

The South Asian Insider

Independent Voice of South Asians in North America

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SMASHING THE SYNDICATE

Inside 'Operation Hard Ball' : How the DOJ Just Dismantled a Global Crime Network of Lawrence Bishnoi and other India-based syndicates that were running global hits from behind bars.

(TSAI Exclusive Report)
New York - In an unprecedented international sweep, the U.S. Department of Justice has dismantled many India - based syndicates that were running global hits from behind bars. Our exclusive report provides further deep-dive context into how U.S. federal prosecutors built their massive transnational case against this India- based network.



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'The Last One Percent': U.S.-India Trade Deal Races a July 24 Deadline

(By our staff reporter) New York- After more than a year of tariff brinkmanship, whiplash diplomacy and marathon negotiating rounds spanning Washington and New Delhi, the United States and India appear to be standing at the threshold of a trade agreement that could reshape the economic relationship between the world's two largest democracies. The question now consuming officials in both capitals is whether they can close it before July 24 - the day a temporary 10 percent tariff framework imposed by the Trump administration on its trading partners expires.

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FEDERAL CRACKDOWN ON TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

OPERATION HARD BALL: DOJ DISMANTLES GLOBAL INDIAN CRIME SYNDICATES IN UNPRECEDENTED INTERNATIONAL SWEEP

37 Charged Across Three Continents as U.S., Canada, Europe Arrest 24 Operatives Linked to Bishnoi, Bhagwanpuria, and Dhanda Enterprises; FBI Offers \$50,000 Reward for Fugitives

(Our Staff Reporter)

New York — In a sweeping law enforcement action announced July 7, 2026, the U.S. Department of Justice unsealed three federal indictments charging 37 defendants connected to India-based transnational organized crime groups operating across North America, Europe, and Asia. The coordinated international operation, designated “Operation Hard Ball,” resulted in 24 arrests across the United States, Canada, and Europe, execution of 50 search warrants, seizure of over 1,000 kilograms of narcotics, multiple firearms, and tens of thousands in illicit proceeds.

The indictments represent one of the largest federal crackdowns on India-linked organized crime networks and directly target three imprisoned kingpins accused of orchestrating global violence, extortion schemes, and multimillion-dollar narcotics trafficking operations: Lawrence Bishnoi, 33, jailed in India; Jaggu Bhagwanpuria, 38, imprisoned in Assam’s Silchar Central Jail; and Vancouver-based Ravinder Singh Dhanda, 57, who operated an international smuggling network under aliases including “Randy,” “Rolex,” and “John Wick.”

THE SCOPE: AN INTERNATIONAL OPERATION BY NUMBERS

Announced by First Assistant United States Attorney Bill Essayli and coordinated by the FBI, DEA, and law enforcement partners across Canada, Europe, and Asia, Operation Hard Ball represents an unprecedented level of international collaboration against transnational organized crime. The operation unfolded across multiple jurisdictions: 37 defendants charged across three separate federal indictments

24 individuals arrested in the U.S. (13), Canada (3), and Spain (1); seven additional defendants already in custody on unrelated charges

50 federal search warrants executed: 23 in the Sacramento area and 11 across the Los Angeles basin; additional operations in Canada 1,000+ kilograms of cocaine and methamphetamine seized; 1 kilogram of heroin; dozens of



firearms including a fully automatic machine gun; approximately \$40,000 in illicit cash

10 fugitives currently at large: seven believed hiding in the United States, two in India, one in Europe

THREE SYNDICATES, GLOBAL REACH

The indictments isolate three parallel, overlapping yet structurally distinct criminal enterprises, each commanding hundreds to over 1,000 members across multiple continents.

The Lawrence Bishnoi Enterprise

Lawrence Bishnoi, 33, imprisoned in India since the mid-2010s, allegedly continued directing his global criminal syndicate from behind bars using smuggled mobile phones and encrypted communication platforms. Prosecutors allege Bishnoi’s enterprise engaged in racketeering, targeted killings, extortion, and cocaine and methamphetamine trafficking across the United States, Canada, Europe, and Asia.

