by defending 'enhanced' interrogation techniques of terrorism suspects that included waterboarding and sleep deprivation. Many, including the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the U.N. special rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights, called these techniques torture.

(News Agency) Palestinian-American activist Linda Sarsour has claimed that the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), which is under congressional scrutiny for alleged links to the terrorist group Hamas, was the main funder for Zohran Mamdani's campaign for the New York City mayoral polls. Mamdani, a Democrat, is the frontrunner in the race, the results of which will be announced on November 4. Sarsour, who's also been a political mentor for the Democrat candidate, boasted that she and the Hamas-linked nonprofit helped fuel Mamdani's rise, according to a report in The New York Post. Sarsour named the CAIR-funded Unity and Justice Fund PAC, which she described as "the largest institutional donor to the pro-Zohran super PAC in New York", the NYP reported. According to public records, the Unity and Justice PAC gave \$120,000 (approximately Rs 25 crore) total to Lower Costs, an NYC-based pro-Mamdani PAC, out of about \$3 million in donations this cycle. This comes even as CAIR is under investigation by lawmakers,

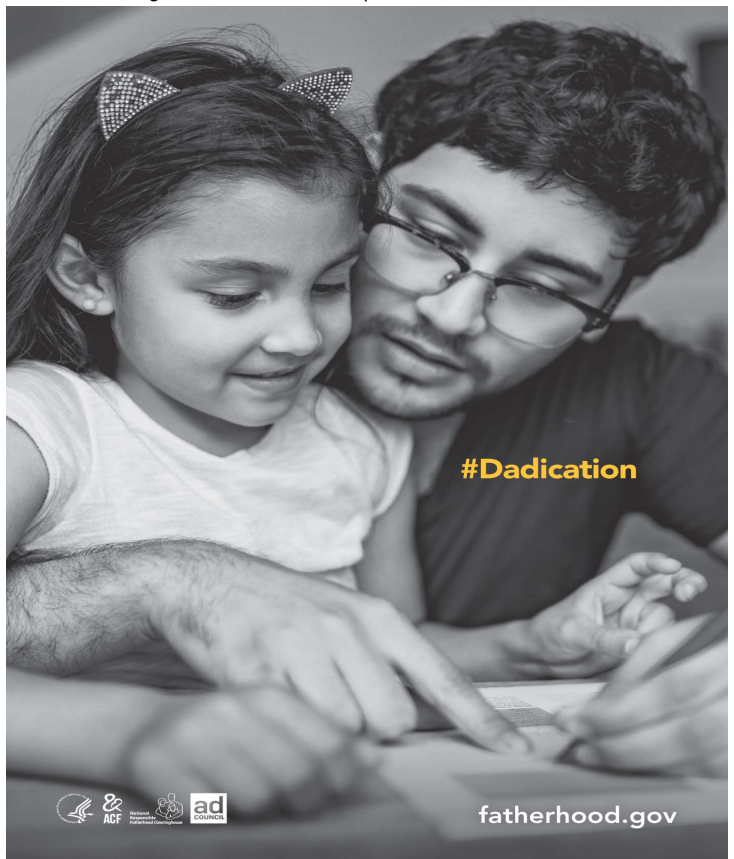


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Better a Democrat than a Communist: Trump backs Andrew Cuomo for NYC Mayor

(News Agency) US President Donald Trump warned on Monday that he will restrict federal funds for New York City if Democratic candidate Zohran Mamdani wins Tuesday's mayoral election, calling Mamdani a Communist and predicting total economic disaster under his leadership. Posting on Truth Social, Trump lashed out at the progressive New York lawmaker, accusing him of having no chance to bring the city back to its former glory. "If Communist Candidate Zohran Mamdani wins the Election for Mayor of New York City, it is highly unlikely that I will be contributing federal funds, other than the very minimum as required," Trump wrote. "As a Communist, this once great city has zero chance of success, or even survival I don't want to send good money after bad." Trump, who was born in Queens and often refers to New York as his first home, said it was his obligation to run the Nation and



claimed the city would become a complete and total economic and social disaster if Mamdani wins. The president said he would even prefer a Democrat with a record of success over Mamdani, urging

New Yorkers to back former governor Andrew Cuomo, whom he called capable. "Whether you personally like Andrew Cuomo or not, you really have no choice," Trump added. "You must vote for

him, and hope he does a fantastic job." Trump also jabbed at Republican candidate Curtis Sliwa, quipping that a vote for Sliwa is a vote for Mamdani and adding that Sliwa looks much better without the

beret. Trump's post marks his most direct intervention yet in a local race that has drawn national attention amid deep ideological divides over housing, policing, and federal aid.

Barack Obama refuses to endorse Zohran Mamdani for NYC mayoral election

(News Agency) Former US President Barack Obama has refused to endorse New York City mayoral frontrunner Zohran Mamdani, despite speaking with him by phone on Saturday. Tuesday's election will



York Post. "He endorses in general election races for federal office and governors. His call to Zohran is a huge boost at a critical moment and a signal to New Yorkers." However, Obama has in the past supported several mayoral candidates, despite his so-called "no-local-endorsement" rule. The 44th president backed Bill de Blasio in New York City's 2013 race, Karen Bass and Eric Garcetti in Los Angeles, and Rahm Emanuel in Chicago. He even weighed in on smaller city contests, endorsing Rick Kriseman for mayor of St. Petersburg, Florida, and Caroline Simmons in Stamford, Connecticut. According to The New York Post, Obama was just across the Hudson River on Saturday, campaigning for New Jersey Gov. Mikie Sherrill at a rally in Newark, but did not cross into

decide New York City's next mayor, with Zohran Mamdani, Andrew Cuomo, and Curtis Sliwa vying for the post in a closely watched race. According to The New York Post, Mamdani campaign adviser Patrick Gaspard, who once served as Obama's White House political director and US ambassador to South Africa, tried to brush off the former President's silence. "President Obama doesn't endorse in local races. That's a longstanding rule post-presidency," Gaspard told The New

New York City to publicly back Mamdani ahead of Tuesday's election. Still, political strategists suggest Obama's silence speaks volumes. Republican analyst Rob Ryan told The Post that the decision reflects unease within the Democratic establishment. "Even Barack Obama realizes Mamdani is bad for New York and the Democratic Party," Ryan said. "Obama is trying to protect other Democrats from the stain of supporting a communist for mayor in America's greatest city."

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Bangladesh election: One-sided under Yunus, or not happening at all in February

Though an election in Bangladesh in February looks unlikely, there's an added question. Will the election, if held, be fair like the one in 2008, or will the Muhammad Yunus set-up conduct polls by keeping away a big chunk of voters like Sheikh Hasina did in 2024?

(News Agency) Several advisers, including Muhammad Yunus, the head of Bangladesh's interim administration, are saying that the general election will be held in the country before Ramzan in February. That means there remain three months and a few days until the polls. Yet what is more significant is that the election the interim arrangement seeks to hold appears to be a one-sided affair—much like the one Sheikh Hasina staged in 2024. The last truly fair election in Bangladesh was in 2008. If we examine the vote share of the 2008 election by party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) got 32.5% of the national vote, Jamaat-e-Islami 4.28%, and others ideologically aligned with the BNP—Jamaat bloc, roughly 3%. In other words, the 2024 election was conducted excluding about 39.78% (roughly 40%) of the country's total vot-

ers.

The current interim authority has already, through an executive order, suspended the organisational activities of the Awami League. The Election Commission has likewise stated that the Awami League will not be allowed to contest. Whether the country's third-largest party, the Jatiya Party, will be permitted to participate also remains unclear. In the 2008 election, the Awami League, which won the poll, had a vote share of 48%.

Ambiguity Over Participation In Bangladesh Election

When the interim administration's head or the commissions it has formed hold dialogues with political parties, the Jatiya Party is never invited. If that party is also excluded from the field, then—according to the 2008 vote statistics—48.04% of votes belonging to the Awami League,

7.04% of the Jatiya Party, and another 1.9% combined of its alliance partners, Workers Party and JASAD, would be left out. Which totals to 56.17% of the electorate of Bangladesh. The interim head, Muhammad Yunus, has remarked that "people say the Awami League still has 20 percent support", but he does not believe it himself. One must, of course, respect anyone's personal belief—but personal conviction and political reality rarely travel together. Historical Context of the Awami League Many now think that the Awami League is in a worse condition than even on August 15, 1975. After that fateful year, when the Awami League went to the parliamentary polls in 1979, the party was essentially split into three factions. Among them, the Awami League (Malek and Razzak) was



considered the real Awami League by most of its grassroots workers. The other factions led by Mizan Chowdhury and Dewan Farid Gazi were not regarded as the authentic organisation by rank-and-file supporters. Electoral History and Outcomes For Awami League The 1979 election was by no means free or fair, yet the Malek-

Razzak faction received 24.56% of the vote. The 1986 election, also flawed, yielded 26.16% for the Awami League. In 1991, the BNP emerged as the single-largest party, gaining 30.81% of the votes, while the Awami League received 30.08% vote share. The BNP's total votes were 15,075,049 against the Awami League's 12,509,866.

More clout for Pak army chief Asim Munir? Buzz over Constitution amendment bid

Pakistan has decided to push through a controversial constitutional amendment widely seen as designed to secure the position and power of army chief Asim Munir.

(News Agency) The past six months have reaffirmed that Pakistan's army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, is arguably the most consequential figure in the country today. Now, in a move that analysts say will only prolong his iron grip, Pakistan has decided to push through a controversial constitutional amendment - widely seen as designed to secure the position and power of Munir. Interestingly, the world and Pakistan itself got to know about plans for the 27th constitutional amendment through a tweet by PPP chief Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari. Bilawal revealed that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reached out to his party for support on the constitutional amendment.

PAKISTAN MULLS CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT



While the proposed amendments include provisions relating to constitutional courts and the transfer of judges, what has set the cat among the pigeons is the mention of changes to Article 243. Article 243 pertains to the command and control of the Pakistani armed forces. "The federal government shall have control and command of the armed forces," the Constitution says.

While the Sharif government has maintained secrecy over the move, the proposal to revise Article 243 is being seen as a step to secure the position and power of Asim Munir, fuelling speculation that it would only further expand the military's footprint in civilian affairs. It is, however, hardly surprising in a country where the military has long cast a shadow over civilian rule. Earlier this year, weeks

after Pakistan suffered massive losses during its three-day hostilities with India, Munir was elevated as Field Marshal -- becoming only the second army chief to hold the title after Ayub Khan. Khan had self-appointed himself to the rank following a military coup. Last year, in a controversial move, the tenure of Pakistan's services chiefs was extended from three to five years. The age limit of 64 was also done away with. However, the rank of Field Marshal currently has no legal status in Pakistan's Constitution, leaving Munir's future unclear. Officially, Munir is due to retire weeks later, on November 28 this year. Now, buzz over the amendment to Article 243 is being seen as effectively granting Munir a secure and extended position. Without confirming the development, Pakistan's minister of state for law, Aqeel

Malik, told Geo News that it was for the first time after the promulgation of the 1973 Constitution that an official had been elevated to Field Marshal. Malik said it needed to be addressed in the constitutional scheme of things.