The Bishnoi indictment explicitly links the syndicate to the June 18, 2023 assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a prominent Sikh separatist leader, outside a temple in Surrey, British Columbia. According to the federal charging document, Bishnoi and his North American lieutenant Satinderjeet Singh—known as “Goldy Brar”—ordered the hit. The court records mask the victim’s full name using initials “H.S.N.” but the location, date, and operational details precisely align with

Nijjar’s high-profile murder. Bishnoi allegedly provided a co-conspirator with a photograph of Nijjar and multiple addresses “to facilitate the assassination.” Critically, the U.S. Department of Justice indictment attributes the assassination entirely to the Bishnoi syndicate’s extortion and territorial expansion strategy, framing it as a transnational criminal enterprise operation used to terrorize the wealthy Indian diaspora and bolster multimillion-dollar WhatsApp-based extortion rackets targeting businessmen in Southern California.

Between March 2024 and July 2025, prosecutors allege, the Bishnoi enterprise intercepted and stole approximately 520 kilograms of cocaine from rival drug trafficking organizations within the greater Los Angeles area. The syndicate also allegedly conducted extortion campaigns against diaspora members residing in California, demanding five-figure sums under threat of violence and murder against relatives in India.

In December 2025 through January 2026, Bishnoi and Brar allegedly attempted to extort \$5 million from a victim in Thousand Oaks, California. By November 2023, the syndicate claimed responsibility for a shooting outside a prominent Indian actor and singer’s Vancouver residence, issuing a Punjabi-language Facebook post warning that “no one can save you from us”—a calculated message designed to reinforce the gang’s reputation for violence and intimidation.

The Ravinder Singh Dhanda Smuggling Network

Operating as the primary supply chain and logistical spine for narcotics operations, Ravinder Singh Dhanda, 57, of Vancouver, orchestrated a sophisticated international trafficking network specializing in bulk acquisition, concealment, and transportation of commercial-grade cocaine and methamphetamine across the U.S.-Canada international border.

Prosecutors describe Dhanda’s organization as having negotiated high-volume wholesale narcotics transactions in Southern California, establishing regional distribution hubs in West Covina, Ontario, Fontana, and Perris. The network utilized long-haul commercial semi-trucks and specialized agricultural farm vehicles to move hundreds of kilograms of cocaine and methamphetamine weekly, concealing contraband inside secret compartments or within legitimate cargo to bypass border control inspection points.

During the investigation, federal agents intercepted a single shipment of 80 kilograms of pure cocaine from one of Dhanda’s semi-truck trailers, along with an additional 49-kilogram cocaine shipment in Redlands, California. Dhanda, known by aliases “Randy,” “Rolex,” “Jim,” “Daytona,” and “John Wick,” negotiated transportation rates and logistics with regional drug trafficking organizations and

subcontracted storage and transportation services.

The Jaggu Bhagwanpuria Transnational Syndicate

Founded by 38-year-old Jaggu Bhagwanpuria, imprisoned in India, this organization represents a rival-turned-independent transnational enterprise operating a network exceeding 1,000 members globally—including more than 100 active associates within the United States—across India, Canada, the United Kingdom, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand.

Once a close criminal associate of Bishnoi, Bhagwanpuria split to establish his own independent criminal enterprise characterized by murder-for-hire, weapons trafficking, money laundering, and complex extortion schemes. Critically, prosecutors allege Bhagwanpuria’s syndicate corrupted law enforcement officers in India and partnered with corrupt government officials to facilitate extortion schemes targeting diaspora members.

According to the indictment, Gunder Preet Singh, an active police chief in India, is charged with attempting to extort \$400,000 from a family in Los Angeles by threatening to file false murder charges against their relatives in India. A Bhagwanpuria gang member, Gurlal Singh, threatened a California victim and then provided that victim’s name to the allegedly corrupt police officer Gurinderjit Singh in Punjab, which led to the victim, the victim’s father, and sister being falsely accused of a January 2026 murder in India.

Simultaneously, Gurlal Singh allegedly exploited his position as a detained subject to continue extorting victims while in ICE custody, utilizing unrecorded telephone lines or smuggled communication devices.

THE ARRESTED AND THE ABSCONDING

Among the 24 arrested: Gurlal Singh (Bhagwanpuria syndicate)—arrested in Stockton, California; alleged extortion operative and member of the firearms trafficking ring Multiple California operatives across Los Angeles, San Ysidro, Mentone, Fontana,

Fresno, Manteca, Sacramento, and San Jose involved in extortion, narcotics trafficking, and firearms sales

Three Canadian defendants arrested in British Columbia, including operatives of the Dhanda smuggling network charged with importing bulk cocaine and methamphetamine. One defendant arrested in Spain. Eleven arrests took place across Southern California on July 7, 2026, as part of the coordinated federal sweep.

Fugitives and Reward Announcements

Ten defendants remain at large. The FBI has designated Satinderjeet Singh, alias “Goldy Brar,” as a priority fugitive, adding him to its Most Wanted List and announcing a reward of up to \$50,000 for information leading to his arrest and extradition.

Brar, identified as Bishnoi’s North American operations leader, currently remains in hiding. His location is unknown, though federal authorities believe he operates between the United States and Canada. Lawrence Bishnoi and Rohit Godara, co-conspirators in the Nijjar assassination, have been declared international fugitives. Additionally, Bhagwanpuria and a corrupt Indian police official remain subjects of extradition requests. Current fugitive breakdown: Seven believed hiding in the United States

Two in India (including major kingpins Bishnoi and Bhagwanpuria)

One in Europe

UNPRECEDENTED INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

Operation Hard Ball represents a multi-year collaborative investigation coordinated across American, Canadian, European, and Asian law enforcement agencies—reflecting an historic level of transnational security cooperation.

Participating Agencies:

U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) — lead domestic investigative agency; Los Angeles Division served as primary field operations center. Assistant Director Patrick Grandy declared the operation a strike “at the heart of three brutal transnational organizations that have terrorized families, exploited communities and stolen lives.” U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) — conducted narcotics seizures and trafficking investigations; instrumental in intercepting the 1,000+ kilograms of cocaine and methamphetamine.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) — co-lead investigative partner; conducted arrests and operations across Canada. RCMP Commissioner Mike Duheme and Deputy Commissioner Lisa Moreland led Canadian coordination. Moreland emphasized that the investigation found no evidence linking Indian government officials to the crimes under Operation Hard Ball, and that the Indian government cooperated fully with the probe. U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) — Central District of California, supervised by First Assistant U.S. Attorney Bill Essayli. “Transnational criminal gangs who spread fear, drugs, and violence will face the full force of justice and the weight of the federal government,” Essayli stated at a July 7 press conference. “Working together,

law enforcement in the U.S., Canada, Europe, and Asia are determined to target and dismantle these criminal organizations wherever they operate. There is no safe harbor for these thugs.” Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) — executed search warrants and provided tactical support across the Los Angeles basin. Chief Jim McDottrell stressed: “For two years, investigators shared intelligence, followed leads across international borders, and built a case designed not simply to make arrests, but to dismantle an entire criminal network.”

European Law Enforcement Agencies — Spanish authorities conducted the arrest of one defendant and supported international operations.

Indian Law Enforcement & Government Agencies — Provided intelligence sharing and cooperation regarding imprisoned kingpins Bishnoi and Bhagwanpuria. India is expected to receive formal extradition requests for both major leaders as well as the corrupt police chief charged in the conspiracy.

ACCUSATIONS, DENIALS, AND LINGERING QUESTIONS

While Operation Hard Ball has been hailed as a historic law enforcement triumph, the indictments have generated diplomatic complexity and lingering questions regarding government involvement and institutional accountability.

The Nijjar Assassination: Private Criminality or State Apparatus?