BID TO SECURE ASIM MUNIR'S POWER?

Geopolitical analysts and even voices from within Pakistan have termed the proposed move a seeming attempt to consolidate military influence under constitutional cover and would only deepen the long-standing civil-military imbalance. There is no doubt that over the course of the past few months, Munir has emerged as the de facto head of state. He has visited the US thrice in as many months, met President Donald Trump, and dabbled in not just defence policy, but also foreign relations and economic planning.

Yunus govt bows to Islamists, drops plan to hire music, physical education teachers

Under mounting pressure from hardline Islamic clerics, the interim government of Muhammad Yunus has scrapped its plans to hire music and physical education teachers for government-run primary schools. Calling the move "un-Islamic, forced and irrelevant", the Islamists had threatened to take to the streets if their demand was not met.



(NewsAgency) Months after Bangladeshi Islamists fiercely opposed the Muhammad Yunus government's decision to appoint music and dance teachers in primary schools, calling the move an "un-Islamic agenda", the interim administration has given in. Bangladesh's Ministry of Primary and Mass Education on Monday said it decided to scrap the newly created posts for music teachers in government primary schools. The ministry also dropped the post of physical education teachers, reported BDNews24. "Although the rules issued last August had four categories of posts, two categories have been included in the amendment. The posts of assistant teachers for music and physical education are not

in the new rules," ministry official Masud Akhtar Khan said. When questioned about whether the decision was a response to pressure from religious groups, Akhtar Khan refused to comment. "You can check for yourself," Khan told BDNews24. The move echoes the Taliban's hardline stance on banning music in schools in Afghanistan. If not fully there yet, Bangladesh seems to be inching down a similar path of religious rigidity. It is the Taliban mentality of regressive policies, influenced by the radicals. The Yunus administration's U-turn comes amid several policy decisions where it has bowed to Islamist pressure. In Bangladesh, Islamists, once kept in check under ousted PM Sheikh Hasina, now feel emboldened

under Yunus. They are rearing their heads and spewing venom one after another through anti-Hindu and anti-India narratives. Their latest demand is a ban on Iskcon, which they call an "extremist organisation". The Islamists had demanded that government-run primary schools employ only religious teachers and warned that they would take to the streets if their demands were not met. They called the appointment of music and physical education teachers "forced and irrelevant", the Dhaka-based Daily Star reported in September.

YUNUS GOVT'S ANTI-ISLAMIC AGENDA, SAY ISLAMISTS

At the September Islamist gathering organised by the Jatiya Olama Mashayekh Aima Parishad, and attended by hardliners from Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Andolon Bangladesh, Khelafat Majlish, and Bangladesh Khelafat Majliish, the radicals claimed that the move was "indirectly connected to an atheistic philosophy aimed at making the future generation faithless and destroying schoolchildren". Addressing the gathering, Islami Andolon Bangladesh's chief Syed Rezaul Karim said, "When we took religious studies as children, there were separate teachers for Hindus

and Muslims. We studied under them. But now, you want to appoint music teachers? What will they teach? What are your intentions? You want to make our children disrespectful, unruly, and characterless? We will never tolerate that." He warned that the "Islam-loving and religion-loving people" of Bangladesh would be forced to take to the streets if the Yunus administration does not pay heed to "their demands". The Deobandi Islamist advocacy group, Hefazat-e Islam, denounced the government's move as an "anti-Islamic agenda" and demanded the cancellation of the recruitment rules.

Adani Power, Bangladesh opt for arbitration to settle payment dispute: Report

(News Agency) Adani Power said on Monday that it will enter an international arbitration process along with the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) to resolve disagreements over power supply payments, reported news agency Reuters. The two sides have been locked in a dispute over how certain cost components under the power purchase agreement are calculated and billed. The company stressed that it continues to meet its contractual obligation to supply electricity

to Bangladesh and is receiving regular payments to the extent acknowledged by BPDB. However, the unresolved differences over cost calculations have led both parties to formally trigger the dispute resolution mechanism outlined in their agreement. "There are disagreements in the way certain cost elements are calculated and billed. The company and the Bangladesh Power Development Board agreed to invoke the dispute resolution process," Adani Power said.

The Beginning

MAD MEN

OF

NU WAY ADVERTISING

About the Author



Sharanjit Thind Singh, for more than 29 years has spent his career immersed in the world of advertising, marketing, and media. His professional journey includes working with well known Media, FMCG and Telecom Companies in India and the US.

Hailing from a small postal stamp size city in Punjab, Thind's academic background reflects his drive for excellence. After completing a Bachelor of Commerce degree, he pursued an MBA. He further strengthened his expertise with a Post Graduate Diploma in Journalism and Mass Communication. This combination of business knowledge and media insight became the foundation of his career.

He founded and, is CEO of Nu Way Advertising in Manhattan now known as Nu Way Media Group Inc. He has served as a Commissioner of the Nassau County Human Rights Commission in New York.



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'People are tired': Democrats splinter as shutdown nears record

Democrats are showing unmistakable signs of splintering as the government shutdown reaches the cusp of setting an all-time record. While many are still demanding their colleagues dig in and fight, a critical mass of Democratic senators appear to be engaged in serious talks about bringing an end to the five-week stalemate. The shutdown is set to overtake the 35-day record Tuesday night.

The divisions among Democrats over whether it's time to negotiate a way out — or even what that way out should be — comes as Senate Republicans grow increasingly confident about their posture, with top leaders hoping to be able to pass a funding patch by the end of the week that would reopen shuttered agencies. To do that, they'll need to flip at least five more Democratic votes. Double that number of senators met behind closed doors Monday night in a Capitol hideaway office. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), who has been involved in informal bipartisan talks since before the shutdown started, said in a brief interview afterward she hoped there would be a resolution to the shutdown this week. "We're having lots of active conversations," Sen.

Elissa Slotkin (D-Mich.) told reporters. The sense of fatigue with the marathon standoff — and the mounting impacts on everyday Americans, including missing food aid and air travel delays — was acknowledged by at least one senior Democrat. "I sense that people are tired of this shutdown and all that flows from it," said Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), the No. 2 party leader, who added that the bipartisan interlocutors he has spoken to "seem more optimistic." But Durbin warned the major sticking point for his party — health care — remains unresolved.

The outlines of the agreement under discussion by rank-and-file senators would fall short of what many Democrats have drawn as a red line: a firm bipartisan agreement to extend Affordable Care Act insurance subsidies that will expire Dec. 31. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer showed no signs of backing down

during a floor speech Monday. He knocked President Donald Trump and Republicans for not coming to the negotiating table even after the open enrollment shopping period opened Saturday, exposing many ACA enrollees to markedly higher premiums.

"It was a bitter, stressful weekend for millions of Americans, but you would never guess it listening to Donald Trump," Schumer said of the "sticker shock." And amid signs that their colleagues could be preparing to concede, a cadre of Senate progressives warned that Democrats need to keep fighting. "We have the moral responsibility to stand up and fight for the 15 million people who are about to lose health care," Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) said in an interview Monday.

"What the polling tells me, and what I believe to be true, is that the vast majority of the American people are behind us not to give in to Trump or the Republicans," Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) said he believed Democrats should continue to fight until they get an agreement to extend the subsidies. He predicted that the results of Tuesday's off-year elections would confirm that "the American people want us to fight for them." "Donald Trump and the

Republicans need to come to the negotiating table," added Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.). In another signal of impending movement, some rank-and-file Senate Democrats who have been involved in the bipartisan talks tried to sell senior House Democrats on a potential off-ramp to the shutdown, according to two people granted anonymity to discuss the private conversations.

But many House Democrats, especially in leadership circles, are still opposed to any deal that doesn't include a concrete legislative solution to extending the ACA subsidies. The developing Senate deal would likely include the promise of a Senate floor vote that would probably fail, paired with a possible framework for subsequent bipartisan negotiations. "It won't be pretty if they vote 'yes' over a promised process versus outcome," one of the people involved in the conversations said, describing the view of many House Democrats.

"But they're trying." In addition to Shaheen and Slotkin, Democratic Sens. Chris Coons of Delaware, Mark Kelly of Arizona, Gary Peters of Michigan, Maggie Hassan of New Hampshire, Jon Ossoff of

Georgia, Catherine Cortez Masto and Jacky Rosen of Nevada attended the Monday night meeting, as well as Maine Sen. Angus King, an independent who caucuses with Democrats. Some who attended, but not all, are also part of the bipartisan group of senators who talked through the weekend.

Their conversations have focused on passing a new funding patch to reopen agencies, reaching an understanding on moving full-year appropriations bills and scheduling a vote on ACA subsidies. Republicans have also pledged that Trump will meet with Democrats after the shutdown ends. Cortez Masto and King have already voted multiple times to advance a House-passed stopgap spending bill that would fund the government through Nov. 21. But there is widespread agreement that this measure is now out of date and will have to be revised to extend the deadline into mid-December at least. Senate Majority Leader John Thune said Monday he hoped to be able to send a revised stopgap back to the House by the end of the week. Under the most optimistic timeline, if the Senate can strike a deal and pass an amended bill by Thursday,

the House would return early next week to vote on sending it to Trump, according to three people granted anonymity to discuss private deliberations. But there are divisions on the Republican side that could complicate that plan. Senate Appropriations Chair Susan Collins (R-Maine) is pushing for a new deadline of Dec. 19, which she hopes would build momentum to pass a package of full-year funding bills in the coming weeks. She and Sen. Katie Britt (R-Ala.), along with other GOP appropriators, have in recent days been trying to build support for such a plan with Democrats. But House and Senate GOP leaders are pushing hard against a December deadline, as they face pressure from conservative hardliners wary of a holiday jam. "You can't go to December," Rep. Andy Biggs (R-Ariz.) said in an interview Monday. "It has to be longer." Sen. Rick Scott (R-Fla.) wrote on X Monday that he believed the new deadline has to go past Jan. 15. Republicans could be forced to swallow the December date if it's the only compromise available in the Senate, but Democrats need to get on the same page, too. Durbin didn't close the door Monday to a January deadline, but Shaheen said she wanted it to end in December.