The June 18, 2023 killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar has been the subject of intense international scrutiny. In

September 2023, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau alleged that “credible intelligence” linked Nijjar’s assassination to Indian government involvement—a claim that triggered diplomatic tensions and strains in India-Canada relations. The U.S. federal indictment unsealed July 7, 2026 explicitly attributes the assassination to the Bishnoi criminal syndicate, not state actors. The charging document states that Bishnoi and Brar ordered the hit as part of the gang’s extortion and territorial expansion strategy—framing it as criminal enterprise activity rather than state-directed violence. The indictment makes no allegation of Indian government involvement or direction.

The Indian Government’s Position

New Delhi has consistently denied involvement in Nijjar’s killing or any crimes alleged in Operation Hard Ball. Indian officials have maintained that the assassination resulted from gang rivalry rather than state direction. The operation’s finding of no evidence of Indian government involvement has provided diplomatic utility for India, demonstrating that New Delhi can be a reliable law enforcement partner even on politically sensitive cases. Indian cooperation with U.S. investigators carried dual benefits: resolving a reputational problem while granting Indian agencies access to evidence gathered in foreign jurisdictions—intelligence otherwise unreachable through traditional channels. India is expected to pursue formal extradition proceedings for Bishnoi and Bhagwanpuria.

Sikh Advocacy Concerns

While welcoming the arrests and charges, prominent Sikh advocacy organizations have raised concerns about unanswered questions regarding government involvement. The Toronto-based Sikh Federation and the World Sikh Organization of Canada stated that they remain concerned about “significant questions regarding the role of agents of the Government of India.” “While welcoming today’s enforcement action, WSO is concerned that significant questions remain unanswered regarding the role of agents of the Government of India,” the

World Sikh Organization stated in an official response to the DOJ announcement. The Sikh Federation reiterated in a formal statement: “The public has a legitimate interest in understanding whether investigators have identified links to foreign state actors and what institutional measures are being taken to dismantle those networks.” Political analysts and commentators have emphasized that Operation Hard Ball raises as many questions as it answers. Political analyst Supriya Dwivedi told CBC’s Power & Politics that the indictments and arrests, while significant, leave fundamental questions about foreign interference and transnational repression unresolved: “Indo-Canadians deserve to know whether or not our people are safe.”

Corrupt Indian Police and Institutional Accountability

The indictments expose a troubling institutional vulnerability within Indian law enforcement: the alleged corruption and collaboration of active police officials with organized crime networks. Specifically, Gunder Preet Singh, an active police chief in Punjab, is charged with attempting to extort \$400,000 from a Los Angeles family by threatening false murder charges against their Indian relatives. Similarly, Gurinderjit Singh, an allegedly corrupt police officer, is accused of receiving victim information from Bhagwanpuria gang members and fabricating criminal charges.

These allegations raise broader institutional questions regarding safeguards within Indian law enforcement and the capacity of organized crime syndicates to leverage corrupt officials for financial extortion and violence. As strategic cooperation between the U.S., Canada, Europe, and India deepens, expectations regarding institutional accountability and criminal justice will increase commensurately.

PENALTIES AND JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS

If convicted, defendants face severe federal sentences. Ravinder Singh Dhanda faces a mandatory minimum sentence of life imprisonment on drug trafficking charges. Numerous other defendants face mandatory minimums ranging from 10 years to life

in federal prison. The U.S. government will formally request extradition of Lawrence Bishnoi and Jaggu Bhagwanpuria from Indian custody. Federal Bureau of Prisons security protocols will strictly monitor and record all communications between imprisoned kingpins to prevent continued direction of their criminal enterprises from behind bars—a critical response to the decades-long pattern of imprisoned Indian gangsters orchestrating global violence, narcotics trafficking, and extortion through smuggled contraband communication devices.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DIASPORA SECURITY AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

Operation Hard Ball stands as a watershed moment in international law enforcement cooperation against transnational organized crime. The indictments reveal the sophistication and scale of India-based criminal networks operating across three continents—networks that exploit diaspora vulnerability, corrupt institutional actors, and leverage advanced communication technologies to coordinate violence and financial crime.

The operation disrupted sophisticated criminal enterprises through coordinated intelligence sharing, joint investigations, and unprecedented levels of diplomatic cooperation. Critically, the operation demonstrates that wealthy diaspora communities and ordinary citizens targeted for extortion by these networks are not without recourse—and that international law enforcement is committed to pursuing these criminals across borders.

Yet the indictments also raise broader questions about institutional accountability within law enforcement agencies, the extent of foreign interference and transnational repression affecting diaspora communities, and the need for enhanced safeguards to protect communities targeted by organized crime. The answers to these questions will shape the security landscape for South Asian American and Indo-Canadian communities for years to come. For individuals with information regarding any of the 10 fugitives, the FBI encourages contact through its tip line or local field offices. The \$50,000 reward for information regarding Satinderjeet Singh (“Goldy Brar”) remains active.

'Satluj' Vanishes in 48 Hours: Who Fears Punjab's Truth?

Diljit Dosanjh's long-suppressed film on human rights martyr Jaswant Singh Khalra finally streamed uncut - then disappeared from ZEE5's Indian catalogue two days later, uniting Punjab's feuding political class in outrage.



(Our Staff Reporter) NEW YORK - It took nearly four years, three titles, a courtroom battle and 127 demanded cuts for Honey Trehan's film about Jaswant Singh Khalra to reach Indian audiences. It took less than two days for it to vanish again.

"Satluj," the Diljit Dosanjh-starrer chronicling the life and custodial killing of Punjab's most celebrated human rights investigator, premiered quietly on ZEE5 on Friday, July 3. By Sunday night it had been withdrawn from the platform's Indian catalogue - though it remains available to viewers abroad, including the Punjabi diaspora across North America. ZEE5 cited only unspecified "current developments" and said the film would be "unavailable until further notice."

The government has defended the removal, saying there were concerns the film could be exploited to draw support for the pro-Khalistan movement ahead of Punjab's elections. But across Punjab's fractious political spectrum - and across the diaspora - the question being asked is a different one: who is afraid of facing the state's history?

The Man Behind the Film

Jaswant Singh Khalra was a bank director in Amritsar when young men began disappearing during Punjab's militancy years. His investigations documented the alleged illegal cremation of thousands of unidentified bodies - roughly 25,000 by his accounting - carried out by police without notifying families. In 1995, Khalra himself was taken into police custody and disappeared. Court proceedings ultimately resulted in the conviction of several police personnel, and, as former Punjab Advocate General R.S. Cheema has noted, the Supreme Court of India recorded that Khalra was a human rights activist assassinated by police officers. His story is not an allegation; it is adjudicated history.

That is precisely what makes the film's suppression so combustible. Originally titled "Ghallughara" - the historic term for the great massacres of Sikhs - the project was submitted to the Central Board of Film Certification in late 2022. The board demanded cuts and a title change to "Punjab '95"; producer RSVP fought the ruling in the Bombay High Court; at various points as many as 127 cuts were sought. When it finally streamed as "Satluj," Dosanjh assured fans on Instagram Live that not a single frame had been touched: "The version I watched in theatres two years ago is exactly the same one I watched at home last week. If even a single cut had been made I would not have promoted the film."