End of big workforces? What Amazon's mass layoff really signals

Amazon's latest plan to cut about 14,000 corporate jobs has renewed debate over whether large workforces are becoming redundant in an age increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence (AI) and automation. The company is not shrinking its business. It is accelerating investment in cloud and AI infrastructure, expanding data centre capacity, and building a USD 10 billion AI-focused campus in North Carolina. The cuts instead target internal layers of management and coordination roles that once formed the backbone of corporate operations. According to Sonica Aron, Founder and Managing Partner at Marching Sheep, the shift is less about headcount and more about efficiency. "Corporate efficiency being prioritised over the size of the workforce is not a new idea. What has changed is the speed at which it is happening, driven by the most transformative wave of technology since the internet," she said. She explained that the roles being reduced are often the ones built

around repetitive processes and slow administrative steps. Automation and AI tools are rapidly taking over tasks that previously required teams and supervisory layers. "When Amazon or any large organisation reduces layers of management and streamlines corporate processes, they are primarily restructuring and streamlining to reduce roles with repetitive tasks, bureaucracy, slow, linear steps that human hands and minds used to manage," Aron said. But she cautions against assuming that layoffs indicate a demise of the big workforces. "Consumption is growing and changing, and there will always be a need for more and different products and services. And there will always be a need for people to deliver those in organisations. It is about the right matching of skills, knowledge, application and attitude," she noted. Aron has worked closely with organisations undergoing restructuring and cultural shifts. She argued that layoffs today are not simply

reactions to financial pressure or advances in AI. They reflect a more complex recalibration. "The equation between technology, productivity and people is changing," she said. "Cost, efficiency and agility are being given more weight than tenure or continuity. That may make financial sense, but it can create a vacuum in trust and psychological safety unless handled with transparency and empathy."

REDEFINING ROLES

As companies redefine their operating models, the shape of work is set to evolve. Aron says the first shift will be in how roles are defined. Work will move away from task-based job descriptions to roles that are flexible and problem-solving in nature. "This is not about doing more with less. It is about doing things differently, with purpose," she said. The second shift concerns skills. Technical competence will remain important, but the skills that determine success in modern workplaces are increasingly human-oriented.

The U.S. president's "Donroe Doctrine" represents a deep break from modern national security thinking.

For Trump, the entire Western hemisphere is America's

U.S. President Donald Trump loves the 19th century. His heroes are former presidents William McKinley who "made our country very rich through tariffs," Teddy Roosevelt who "did many great things" like the Panama Canal, and James Monroe who established the policy rejecting "the interference of foreign nations in this hemisphere and in our own affairs." These aren't just some throw-away lines from Trump's speeches. They signify a much deeper and broader break from established modern national security thinking.

Trump is now the first U.S. president since Franklin D. Roosevelt to believe the principal threats to the U.S. aren't in far-away regions or stem from far-away powers — rather, they're right here at home. For him, the biggest threats to America today are the immigrants flooding across the country's borders and the drugs killing tens of thousands from overdoses. And to that end, his real goal is to dominate the entire Western hemisphere — from the North Pole to the South Pole — using America's superior military and economic power to defeat all "enemies," both foreign and domestic. Of course, at the top of Trump's list of threats to the U.S. is immigration.

He campaigned incessantly on the idea that his predecessors had failed to seal the southern border, and promised to deport every immigrant without legal status — some 11 million in all — from the U.S. Those efforts started on the first day, with the Trump administration deploying troops to the southern border to interdict anyone seeking to cross illegally. It also instituted a dragnet to sweep people off the streets — whether in churches, near schools, on farmlands, inside factories, at court houses or in hospitals.

Even U.S. citizens have been caught up in this massive deportation effort. No one is safe. The resulting shift is also expectedly dramatic: Refugee admissions have halted, with

those promised passage stuck in third countries. In the coming year, the only allotment for refugees will be white South Africans, who Trump has depicted as genocide victims. Illegal crossings are down to a trickle, while large numbers of immigrants — legal as well as illegal — are returning home. And 2025 will likely be the first time in nearly a century where net migration into the U.S. will be negative.

For Trump, immigrants aren't the only threat to the homeland, though. Drugs are too. That's why on Feb. 1, the U.S. leader imposed tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China because of fentanyl shipments — though Canada is hardly a significant source of the deadly narcotic. Still, all these tariffs remain in place.

Then, in August, he called in the military, signing a directive that authorizes it to take on drug cartels, which he designated as foreign terrorist organizations. "Latin America's got a lot of cartels and they've got a lot of drugs flowing," he later explained. "So, you know, we want to protect our country. We have to protect our country." And that was just the beginning.

Over the past two months, the Pentagon has deployed a massive array of naval and air power, and some 10,000 troops for drug interdiction. Over the past five weeks, the U.S. military has also been directed to attack small vessels crossing the Caribbean and the Pacific that were suspected to be running drugs.

To date, 16 vessels have been attacked, killing over 60 people. When asked for the legal justification of targeting vessels in international waters that posed no imminent threat to the U.S., Trump dismissed the need: "I think we're just going to kill people that are bringing drugs into our country. Okay? We're going to kill them. You know, they're going to be, like, dead." But now the U.S. leader has set his sights on bigger fish. Late last month, the Pentagon ordered a carrier battle group, Gerald R. Ford, into the Caribbean. Once that carrier and its accompanying ships arrive at

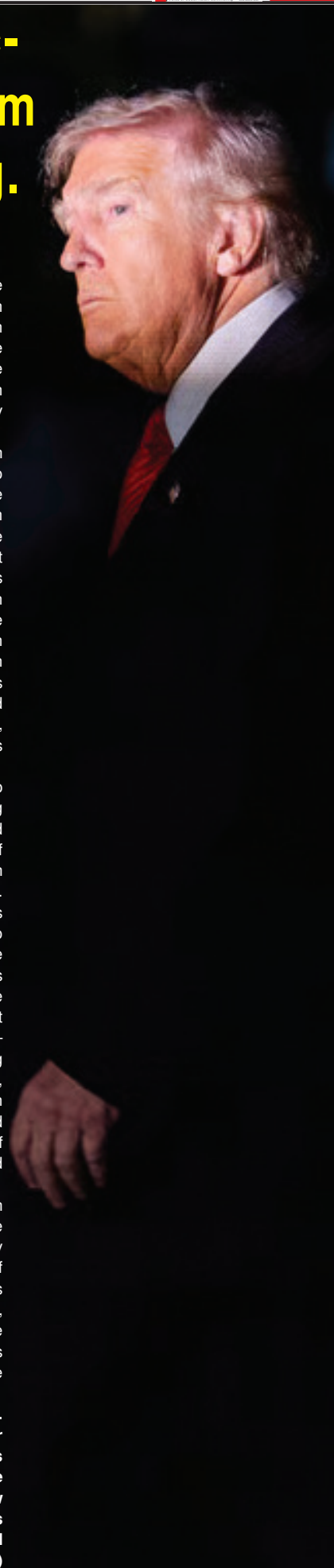
their destination later this week, the U.S. will have deployed one-seventh of its Navy — the largest such deployment in the region since the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. If the target is just drug-runners in open waters, clearly this is overkill — but they aren't.

The real reason for deploying such overwhelming firepower is for Trump to intimidate the leaders and regimes he doesn't like, if not actually force them from office. Drugs are just the excuse to enable such action. The most obvious target is Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro, who blatantly stole an election to retain power last year. The White House has declared Maduro "an illegitimate leader heading an illegitimate regime," and Trump has made clear that "there will be land action in Venezuela soon." However, Maduro isn't the only one Trump has his eye on.

After Colombian President Gustavo Petro accused the U.S. of killing innocent fishermen, Trump cut off all aid to the country and accused Petro of being "an illegal drug leader," which potentially sets the stage for the U.S. to go after another regime. All this firepower and rhetoric is meant to underscore one point: To Trump, the entire Western hemisphere is America's. Leaders he doesn't like, he will remove from power. Countries that take action he doesn't approve of — whether jailing those convicted of trying to overthrow a government like in Brazil, or running ads against his tariffs as in Canada — will be punished economically. Greenland will be part of the U.S., as will the Panama Canal, and Canada will become the 51st state.

Overall, Trump's focus on dominating the Western hemisphere represents a profound shift from nearly a century's-long focus on warding off overseas threats to protect Americans at home. And like it or not, for Trump, security in the second quarter of the 21st century lies in concepts and ideas first developed in the last quarter of the 19th century.

(Ivo Daalder, former U.S. ambassador to NATO, is a senior fellow at Harvard University's Belfer Center and host of the weekly podcast "World Review with Ivo Daalder." He writes POLITICO's From Across the Pond column. Courtesy)



NYC Mayor Elect Zohran Mamdani announces transition team

That transition team will include two former deputy mayors, Maria Torres-Springer and Melanie Hartzog; former Federal Trade Commission Chair Lina Khan; and Grace Bonilla, the head of United Way of New York City, a nonprofit focused on low-income residents. Political strategist Elana Leopold will serve as executive director of the team.

Zohran Mamdani's incoming administration began taking shape on Wednesday as the New York City mayor-elect announced a transition team to help enact what he called the city's most ambitious policy platform in a generation, vowing to get right to work when he takes office on 1 January. Speaking at a morning press conference in Queens, the 34-year-old democratic socialist revealed an all-female transition team led by Elana Leopold as executive director. It also includes co-chairs Maria Torres-Springer, the former first deputy mayor; Lina Khan, the former federal trade commission chair; the United Way's president and CEO, Grace Bonilla; and the former deputy mayor for health and human services Melanie Hartzog. "In the coming months, I and my team will build a city hall capable of delivering on the promises of this campaign," Mamdani told reporters. "We will form an administration that is equal parts capable and compassionate, driven by integrity and willing to work just as hard as the millions of New Yorkers who call this city home."

The selection of Khan, who gained national prominence for her aggressive antitrust enforcement at the FTC under Joe Biden and is admired by both progressives and populist Republicans, signals Mamdani's intention to bring bold reformers into his administration as he prepares to lead the nation's largest city. In his first

television interview since defeating Andrew Cuomo, the former governor, and Republican Curtis Sliwa on Tuesday night, Mamdani stressed the urgency of preparation. "We owe it to this city to be ready on 1 January to start delivering," he said on Wednesday. "We have 57 days and those are 57 days to start to do the work of preparing."

With his victory, Mamdani will become the city's first Muslim mayor, the first of South Asian heritage, the first born in Africa and the youngest in more than a century. New York's incoming administration faces formidable obstacles, not least from Donald Trump, who has repeatedly threatened to withhold federal funding from the city if Mamdani took office. In a post on his Truth Social platform, the president, who also hails from Queens, wrote that if Mamdani won the mayoral election, "it is highly unlikely that I will be contributing Federal Funds, other than the very minimum as required" to New York City.

He often labels the democratic socialist a "communist". New York City's budget for fiscal year 2026 includes approximately \$7.4bn in federal funding, accounting for 6.4% of total spending, according to a 2025 analysis from the state comptroller. On election day, Trump escalated his attacks, writing on Truth Social that "any Jewish person that votes for Zohran Mamdani, a proven and self

professed JEW HATER, is a stupid person", despite Mamdani's repeated condemnations of antisemitism.

The campaign was marked by a massive wave of Islamophobic attacks from Democrats, Republicans and conservative commentators. Florida congressman Randy Fine and Tennessee congressman Andy Ogles, both Republicans, urged the justice department to denaturalize and deport Mamdani, who became a US citizen in 2018, and in late October, Cuomo laughed on a radio show when host Sid Rosenberg suggested that Mamdani "would be cheering" if another 9/11 attack occurred, with Cuomo responding in agreement.

Later, standing next to outgoing mayor Eric Adams, Cuomo nodded as Adams warned: "New York can't be Europe, folks. You see what's playing out in other countries because of Islamic extremism." Republican congressman Chip Roy of Texas also published an op-ed ahead of the election warning about the "Islamic cultural revolution" behind Mamdani, calling him "the poster child for the modern Democrat party".

A November report from the Center for the Study of Organized Hate found that Islamophobic posts about Mamdani on X increased by more than 450% from September to October, with nearly 36,000 posts from over 17,000 unique accounts collectively receiving 7.37m likes,

and 72% of posts involved "terrorist labeling".

The mayor-elect acknowledged some of the significant challenges ahead, including navigating city hall bureaucracy and working under a hostile Trump administration. But Mamdani said he's convinced in his ability to deliver on his campaign promises. "I'm confident in delivering these same policies that we ran on for the last year," he said, adding that he aims to unite New Yorkers across political divides. "No matter what your politics, we're all facing the same issues."

Mamdani campaigned on an unabashedly progressive platform including a rent freeze for stabilized apartments, free bus service, universal childcare and city-run grocery stores, all funded by increased taxes on corporations and the wealthy. His campaign raised more than \$20m from small donors, breaking fundraising records with an average contribution of approximately \$80. His victory also came on a night of scorching wins for Democrats nationally.

In gubernatorial races, Democrats Mikie Sherrill and Abigail Spanberger won in New Jersey and Virginia, respectively, both as former moderate Democratic members of Congress running on their national security backgrounds. California voters also approved Proposition 50, Gavin Newsom's redistricting measure designed to make five Republican-held congressional seats more favorable to Democrats in next year's midterm elections. And in Somerville, Massachusetts — home to Tufts University — voters approved Question 3, a non-binding measure calling on city leaders to end business with companies that "engage in business that sustains Israel's apartheid, genocide and illegal occupation of Palestine", by 55%. The incoming New York administration said it would begin announcing deputy mayors and agency commissioners in the coming days. Mamdani said that "some of these people will have familiar names, others will not" but that these officials would be united by their "commitment to solving old problems with new solutions".

"On 1 January, when our city celebrates the inauguration of a new administration, let us also celebrate a new era for our city," Mamdani said, "one that we all feel invested in and whose success we all work to achieve."

US bars 7,000 truckers for failing English tests; Indian-origin drivers hit hard

More than 7,000 truck drivers have been placed out of service this year for failing mandatory English proficiency tests, US Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said. The crackdown comes in the wake of road accidents involving Indian truckers. The move has hit Indian and Indian-origin truck drivers in the US the hardest. Lakhs of Sikhs work in the US trucking industry, of whom 90% are drivers. Duffy, in a social media post, noted that, as of October 2025, 7,248 drivers have been removed from service, referencing real-time violation data from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). The number marks a significant rise from the 1,500 drivers reported in July, highlighting intensified roadside enforcement following the rule's reinstatement earlier this summer. Around 130,000 to 150,000 truck drivers working in the US are from Punjab and Haryana, according to the North American Punjabi Truckers Association. Thousands of them have been hit by the new regulations, reported The New Indian Express, quoting the truckers' association. A Trump executive

order earlier overturned a 2016 Obama-era memo that had barred inspectors from sidelining drivers solely over language. "Commercial truck drivers must speak and understand English to operate—or they will be taken out of service," the Transportation Secretary said. According to FMCSA's national inspection database, at least 5,006 English language-related out-of-service violations were recorded through October — a number that has continued to rise in recent months as more states ramp up enforcement, FreightWaves, a price reporting agency, reported. Under the new rule, 49 CFR 391.11(b)(2), all holders of a Commercial Driver's Licence must have sufficient English skills to communicate with the public, interpret signs, interact with authorities, and keep accurate records. President Donald Trump's 2025 executive order and subsequent Transportation Department directives mandate that drivers who fail English language tests be

immediately removed from service starting June 25, 2025.

HIGHWAY CRASHES INVOLVING INDIAN TRUCKERS SEEN UPTICK IN US

The crackdown followed a series of high-profile crashes, including a deadly October pileup on a California highway in which an Indian driver was accused of killing three Americans. Additionally, a crash on the Florida Turnpike resulted in the deaths of three people after a tractor-trailer driven by an illegal immigrant from India made a dangerous U-turn. In the Florida crash, the driver who is charged with killing three people had failed a commercial driver's license repeatedly, ABC News reported. Despite this, he reportedly secured a California Commercial Driver's License (CDL). Texas has the largest total issuance of non-domiciled commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) — commercial driver's licenses held by foreign drivers legally operating in the US, according to FreightWaves.

Wide awake at 11 pm? Blame the Second Wind Effect

Have you ever had one of those days when you are all worn out from the day's hustle, ready to crash at the mere sight of your bed but somehow, end up feeling strangely energetic instead? That's called the second wind phenomenon. The human body works in mysterious ways, well, scientific ones, to be honest. But given that it's functions are sometimes amusing and comprehension, it all appears to be enigmatic and complicated. And among these curious processes is this late-night energy comeback. The conversation recently resurfaced thanks to, unsurprisingly, a viral reel. Nothing new — just the internet doing what it does best. Sometimes insightful, mostly bizarre. Reportedly, a naturopathic doctor named Dr Kara shared a video about the "second wind" on TikTok. This further sparked a buzz and eventually the internet algorithm landed it on the feeds. Decoding second wind effect The "second wind" is a neurobiological response that occurs when the brain overrides natural sleep pressure. Normally, as the day progresses, a chemical called adenosine builds up, signalling fatigue and preparing the body for rest. "If you stay awake beyond your natural sleep window, your circadian rhythm — the body's internal clock — triggers a counter-response," explains Dr Kapil Khandelwal, senior consultant, neurology, CK Birla Hospitals, Jaipur. "In simple terms, your brain fights sleep to keep you functioning — but at the cost of disrupting its recovery cycle." Most people experience two energy peaks in a day. One is in the morning when the adrenaline helps the body in wakefulness. The next often comes after you are through with the day's hustle. Physiologically, the body requires rest, but because you push through it, there's a good chance you feel a sudden surge of energy just before going to bed. So why does the brain mistake fatigue for focus? It's all in the chemical locha. When you push past that initial drowsiness, your brain releases endorphins and other

"feel-good" neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin. These reduce the perception of fatigue and elevate your mood, tricking your brain into feeling recharged. According to Dr Deep Das, neurologist, CMRI Kolkata, "Physiologically, the body becomes more efficient at energy production; psychologically, the brain releases stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol to push through exhaustion. However, in non-athletic contexts — such as staying awake late at night or working beyond fatigue — this 'second wind' is more of a stress response than a healthy energy surge." To break it down, it's not real energy. It's more of a stress response. The body goes into a state of alertness driven by stress hormones, not actual rest or restoration. But mind you, this is a trick.

productivity trap

While it may feel tempting to use that window to get more done, reorganise your room, or doomscroll, it's healthier to recognise it as a stress-driven response and prioritise winding down. Why? Because if you follow the energy surge and take more work, it will disturb



the restorative sleep your body requires more than those deadlines. What it says about your health It's essential to note that not everyone experiences it equally. It's subjective and depends on your fitness level, metabolism, and circadian rhythm. "If the late-night second winds are frequent, it indicates circadian misalignment — your internal clock is out of sync with your lifestyle," explains Dr Khandelwal. Over time, this can lead to sleep deprivation, anxiety, irritability, poor focus, and even metabolic issues. Dr Das adds that while an occasional second wind during exercise is normal, relying on this artificial alertness can, over time, affect hormonal balance, immunity, and emotional stability. Experts agree that Gen Z and millennials experience this more frequently due to irregular sleep patterns, long screen exposure, and mental overstimulation. Spotting and managing a second wind You might be in your "second wind" if you notice: A sudden sense of alertness or clarity after feeling drowsy A burst of creativity late at night A racing mind Elevated heart rate or restlessness before bed The best way to manage it? Resist the urge to be productive. Respect your body's first signal for rest.

The moment you start yawning or feel your energy dip, that's your true biological bedtime. Gentle stretching, reduced screen time, staying hydrated, and mindfulness practices can help your body transition to rest. If it often happens, try aligning your work and sleep schedules better. As Dr Das puts it, "True productivity comes from recovery — not from repeatedly overriding fatigue."

How to make your everyday chai more gut friendly

It's a phrase that echoes in the Indian hearts, homes, offices, and even street corners every single day. There's no need to make a case for tea and how it's more than a beverage — it's a habit and a comfort. If you're a chai person, you would know it's not just limited to that morning wake-up drink or evening refreshment. This beverage also makes for the perfect afternoon companion — a pause in the hustle, a moment to reset, maybe even a subtle boost for better cognition. But it's not just about any tea. It has to be the kind that offers more than comfort and science seems to root for black tea in that department. While most people prefer the staple version, the one with the milk, unfortunately, it's not everyone's cup of tea. It can lead to acidity, bloating, and digestive discomfort, and may not be the best pick for those who are lactose intolerant either. From a health perspective, black tea has the edge. Studies suggest that two to three 200 ml servings of black tea can enhance both objective and self-reported attention and alertness. It contains L-theanine, an amino acid that promotes calm alertness and helps balance caffeine's effects, making it ideal for midday consumption.

The kind of post-lunch pick-me-up or 4 pm office refill drink everyone's looking for, right? Additionally, black tea is considered a better alternative to milk tea largely because it retains higher levels of beneficial polyphenols and antioxidants,



which are often diminished or bound by the proteins in milk. Research has also linked black tea with improved heart health, lower LDL cholesterol, and anti-inflammatory effects — benefits that might be compromised when it's consumed with milk. There are several studies that establish how black tea may help you power through that afternoon slump too. But that's not all. Before you rethink your tea ritual, in this wellness-first world, a doctor recently shared how to make that afternoon black tea even more nourishing.

Healthy and hearty afternoon tea Dr. Saurabh Sethi, a Harvard- and AIIMS-certified gastroenterologist, often shares his expertise online through quick, practical reels. In one of his recent viral videos, he shared a recipe that can make a regular black tea more nourishing without losing the comfort that makes it so beloved. His intention? To make that sip a little more anti-inflammatory and a little better for the gut. Because, well, isn't gut health the wellness trend? Here's his way of adding a little more 'well' to your garam chai ki pyaali: Take some black tea leaves and bring them to a boil. While it's brewing, add a few slices of fresh ginger — it helps with better gut mobility and aids digestion.

Next, crush a few cardamom pods and add them to the concoction. They help reduce bloating and add a naturally sweet aroma without sugar. Add a small piece of clove; it contains eugenol, a compound known to support liver function. Once everything is done, strain the tea and let it cool slightly. You can then add a drizzle of honey for optional sweetness. It's true this version takes a little extra effort to prepare, but experts say it's a small step toward wellness.