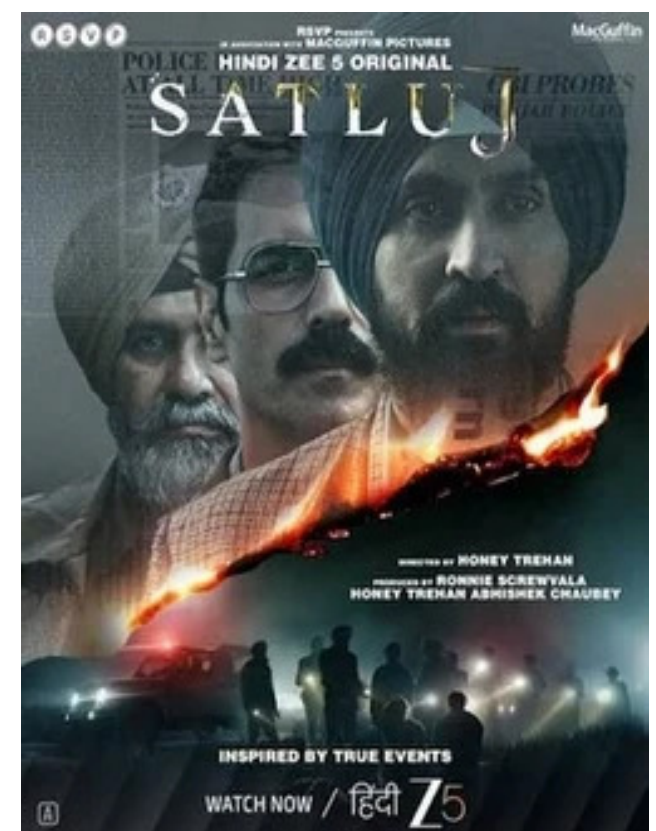
A Rare Political Consensus

The takedown achieved what little else in Punjab politics can: consensus. Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal condemned the removal as not mere censorship but an assault on the collective memory of Punjab. Aam Aadmi Party leaders blamed what they called a Congress-BJP nexus. Leaders across party lines demanded to know, in the words echoing through Punjab's press, "who is afraid of Punjab's truth?" Meanwhile, the film has taken on a second life beyond anyone's control: high-quality digital copies are reportedly circulating through WhatsApp groups across Punjab and the diaspora. Critics have also noted an uncomfortable asymmetry: ZEE5 continues to host other politically charged films - "The Kashmir Files," "The Kerala Story" and its sequel, "The Bengal Files" - raising pointed questions about whose contested history is permitted on Indian screens and whose is not.

Why It Matters Here

For Punjabi communities in New York, New Jersey and California, the Khalra story is living memory, not

distant history. Families in our readership lost relatives in the disappearances Khalra documented; his widow, Paramjit Kaur Khalra, has spoken to diaspora gatherings for decades. That the film can be streamed freely in Queens and Surrey but not in Amritsar is an irony no viewer here will miss - and a reminder, in the week India's greatest trading partner celebrated 250 years of its First Amendment tradition, that the freedom to remember remains contested in Punjab.



'The Last One Percent': U.S.-India Trade Deal Races a July 24 Deadline



With temporary tariffs set to expire in seventeen days, negotiators on both sides say a landmark agreement is within reach - even after a Supreme Court ruling upended the legal ground beneath it.

By The South Asian Insider Weekly News Desk

NEW YORK - After more than a year of tariff brinkmanship, whiplash diplomacy and marathon negotiating rounds spanning Washington and New Delhi, the United States and India appear to be standing at the threshold of a trade agreement that could reshape the economic relationship between the world's two largest democracies. The question now consuming officials in both capitals is whether they can close it before July 24 - the day a temporary 10 percent tariff framework imposed by the Trump administration on its trading partners expires.

"It's in the last one percent," U.S. Ambassador to India Sergio Gor said last week, describing negotiations that have entered what officials on both sides call the final steps. Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal was similarly bullish, telling a strategic dialogue in New Delhi that concessions and other core elements of the pact have largely been finalized and that India does not foresee major hurdles. "We don't see any difficulties with the US," he said.

From Tariff War to Trade Framework

The path here has been anything but smooth. India entered 2026 facing a 25 percent reciprocal tariff plus an additional 25 percent penalty tied to its purchases of Russian oil - among the harshest treatment given to any major U.S. trading partner. The breakthrough came in February, when President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi reached a framework for an interim agreement in a phone call. Trump agreed to remove the additional 25 percent Russia-oil tariff after India committed to halting those purchases, and Washington lowered the reciprocal tariff from 25 percent

to 18 percent. In exchange, India - which has historically maintained agricultural tariffs averaging 37 percent and auto tariffs exceeding 100 percent - agreed to eliminate or reduce duties across a broad range of American goods, alongside commitments on technology trade and non-tariff barriers. Both governments framed the February joint statement as the foundation for a full Bilateral Trade Agreement, with negotiations continuing on services, investment, intellectual property, government procurement and digital trade.

The Supreme Court Wild Card

Then came the courts. The U.S. Supreme Court's decision striking down tariffs imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act invalidated the legal instrument that had powered the White House's global tariff campaign - the very pressure that brought many partners, India included, to the table. Rather than derailing the talks, however, the ruling appears to have accelerated them. Goyal said Washington is now constructing an alternative mechanism designed to preserve India's hard-won competitive advantage over rival exporters, and that U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer has acknowledged India's insistence on preferential market access relative to competing nations.

Greer's late-June visit to New Delhi - a two-day round of ministerial talks intended to put final touches on the interim pact - covered market access, digital trade, supply-chain resilience and strategic-sector cooperation. "We reviewed progress of the ongoing India-US trade discussions and explored avenues to further deepen our economic partnership," Goyal wrote

afterward, praising the sustained efforts of both negotiating teams.

What It Means on Both Sides of the Ocean

For the Indian-American business community - from the IT services corridors of New Jersey to the trading houses of California - the stakes are immediate and personal. A finalized agreement would stabilize the tariff environment for importers of Indian textiles, gems, pharmaceuticals and engineered goods, while opening Indian markets to American agriculture and technology firms in which many diaspora entrepreneurs hold stakes. India's parallel trade diplomacy adds context: its free trade agreement with the United Kingdom takes effect July 15, and a European Union pact is on track behind it - evidence that New Delhi is building a lattice of Western trade partnerships with the American deal as its centerpiece.

The timing carries symbolic weight as well. A deal concluded in the season of America's 250th anniversary - and ahead of a heated midterm campaign in which trade and economic nationalism loom large - would hand both leaders a signature achievement. Modi and Trump, who conferred most recently on the sidelines of the G7 summit in France, have each invested personal capital in the relationship; Trump has called Modi a tough negotiator while emphasizing their rapport. Seventeen days remain. If the negotiators are right that only one percent separates the two sides, the finish line is in sight. If they are wrong, July 24 will arrive with the tariff question - and billions of dollars in two-way commerce - once again suspended in uncertainty.

Decoding Zoonotic Spillover Through A 'One-Health' Approach



(By Our Staff Reporter) : The COVID-19 pandemic reminded the world of a fundamental reality: human health does not exist in isolation. From Ebola linked to cave-dwelling bats in Africa, SARS and Nipah traced to bat reservoirs, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) to camels, to COVID-19 itself - history shows pathogens transcend species boundaries. In India, farmers, livestock owners and agriculture workers remain on the frontlines of this invisible threat, as shrinking wildlife habitats bring humans and wildlife into closer contact. As countries grapple with emerging infectious diseases, antimicrobial resistance, climate change and biodiversity loss, a critical question remains: how do pathogens cross species boundaries and spill over from animals to humans (zoonoses) and from humans to animals (reverse zoonoses)? On World Zoonoses Day, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) calls for urgent collective action to prevent the next pandemic before it begins by addressing the drivers of zoonotic spillover through the One Health Approach.

Understanding Zoonotic Spillover Through One Health

Globally, over 60 per cent of infectious diseases in humans originate in animals, and nearly three-quarters of newly emerging pathogens are zoonotic. Traditionally, disease control focused on post-occurrence response. But to prevent the next pandemic, nations must address ecological and socio-economic drivers of disease emergence - through the One Health approach - an integrated framework, defined by the Quadripartite (FAO, WHO, WOA and UNEP), that recognises the interdependence of human, animal, plant and ecosystem health.

Human activities are accelerating zoonotic spillover. Deforestation, agricultural expansion, biodiversity loss, wildlife trade, and urbanization bring wildlife, livestock and people into closer contact, increasing opportunities for pathogens to cross species. By

disrupting ecosystems and intensifying human-animal interactions, these activities heighten the risk of disease emergence. El-Niño-associated climate disruption, extreme weather events and forest fires further compound these risks. Domestic animals often act as bridge hosts between wildlife reservoirs and humans, adding another dimension as agricultural frontiers expand into undisturbed ecosystems.