Dhurandhar to Avatar 3: Inside India's 2025-end slate and box office pulse

As 2025 enters its final stretch, Bollywood finds its rhythm again while the South holds steady with grounded storytelling. Trade experts break down what worked, what didn't, and what lies ahead as the year ends.

As 2025 enters its final two months, it's the perfect moment to take stock of what lies ahead, and also how India's film industry has performed so far – what we've gained, what we've lost, and what hopes remain as the year closes.

This has been a year of surprises: love stories found their way back to theatres, mid-budget films reclaimed the audience's trust, and stories rooted in homegrown flavours turned into box-office winners. Yet, 2025 also saw some high-profile disappointments that forced the industry to rethink its festival-release strategy and what truly draws audiences to the big screen. IndiaToday.in spoke to trade experts Girish Wankhede and Ramesh Bala to decode the box-office pulse of 2025 that will decide the shape of things to come – from Bollywood's revival to the South's shifting landscape – and to find out what's still in store for the rest of the year.

Bollywood's big comeback: A year of heart and hustle

If 2024 was a mixed bag for Hindi cinema, 2025 would be a comeback story. As trade expert Girish Wankhede puts it, "Bollywood has bounced back strongly in 2025, firing on all cylinders." The box office saw an eclectic mix of genres

delivering results. Epic spectacles like 'Chhaava', soulful dramas like 'Saiyaara', thrillers such as 'Raid 2', and offbeat hits like 'Thamma' and 'Ek Deewane Ki Deewaniyat' collectively proved that content and star power can co-exist. Even mid-tier entertainers such as 'Housefull 5' and 'Sitare Zameen Par' brought in steady numbers, while 'Param Sundari', 'Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari' and 'Dhadak 2' added colour to the commercial calendar. Compared to last year, which produced only a handful of notable successes like 'Stree 2', 'Kalki', 'Shaistaan', 'Munjya' and 'Crew', this year's line-up offered more volume and variety. "Simply put," says Wankhede, "2025 has elevated Bollywood's commercial standing over the previous one."

What's next: The year-end slate

The final leg of 2025, though, is what will matter most to the trade. November opens with Ajay Devgn's 'De De Pyaar De 2', followed by the patriotic ensemble '120 Bahadur' and comedy franchise 'Masti 4'. Toward the end of the month, Dhanush and Kriti Sanon's 'Tere Ishk Mein' brings a whiff of romance and rooted storytelling.

December looks especially stacked – starting with Ranveer Singh's spy thriller

'Dhurandhar', followed by Kartik Aaryan's 'Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri' in the holiday week. The line-up is bolstered by James Cameron's 'Avatar: Fire and Ash', which may give global audiences another reason to fill theatres, and on a massive scale. Cameron's latest instalment in the Avatar saga is expected to spark renewed interest in 3D and IMAX screenings, with Indian multiplex chains planning special marathon shows of the previous films. "The 'Avatar' franchise has a universal pull," says Wankhede. "Even though it's a Hollywood release, it significantly impacts India's year-end footfalls and adds to the festive theatre buzz," he adds. "These releases look especially promising thanks to strong star casts, festive timing, and high brand recall," Wankhede goes on. "All these factors typically boost opening numbers and sustain momentum through the holiday season," he says. "Among these, 'Dhurandhar' is already being tipped as a sure-shot winner in Bollywood," says Wankhede. The teaser's rousing reception and its ensemble cast: Ranveer Singh, Sanjay Dutt, R Madhavan, Akshaye Khanna, and Arjun Rampal, have created the perfect storm for a December blockbuster.

"It's a slick, high-octane spy thriller with production values that rival global standards," he says, adding: "This one's poised to rule the season."

Down South: Solid performances, mixed momentum

While Bollywood has been on a rebound, the South Indian film industries: Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam, have had a steady but uneven year.

According to trade analyst Ramesh Bala, "The South Indian box office has performed reasonably well this year. We've had huge grossers like 'Kantara: Chapter 1' in Kannada, 'Coolie' and 'Good Bad Ugly' in Tamil, 'Lokah' in Malayalam, and 'They Call Him OG' in Telugu."

However, Bala notes that the scale hasn't quite matched previous years. "Unlike 2023 or 2024, there hasn't been a 'Pushpa' or 'Baahubali'-like phenomenon this year. Each regional industry has had its own wins, but not that one pan-India monster hit," he explains. Still, films like 'Kantara: Chapter 1', 'Lokah', 'Coolie' and 'OG' have been applauded both for their box-office runs and their audience connect, proving again that authentic storytelling continues to travel across states and languages.



The unveiling of the first look of Shah Rukh Khan's new film, 'King', turned his 60th birthday into a double celebration for his fanbase. Shah Rukh later met fans in Mumbai, revealing crucial details about the project,

SRK confirms romantic angle with Deepika Padukone in Siddharth Anand's King

Shah Rukh Khan unveiled the first look of his film 'King' on his 60th birthday. The actor also revealed about a romantic angle with Deepika Padukone in the movie.

specifically his on-screen romantic angle with co-star Deepika Padukone.

While speaking about the concept behind 'King', Shah Rukh said, "I don't want to give out too much of the story of 'King'. Once more and more assets come up, you'll know more about the film. There are several characters in the film. The idea behind the film is that we end up taking big decisions when we end up taking things personally. We should think whether what we are doing is right or not. Also, we are not going to take any sides in 'King'. If you like our thought, then do follow it. Ya fir burai hi karte rehna (Or you may criticise it)!" During the interaction, when a fan shouted that they had a lot of "pyaar" (love) for Shah Rukh, the 60-year-old stated, "Mere saath film mein Deepika Padukone bhi hai. Pyaar toh zaroor hoga! (I have Deepika with me, so love will obviously be there)." Recently, Shah Rukh Khan Film Festival was launched by PVR INOX, starting October 15, 2025, onwards, starting November

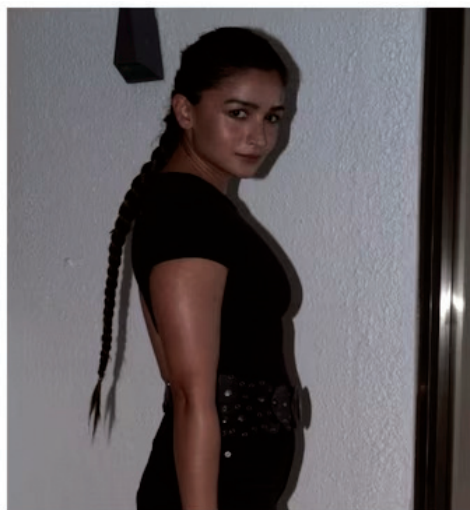
2, 2025. While reacting to the tribute, the 'King' actor said, "Cinema has always been my home, and seeing these films return to the big screen feels like a beautiful reunion. These movies aren't just my stories — they belong to the audience that has lovingly embraced them for over 33 years. I'm grateful to PVR INOX for celebrating this journey with such love, and to Red Chillies Entertainment, my creative home, for always believing in stories that connect us all. I hope everyone who comes to watch relives the joy, the music, the emotions, and the magic of cinema that we've shared together." Shah Rukh was last seen in director Rajkumar Hirani's 'Dunki' (2023). He will next be seen in Siddharth Anand's 'King'. The movie co-produced by Marflix Entertainment and Red Chillies Entertainment, also features Suhana Khan (Shah Rukh Khan's daughter), Abhay Verma, Jaideep Ahlawat, Abhishek Bachchan, Jackie Shroff and others in key roles. 'King' is tentatively set for a theatrical release on Gandhi Jayanti 2026.

Alia Bhatt, Sharvari's Alpha pushed to April 2026 due to extended VFX work

Yash Raj Films has postponed the release of Alia Bhatt, Sharvari's spy-thriller, 'Alpha' to April 17, 2026 due to extended VFX work. This delay aims to ensure a visually spectacular experience for the audiences.

Yash Raj Films has shifted 'Alpha' release date to 2026, as the visual effects (VFX) needs more time to make the action-thriller as a visually immersive experience for audiences. The film is the first female-led espionage-thriller from YRF spy Universe. The insiders and trade sources have stated that the movie is taking longer as the production house wants to leave no-stones unturned. Though Sharvari had made her Bollywood debut with YRF's 'Bunty Aur Babli 2', 'Alpha' is Alia's first film with the banner and the spy universe comprising 'Pathaan', 'Tiger 3' and 'War 2'. The post-credits scene of Hrithik Roshan, Jr NTR's 'War 2' showed Bobby Deol and a young girl with the former telling her the significance of 'Alpha'. The film also features Anil Kapoor who has joined as the new RAW chief. Alia and Sharvari will go toe to toe against Bobby in this brutal showdown that is a part of YRF Spy Universe.

A YRF spokesperson says, "'Alpha' is an extremely special film for us, and we want to present the film in its most cinematic self. We have realised that the VFX will take a little longer than what we had initially assumed. We want to leave no stone unturned to make Alpha into a theatrical experience for everyone to cherish. Thus, we will now release the film on April 17, 2026." Another top trade source says, "'Alpha' team



wants to put out the best film for audiences to enjoy. It is a fair move by YRF. This was brewing as the VFX team was under a lot of pressure with regards to timelines which was seeming unrealistic. So, the push of release date is due to this only and not because of



the current cluttered release window from Avatar to the end of January 2026. There is significant work pending and that's why Alpha is releasing in April and not February."

'Alpha', theatrically releases on April 17, 2025.

Ramya Krishnan steals the spotlight with bold avatar in Police Station Mein Bhoot

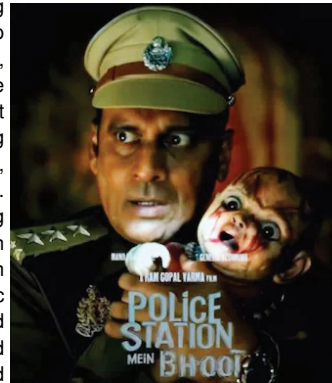
Director Ram Gopal Varma's return to the horror genre has been anticipated ever since the announcement of his next film, 'Police Station Mein Bhoot'. With this latest update, the buzz surrounding the film has only grown stronger.



Sarkar' director Ram Gopal Varma is returning to the horror genre after nearly five years with his upcoming film 'Police Station Mein Bhoot'. The director, known for cult horror thrillers like 'Raat', 'Bhoot' and 'Phoonk', had earlier confirmed Manoj Bajpayee in the lead, with Genelia Deshmukh also playing a key role. The latest addition to the cast is actor Ramya Krishnan, whose striking new look for the film has become a talking point online. Varma on Monday evening shared a mysterious image, teasing a major casting reveal. Fans quickly began speculating about the identity of the actor in the photo, which showed a woman gazing upward under dramatic lighting. The suspense ended soon after when it was confirmed that Ramya Krishnan had joined

the project. In the photo, she appears in a bold new avatar, featuring intricate jewellery, expressive eye makeup, and distinctive facial markings—hinting at a complex and powerful character. Sharing the image on X, Varma wrote, "Here is @meramyakrishnan in POLICE STATION MEIN BHOOT," and the post quickly went viral. The reveal has intensified buzz around the film, especially with Varma's reputation for experimenting

with unconventional characters and narrative styles. In the sling of pictures Varma shared, Ramya Krishnan can be seen smoking, riding a motorbike and sporting a poker face. 'Police Station Mein Bhoot' is currently in production, backed by Vauve Emirates Media



Production and Karma Media and Entertainment. While the makers have yet to announce a release date, the film is expected to hit theatres sometime in 2026. With an ensemble cast featuring Manoj Bajpayee, Genelia Deshmukh, and now Ramya Krishnan, 'Police Station Mein Bhoot' marks Ram Gopal Varma's much-awaited return to the genre that first made him a household name.

HAQ cleared with no cuts worldwide amid legal notices from Shah Bano's family

Emraan Hashmi and Yami Gautam's 'HAQ' has been cleared by censor board worldwide with zero cuts ahead of its November 7 release. Inspired by the Shah Bano case, the film explores themes of justice, gender equality, and faith.

The upcoming film 'HAQ', starring Emraan Hashmi and Yami Gautam, has cleared censorship requirements across India, the United Arab Emirates, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom ahead of its theatrical release on November 7, 2025. The film received certification without any cuts from all boards, raising interest for its exploration of family, religion, justice, and gender equality. However, the release comes amidst objections and legal action from the family of Shah Bano, on whose life the story is based. 'HAQ' has been certified U/A 13+ in India, PG-15 in the UAE, and PG in the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. The

film is produced by Jungle Pictures and directed by Suparn Verma. The narrative draws from the widely discussed Supreme Court judgment in the Mohd. Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum case of the 1980s, touching on sensitive themes such as the Uniform Civil Code, personal laws, and gender rights. The film centres on Shah Bano, a mother who

approached the courts in 1985 seeking maintenance under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) for herself and her children. The Supreme

Court's decision at the time led to significant public and political debate,



influencing discourse around equal access to justice and the intersection of religious and secular laws in India. Despite having completed all

formalities for release, the certification process has not put an end to controversy. Shah Bano's family has criticised the producers, alleging that the film depicts her life story without the family's approval or authorisation. The concerns have led the family to take legal steps to challenge the movie's release. On October 3, the filmmakers were served legal notices from members of Shah Bano's family. The notices demanded, "immediate restraint on the publication, screening, promotion or release of the upcoming film," highlighting their complaint of an "unauthorised depiction of her personal life without the consent of her legal heirs."

Amazon fires employees with these two early morning text messages

In a move that caught many off guard, Amazon employees woke up to text messages informing them that their roles had been eliminated. Here is everything you need to know.

In a move that caught many off guard, Amazon employees woke up to text messages informing them that their roles had been eliminated. The notifications, sent before dawn, marked yet another wave of layoffs at one of the world's largest employers. This time affecting around 14,000 people across multiple teams. According to screenshots reviewed by Business Insider, Amazon sent two text messages to affected employees within minutes of each other. The first asked them to check their personal or work email before heading to the office, while the second provided a help desk number in case they hadn't received "an email message about your role." These messages were reportedly sent right after email notifications, a measure meant to ensure employees don't show up at work because their badges were deactivated. This new way of communicating layoffs via text has sparked conversations inside and outside the company about the

impersonal nature of corporate restructuring. It also shows a growing pattern seen across major tech firms like Google and Tesla, where employees have found themselves locked out of systems overnight with little to no warning. People familiar with the matter told Business Insider that the messages were designed to prevent confusion and avoid potentially awkward scenes at offices across the United States. The latest job cuts primarily target Amazon's retail management teams, continuing a trend of workforce reductions that began last year. The company said the move is part of an ongoing effort to "streamline operations" and allow the business to "innovate much faster." In a message shared internally, Amazon's HR head, Beth Galetti, told affected employees that they would continue to receive full pay and benefits for 90 days, along with a severance package and access to job placement assistance. "We didn't make these decisions lightly," Galetti

said in her note. "We're committed to supporting you throughout this transition." Galetti also posted a blog on Tuesday, acknowledging that advances in artificial intelligence are changing how Amazon operates. She wrote, "What we need to remember is that the world is changing quickly. This generation of AI is the most transformative technology we've seen since the Internet, and it's enabling companies to innovate much faster than ever before." The internal email sent to employees, later accessed by Business Insider, detailed the process of the layoff and offered step-by-step instructions on what to do next. It informed workers that their badge access had been restricted and that a non-working period would begin immediately, during which they would continue receiving full pay and benefits. The email also directed them to use Amazon's internal tools like the A to Z app and MyHR to access support, retrieve belongings, or return company equipment. The tone



of the message attempted to soften the blow, with Galetti personally assuring employees that Amazon's HR team was available to help around the clock. "If you run into any trouble at all getting what you need—whether that's connectivity issues, questions about next steps, or any other concerns—please just reply to this email. I'm personally committed to making sure you get the help you need as you navigate this change," she wrote. The layoffs come as Amazon prepares for what analysts expect to be a record-breaking holiday quarter, potentially crossing \$140 billion in sales. Yet the company is also under pressure to remain agile and cost-efficient amid the rapid growth of AI-powered automation.

ED has attached assets under PMLA, Anil Ambani not on board: Reliance Infra

The clarification follows the ED's latest attachment of over 132 acres of land at Dhirubhai Ambani Knowledge City in Navi Mumbai, worth Rs 4,462 crore, in a bank fraud case involving Reliance Communications and related firms.

Reliance Infrastructure Limited on Monday said that certain assets of the company have been provisionally attached by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), but clarified that the move has "no impact" on its business operations or stakeholders. In a statement, the company said, "We wish to inform that certain assets of the company have been provisionally attached by the ED for the alleged violations under PMLA. There is no impact on the business operations, shareholders, employees or any other stakeholders of Reliance Infrastructure Limited." It further added that "Mr Anil D Ambani is

ED ATTACHES DAKC LAND WORTH RS 4,462 CRORE

The clarification came shortly after the ED announced it had attached 32 acres of land at Dhirubhai Ambani Knowledge City (DAKC) in Navi Mumbai worth 4,462 crore. The move forms part of an ongoing money laundering probe linked to alleged bank fraud involving Reliance Communications Ltd (RCOM), Reliance Commercial Finance Ltd (RCFL) and Reliance Home Finance Ltd (RHFL). With this, the total value of assets attached in connection with companies

not on the Board of Reliance Infrastructure Limited for more than 3.5 years."

linked to Anil Ambani now exceeds Rs 7,500 crore. The ED said it issued five provisional attachment orders under the PMLA — four on October 31 and one on November 4 — covering 42 properties, including Ambani's Pali Hill family residence, Reliance Centre on Maharaja Ranjit Singh Marg in Delhi, and several commercial assets of Reliance Infrastructure and related entities. These include Adhar Property Consultancy Pvt Ltd, Vihaan43 Realty Pvt Ltd, Campion Properties Ltd, and others with properties in Mumbai, Delhi, Noida, Ghaziabad, Pune, Thane, Hyderabad, Chennai and Andhra Pradesh's East Godavari district. Offices at Nagin Mahal

in Mumbai and apartments in Noida and Hyderabad were among those provisionally attached.

ED: DIVERSION OF PUBLIC MONEY DETECTED

According to the ED, the attachments follow findings of "fraudulent diversion of public funds" by multiple Reliance Anil Ambani Group (RAAG) entities. The agency alleged that between 2010 and 2012, RCOM and its group firms raised thousands of crores in loans from Indian banks, of which Rs 19,694 crore remains unpaid. It claimed that "loans taken by one entity were used to repay another, transferred to related parties, or invested in mutual funds, in

violation of loan conditions." The ED said its analysis showed over Rs 13,600 crore was used for loan evergreening, Rs 12,600 crore was diverted to connected parties, and Rs 1,800 crore was invested in fixed deposits and mutual funds.

YES BANK EXPOSURE AND FEMA FINDINGS

The ED added that during 2017–2019, Yes Bank invested Rs 2,965 crore in RHFL instruments and Rs 2,045 crore in RCFL instruments, which later became non-performing. It alleged that RHFL and RCFL together received over Rs 10,000 crore in public funds, a large part of which originated from Yes Bank.

Is silence a sign of comfort or trouble in your relationship?

Do you notice that you and your partner sit in silence more often now, instead of talking like you did in the honeymoon phase? Is that silence comfort or is it a sign of distance?

It's true that in every relationship, the initial spark settles with time. In the beginning, there's excitement, curiosity, endless conversations and stories. You're discovering each other. But as the relationship grows, you learn more, routines form, and the constant talking naturally reduces. That's when silence begins to appear. Many people assume this silence is a sign of comfort, that you're so close now you don't need words to express love. And sometimes, that's true. But silence doesn't always mean closeness; for some, it can also mean trouble. Silence in relationships can hold two very different meanings. It can feel like the soft warmth of familiarity or the harsh chill of disconnection. And Ruchi Ruuh, a Delhi-based relationship counsellor, agrees. "Silence is very contextual. Why your partner is silent, or why your relationship feels silent right now, depends on what happened before that. In many cases, it means that

you're very in tune with each other, comfortable, emotionally safe, and under no pressure to speak or fill the space with words," she tells India Today. Ruuh further adds, "But in other cases, silence can act as an emotional wall or even a form of manipulation when it's used incorrectly. That kind of silence feels cold and tense, filled with unspoken resentment, like you want to say something but can't. You sense your partner withdrawing, pulling away." So it's the same silence, but its meaning changes with context.

What does healthy silence look like?

According to Dr Nisha Khanna, a Delhi-based relationship and marriage counsellor, it is like two people sitting together without fear or judgment. They feel secure, physically and emotionally, and trust each other. "They don't feel the need to perform, defend, or over-explain. They can just be. Sometimes it's shared reflection,

empathy, or simply being present. You don't feel anxious about what the other person is thinking. You feel calm, warm, and connected." "The key is that silence feels full, not hollow. It's a sign that both people are in tune with each other," adds Ruuh.

What about troubled silence?

On the other hand, troubled silence feels heavy. Dr Khanna tells us that it may look like avoiding communication, withdrawing, feeling tense, restless, lonely, or misunderstood, even when together. "The communication becomes superficial or purely need-based. You think twice before sharing. You feel you are walking on eggshells. Your needs don't feel heard, and emotional safety is missing." She further explains that during conflicts or emotional overwhelm, one partner may become silent because they feel numb, anxious, or unable to express themselves. In such



situations, silence becomes avoidance, an attempt to escape discomfort or confrontation, or a sign of giving up. As per Ruuh, troubled silence often develops when there's a breakdown in connection, maybe a trust issue, an unresolved conflict, or suppressed emotions like anger, disappointment, or unmet needs. Instead of expressing these feelings, one partner withdraws, creating a silence that feels uneasy and emotionally distant.

Simply put, here's the difference:

Healthy silence feels peaceful, warm, connected, and grounding. Troubled silence feels lonely, distant, anxious, and confusing. Meanwhile, sometimes silence hurts more than arguments. Imagine being in the middle of a heated conversation, ready to express everything, and your partner suddenly goes quiet. That silence stings more than any fight.

Why we're always chasing one trend after another (and the hidden cost behind it)



Whenever an old Y2K song plays, it instantly takes us back. You remember how long that one track stayed on your playlist, for months, sometimes years. Back then, if something was a "hit", it actually had a life. Even viral products stuck around for a long time (remember Maybelline Baby Lips? It lived in all our bags forever). Trends existed even then, but now they change almost every day. One week, everyone wants a Labubu. Next, it's a sipper bottle that somehow becomes a cultural moment. It's true that trends have always existed, but the speed at which we consume, discard, and chase the next thing has dramatically changed. And somewhere in that rush, we've stopped asking why. Why are we always looking for

the next big thing? And at what cost to our attention, peace, and mental well-being?

When 'new' never stops

"I often hear people say, 'I just blink, and something new is trending.' What we're actually feeling is constant adjustment fatigue," says Nandita Kalra, supervising counselling psychologist at Rocket Health (a mental health startup). What used to evolve slowly, like music, fashion, and even language, now changes overnight. The pace itself isn't just cultural; it's psychological, says Kalra, adding that our minds are wired for gradual change, which gives us a sense of rhythm and stability. When things shift this fast, it feels like standing on moving ground. "You start feeling

restless, anxious, or even disconnected from yourself. It's like you can't catch your breath any more; you are constantly adjusting, without ever feeling settled. Additionally, it also feels like a loss of personal rhythm, and you begin to feel you are living reactively instead of intentionally," she further tells

India Today. Meanwhile, Dr Rajiv Mehta, senior consultant psychiatrist, Sir Gangaram Hospital, New Delhi, mentions that as life gets faster, we've started wanting quick results in everything; food, relationships, and success. So, the problem isn't just fast trends; it's our growing need for instant

satisfaction. But fast trends only give shorter happiness. Once the excitement fades, we're left with emptiness and the urge to find the 'next thing,' which can lead to loneliness, anxiety, and low mood. It's true that today's fast-paced trend culture keeps us constantly chasing the next big thing.

Are VR workouts the future of fitness?

If you have tried shopping online lately, chances are that before you zeroed in on your preferred sofa, you placed it virtually in your living room just to check if it fits in or not. Even buying makeup is easier now that you can sit at home and choose among hundreds of lip shades that which is the one for you. Augmented reality has quietly slipped into our lives, and it's layered, gamified, and increasingly digital. Your Instagram feed would have made it a point to show someone boxing the air in their living room, wearing a VR headset or playing cricket. And from what it looks like, it could be the future of everything, even fitness.

Why are younger users hooked

STORIES YOU MAY LIKE

There's no denying how wellness has taken over everything. We are extra cautious about what we put in our body, and exercise has, for many people, become an inseparable part of their life. However, sometimes the routine can get a little monotonous and this is when you might need a

fun intervention in the form of VR exercises. "VR training merges entertainment, gamification, technology, and fitness," says tech and auto expert Nikhil Chawla. "Traditional workouts can feel monotonous, whereas VR makes movement immersive and goal-driven." This is the cohort (Gen Z) raised on immersive gaming, instant feedback, and interactive everything. A static treadmill facing a blank wall? It doesn't stand a chance against climbing a virtual mountain in Iceland or punching your way through a high-intensity rhythm game. Chawla doesn't see this as a fad. "Just like streaming replaced TV habits and digital wallets replaced cash, immersive training is redefining how we look at physical activity," he notes. "The thrill, the data, the global community — these layers make it stick." But will it replace weights, mats, and mirrors? "Not entirely," he says. "Think digital payments and cash, both exist. VR is a powerful complement, not a total takeover." Can it beat (or replace) the good old gym? The short answer? Not yet — and maybe not ever.

Pakistani Marxists helped Zohran Mamdani win New York City mayoral primary

Democratic mayoral candidate for New York City, Zohran Mamdani, received help from a radical Pakistani Marxist organisation during the mayoral primary held in June, according to a report by the New York Post. The revelation comes even as Mamdani's political mentor and Palestinian-American activist, Linda Sarsour, said that the Democrat received major funding from an organisation with alleged Hamas links. New York City residents are voting to choose their mayor, and the results will be out on November 4 (US time). The investigation reports



that the immigrant-rights group Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM) and its political arm DRUM Beats mobilised unprecedented levels of turnout among Bangladeshi and Pakistani voters across Queens and beyond. The New York Post says DRUM claims to have helped bring more than 150,000 South Asian and Indo-Caribbean voters to the polls. Behind the operation, the New York Post

identified several individuals connected to a Pakistan-based radical socialist party, the HaqooqeKhalq Party (HKP), a radical socialist movement founded in Pakistan by Cambridge-educated historian Ammar Ali Jan and veteran left-wing politician Farooq Tariq. Among them were Raza Gillani (journalist and organiser), Mohiba Ahmed (community organiser), and Zahid Ali

(doctoral student)—all of whom appear in DRUM's campaign effort and also appear in HKP posts or circles. The NYP highlighted a 2022 Facebook post by DRUM executive director Fahd Ahmed celebrating discussions with HKP leadership as "encouraging and impressive". Notably, city records list DRUM Beats as receiving approximately \$20,000 from

Mamdani's campaign during the primary, while both organisations share the same address and top director, the New York Post reported.

SOUTH ASIAN MOBILISATION CREDITED FOR MAMDANI'S PRIMARY WIN

The NYP suggested that the overlap between DRUM and DRUM Beats might blur the lines between permitted

nonprofit advocacy and impermissible campaign activity. On the digital front, the NYP reported that Mamdani's campaign enjoyed explosive social-media growth: between June 1 and July 1, his Instagram following leapt from about 213,000 to nearly 3 million (a roughly 1,295 % increase), and his TikTok surged more than 1,000%. Data reviewed by the NYP showed that engagement from users in South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh) outpaced US-based engagement, with dozens of repeated comments such as "Let's go bhai!" appearing on Instagram. Together, the ground and online operations—especially DRUM's mobilisation of South Asian communities in boroughs like Queens and Brooklyn—appear to have delivered the margin of victory. The NYP notes that the turnout rise alone among those blocs would have been sufficient to bridge the gap between Mamdani and Cuomo in the final ranked-choice tally.

How 'admin123' Led To Hospital Footage Of Women Being Uploaded On Porn Sites



A lack of digital housekeeping led to footage of women undergoing gynaecological checkups at a maternity hospital in Gujarat's Rajkot being uploaded to porn websites, an investigation has revealed. A scandal had broken out in February when clips of

women in various stages of undress at the Payal Maternity Home in Rajkot appeared on porn sites and made available for sale on Telegram groups. The hospital authorities had said that their server had been hacked. I don't know how the hospital videos went viral. Our

CCTV server seems to have been hacked. However, we are also unaware of why this happened and will inform the police," Dr Amit Akbari, who works at the hospital, had said. Some people behind the hacking had been arrested the same month but the videos

remained up for sale on Telegram groups until at least June. An investigation revealed that the maternity home's CCTV dashboard was one of 80 that had been hacked across India, including in Delhi, Pune, Mumbai, Nashik, Surat, and Ahmedabad. The hackers got

access to footage from the hospital for nearly all of 2024, as well as recordings from schools, corporate houses, cinema halls, factories, and even homes. Investigators said most of the places that had been hacked, including the hospital, had retained the default password for the CCTV dashboard - admin123. The hackers used a brute force attack, using combinations of words, numbers and symbols to gain access to the systems. Since the password was so simple, they could hack these dashboards with relatively little effort.

Experts said the hacking reinforces the need for strong passwords and the use of two-factor authentication where available. Institutions, they said, need to enforce this even more because the data of others, including footage of women in the hospital's case, is at stake.

In Bihar, more things change more they may remain the same



Bihar elections have a unique consistency in enriching the political lexicon. For decades, journalists travelling to Patna to cover elections would invariably visit the Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI) on the Boring Road and meet its founder, Saibal Gupta (who passed away in 2021), to gauge ground conditions. He would often come up with innovative formulations to describe the economic, social, and political dynamics of Bihar. When Nitish Kumar won the assembly elections in 2005, he described it as a "coalition of extremes". It implied that upper castes, the most backward classes, and the Scheduled Castes coalesced together to defeat the Muslim-Yadav combination of Lalu Prasad. In the 2010 elections, Nitish Kumar's thumping victory at the hustings was described as a "rainbow coalition". Nitish Kumar could manage to win over a substantial section of OBCs and a marginal section of the Muslim-Yadav combine, too. Lalu Prasad's RJD was thoroughly marginalised. The subsequent elections of 2015 and 2020 were like an enigma wrapped in a social riddle. They were replete with complex social variables that were too difficult to decipher. Yet Nitish Kumar retained his relevance despite his flirty dalliances with two principal political forces – the BJP and the RJD. The 2025 assembly elections are taking place in an even more complicated situation, when Nitish Kumar has apparently lost the charm and glory of yesteryears but retained his political base in Bihar. This time, the elections are on an entirely different plane. The opposition in Bihar appears to have singularly failed to convince the electorate that they have put up a united and coherent front against the nearly two-decade-old regime of a fading leader. They seem to have missed a golden opportunity that came their way by reinventing their politics that could match the people's aspirations. There is no doubt that Lalu's misrule of 1990 is in quite a distant past for the younger generation. But, more recently, when Nitish Kumar allied with the RJD in 2015, a glimpse of that misrule was seen, which is still fresh in people's memory. For instance, the manner in which Shahabuddin was released from jail and steamrolled the highways of Bihar to reach Siwan was the trigger that alienated Nitish Kumar and eventually led him to part company with him. Even in the administration, the influence of criminal gangs closer to the RJD was quite evident. Neither Rahul Gandhi nor Tejashwi Prasad Yadav have managed to dispel that impression associated with the opposition alliance. They have focussed too much on personal attacks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi or Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. In both cases, they seem to be oblivious of the fact that this strategy would not win any new social forces in Bihar, particularly from the OBCs. Tejashwi's reckless promise of one job per family lacks credibility to mobilise people to his support. Ironically, Nitish Kumar still represents the most sober face of Bihar despite speculations about his cognitive decline. For nearly two decades, he has assiduously cultivated the constituency of women irrespective of caste and community. First, he earmarked reservation for women in local body elections and consistently worked for women empowerment through the umbrella programme of Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society, better known as 'Jeevika'. His prohibition policy endeared him to women, as it substantially reduced social vagrancy and crime against women. There is no doubt that the enforcement of prohibition is inadequate and has engendered a parallel economy of illicit liquor trade. Still, there is fear of law that restrains people from consuming alcohol openly and acting irresponsibly. At the social level, its positive impact outweighs the negatives. Evidently, the NDA retains its ability to forge a broad spectrum of coalitions of social forces that obviously excludes the Muslim and Yadav combine that forms a sizeable chunk of the electorate. The impact of the wild card, Jan Suraj Party of Prashant Kishore, is still immeasurable. In the conventional understanding of Bihar, he is making all the right noises with no traditional support base on the caste and community lines. Though Bihar is often seen as a traditional society with castes and communal identity defining its social landscape, it has a history of defying that stereotype too. George Fernandes won elections from constituencies often dominated by upper castes and OBCs. Such a situation is more of an exception rather than a rule. In the post-poll scenario, the Bihar verdict will once again enrich the political lexicon by throwing up new combinations of social forces which can range from "coalition of extremes" to "rainbow coalition". Perhaps, the presence of a genial and gentle Nitish Kumar in his sunset years is far more powerful imagery than any rhetoric to put the NDA in an advantageous position.

The battle of Bahubalis in Bihar's Mokama: Crime, money and power

As the battle for Bihar's throne heats up, the Mokama Assembly constituency, about 90 kilometres from Patna, has once again become one of the state's most fiercely contested and captivating seats. Historically dominated by Bhumihar leaders, Mokama is known for its volatile political climate, where electoral battles have often spilled onto the streets and gunfire was once a common feature of campaigns. This time, the contest is direct and decisive, between Janata Dal (United) (JDU) candidate Anant Singh, popularly known as 'Chhote Sarkar' (Junior Boss), and Veena Devi, wife of former MP Surajbhan Singh, contesting on a Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) ticket. Both hail from the influential Bhumihar community, turning the election into a clash of money power, muscle, and deep-rooted rivalries. Anant Singh, who has wielded influence over Mokama for nearly two decades, is seeking to reclaim his stronghold on a JDU ticket following his recent acquittal by the Patna High Court. Veena Devi, backed by her husband Surajbhan Singh, another local heavyweight known as 'Dada', has reignited the long-standing feud between the Singh and Surajbhan families.

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The seat, which goes to polls in the first phase on November 6, will serve as a litmus test for the continued political relevance of Bihar's bahubalis (strongmen).

THE POLITICS OF BAHUBALIS

Mokama, a fertile region along the Ganga, is famous for its pulse and wheat cultivation. But over the past five decades, it has also produced several powerful bahubalis whose influence extended far beyond its borders. The entry of strongmen into Mokama's politics dates back to the post-Independence era. According to old-timers, prominent Congress leaders and landlords relied on musclemen and local



gangsters to win elections. A senior Congress leader, elected MLA twice, famously used strongmen like Dilip Singh (Anant Singh's elder brother) and Dular Chand Yadav as his enforcers, until they learned the ropes of politics and stepped into the arena themselves. Mokama's geography also contributed to this culture of muscle power. Despite being close to Patna, its interiors, particularly the Diyara (riverine) and Tal (shallow waterlogged) regions, remained hard to access. In these notorious stretches, farmers struggled to protect their produce from robbers. By the 1970s, self-styled protector gangs led by strongmen emerged, claiming to safeguard the locals, a legacy that shaped Mokama's political landscape. Experts recall that while Congress leaders initially nurtured these musclemen, many later rebelled. One such protégé, Dilip Singh, defeated his mentor in 1990 as a Janata Dal candidate. The Congress leader then backed Surajbhan Singh, who won in 2000 as an independent by defeating Dilip Singh. Anant Singh avenged that loss in 2005, and his dominance has remained unchallenged since.

ANANT SINGH'S

POLITICAL JOURNEY

Anant Singh has represented Mokama since 2005, winning five consecutive terms, including the 2020 election, which he contested from jail as an RJD candidate. His tenure was cut short in 2022 after a conviction under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), leading to his disqualification. His wife, Neelam Devi, subsequently won the by-election on an RJD ticket. Now acquitted by the Patna High Court, Singh is back in the fray on a JDU ticket, seeking to reclaim his political bastion. He has declared assets worth Rs 37.88 crore and faces 28 criminal cases, including those related to murder, kidnapping, and possession of illegal arms. His wife's assets stand at Rs 62.72 crore, with the couple jointly burdened by debts exceeding Rs 50 crore. Despite his criminal record, Singh has carefully cultivated a Robin Hood-like image. Locals still refer to him as 'Vidhayak Ji' (Honourable MLA), crediting him with protecting farmers from exploitative strongmen. "If people love me, how am I a strongman?" Singh says. "Since 2000, there hasn't been a single incident of 'slapping.'

I'd be a strongman if I won by force." Supporters credit him for improving infrastructure, building roads, ensuring water supply and electrification, and initiating drainage work in flood-prone areas using machinery he brought from Uttar Pradesh.

VEENA DEVI'S CHALLENGE

Opposing him is Veena Devi, wife of former MP Surajbhan Singh, who cannot contest himself due to a murder conviction. Surajbhan, once a protégé of Anant's brother Dilip Singh, defeated him in 2000 as an independent and has since remained an influential figure, often backing Anant's opponents. Veena Devi, educated up to Class 9, is campaigning on the plank of development. "We seek votes for progress," she says. "Work here has stalled. We want Ek Mokama, Nek Mokama (One Mokama, Good Mokama), free from caste and religious divides.

Her husband is managing her campaign strategy from behind the scenes. Relatives like Ritesh Kumar Singh admit the family's bahubali legacy but claim they are contesting "at the people's demand" to bring about change.

OTHER CONTENDERS AND CASTE DYNAMICS

Mokama has around 2.89 lakh voters, known for high turnout. In 2020, Anant Singh secured 78,721 votes. The caste equation plays a decisive role: around 82,000 Dhanuk and Kurmi voters, 50,000 Bhumihars, and 40,000 Yadavs dominate the demography. With both main candidates being Bhumihars, the vote is likely to split between them. Other contenders include Priyadarshi Piyush of Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraj Party (JSP) and Dr. Rajesh Kumar Ratnakar of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Piyush, a TISS-Mumbai postgraduate, is focusing on unemployment and education, seeking support from non-dominant caste groups. Analysts predict a straight fight between Anant Singh and Veena Devi, as Mokama's voters tend to favour individuals over parties. Singh's personal rapport with every section of society could give him an edge, though the absence of his former manager Kartik Kumar Singh, now an RJD MLC, may affect his campaign. Meanwhile, Surajbhan's limited engagement with locals in recent years could hinder Veena Devi's chances, setting the stage for a high-stakes, personality-driven contest.

How Kashmir's own IPL featuring stars like Chris Gayle ended in chaos



It was billed as a major sporting milestone in Kashmir, where local cricketers could rub their shoulders with international and national stars like Chris Gayle, Jesse Ryder and Praveen Kumar. However, just overnight, the much-touted Indian Heaven Premier League (IHPL) turned into hell for the players and umpires after its organisers allegedly fled midway through the tournament, leaving behind a trail of confusion, unpaid hotel bills running into lakhs, and a political fiasco. So much so that players like Gayle and foreign umpires were held hostage by staff at the hotel where they were staying over non-payment of bills. They were only allowed to go after the government intervened. Kashmir's biggest sporting scandal had started to unravel.

KASHMIR'S OWN IPL FALLS FLAT

It was just a week back that the T20 tournament kicked off on October 25 at Srinagar's iconic Bakshi Stadium with much fanfare. Organised by Mohali-based Yuva Society, a non-profit, and allegedly promoted by J&K Sports

Council, a government entity, it had all the trappings of being Kashmir's own IPL.

It gave Kashmir a foothold in India's cricketing map. Entertainment was making its way back into the Kashmir valley, leaving behind the shadow of the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, which fuelled an exodus of tourists.

Cricketing stars Kashmiris saw only on their TVs started arriving one by one in the 'Heaven on Earth'. Finally, the youth would get a glimpse of 'Universe Boss' Chris Gayle, New Zealand's Jesse Ryder, Australia's Shaun Marsh and other international stars. Former Indian cricketers like Praveen Kumar, Rishi Dhawan, Gurkeerat Singh Mann, and Saurabh Tiwary added to the glam quotient. The organisers even brought in umpires and technical staff from England. The eight teams were named after popular towns within J&K and Ladakh. For the first few days, the matches, especially ones involving Gayle, drew huge crowds. However, problems were evident from the beginning. The cost of the tickets, running well over Rs

1,000, was too high, resulting in a dismal turnout. Local reports said logistical failures were also visible, and some sponsors also pulled out at the last moment.

ORGANISERS PULL OFF A HOUDINI

The first sign that things were not right came on November 1 (Saturday). The match between Uri Panthers and Gulmarg Royals was called off. The players were told by their managers that the day's matches were cancelled. No proper reason was cited. It was the next morning that the players and foreign match officials staying at Radisson in Srinagar received the bombshell news - the organisers allegedly left the city without making any payment, and they had to fend for themselves. To their horror, the players and umpires were not even allowed to leave the hotel, as no payment was made for their lodging and food. As the news leaked to the media, the government intervened, and the players were allowed to leave. Melissa Juniper, an umpire affiliated with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), told

reporters that the mobiles of the organisers had been switched off since Saturday. "The league hasn't paid any bills. They haven't paid players, umpires, staff or the hotel. The league management is nowhere to be seen, and they are not even receiving our calls," Juniper said. Other logistical partners associated with catering and transport have also claimed that they were not paid.

SCANDAL TRIGGERS POLITICAL FIASCO

The scandal has now turned into a full-fledged political fiasco in Kashmir, with the opposition, led by the BJP, tearing into the Omar Abdullah-led government for not conducting proper verification. The opposition has asked how the organisers with no past experience in holding tournaments of such magnitude were allowed to use the Bakshi Stadium. The government has attempted to wash its hands of the controversy. However, the league was inaugurated by J&K Sports Minister Satish Sharma. J&K Sports Council secretary Nuzhat Gul was also present at the inaugural event.

"I have no association with the IHPL. I was present at the inaugural ceremony only as an invitee," Gul told PTI. As the political slugfest escalated, police registered a case against the organisers under sections 316 and 318. Addressing a press conference, J&K BJP spokesperson Altaf Thakur said the issue had dealt a big blow to Kashmir's image, at a time when it was picking up its pieces following the Pahalgam attack. "Who were these scammers who deceived umpires, players, and those who participated in the cultural programmes? The biggest question is, who gave permission for the league," Thakur said. "Many children aspired to become the next Virat Kohli, but the J&K government has played with their future," he further said. The Abdullah government has distanced itself from the fiasco. "It was a private event, not a government-organised one... Police have launched a free and fair investigation, and an FIR has been filed. All details will come to light soon," the J&K sports minister told TOI.

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