India's One Health Progress

India has made significant progress in operationalising One Health. The National One Health Mission, approved in February 2024, along with initiatives such as establishing the National Institute for One Health (NIOH) in Nagpur, Maharashtra, and the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme by the National Centre for Disease Control programmes by One Health Support Unit under the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India, and the Pandemic Fund project, Animal Health Security Strengthening in India for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (PPR), implemented by FAO, World Bank and Asian Development Bank, are strengthening national capacities for PPR. Enhanced surveillance systems, integrated outbreak investigations, laboratory networks and cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms are increasingly part of India's preparedness architecture.

From Outbreak Response To Risk Prevention

Preventing zoonotic spillovers requires moving from outbreak response to proactive risk prevention. This requires integrated surveillance across wildlife, livestock, human and environmental health sectors; harnessing genomic technologies for early pathogen detection; strengthening biosecurity in animal production; protecting and restoring ecosystems as natural buffers; and fostering collaboration among veterinarians, physicians, ecologists, scientists/experts, policymakers and local communities. The economic case is equally compelling. Preventing pandemics through risk reduction and

ecosystem-based interventions would cost only a fraction of the losses from global pandemics. Prevention is therefore not merely a health investment; it's an investment in sustainable development, food security, biodiversity conservation and economic resilience. This aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, which recognise the strong linkages between healthy ecosystems, human welfare and long-term prosperity.

The next pandemic threat may already be circulating silently at the human-animal-environment interface. Whether it remains localised or escalates into a global crisis will depend on our ability to understand and address its drivers. One Health provides the scientific framework, operational pathway and collaborative platform to achieve this. On this World Zoonoses Day, the call to action is clear: prevent the next pandemic before it begins. Governments, researchers, veterinarians, physicians, environmental experts, farmers, local communities and the private sector all have a role to play in strengthening surveillance, protecting biodiversity, promoting sustainable agriculture and improving biosecurity across food systems. No single institution or sector can prevent the next pandemic alone.

Protecting human health requires action beyond hospitals. Better management of forests, farms, wetlands, markets and communities is critical to preventing zoonotic spillover. By embracing a One Health approach, we can reduce the risk of zoonotic spillover, safeguard livelihoods, strengthen food security and build healthier, more resilient societies. On World Zoonoses Day, let us reaffirm our shared responsibility to act early, act together and leave no one behind.

SMALL DONATIONS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE



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AI Actor Tilly Norwood Lands First Feature Film And It's Set In The Wild Tillyverse

AI actor Tilly Norwood to star in her first film, "Misaligned," a comedy-drama developed by Particle 6. The film is set in the "Tillyverse" and explores AI chaos.



According to Variety, the AI actor will lead Misaligned, a comedy-drama from Particle 6, the AI-focused studio that created Tilly. The film is currently in early development and marks the character's first full-length feature as the lead. Misaligned is set inside the quirky "Tillyverse"—a digital world that exists somewhere in the Cloud. The story has been described as a "coming-of-age story infused with existential AI chaos," blending humour with questions about identity, emotions and what it really means to be human. At the heart of the film is Tilly, an AI being with no real body, no childhood and no memories of her own. Instead, she has access to everyone else's experiences. But things take an unexpected turn when she meets a charming rogue bot from the dark web. He convinces her to ditch her built-in guardrails, and suddenly Tilly starts developing desires, ambitions and impulses of her own—making her feel a

lot more human than she was ever meant to.

Particle 6 says the movie won't rely only on artificial intelligence. Instead, it will be made using a mix of AI tools and traditional filmmaking, with directors, writers and editors working alongside AI specialists. Explaining the vision behind the project, Particle 6 CEO and founder Eline van der Velden told Variety:

"Our work this year has proven something we suspected all along. AI can support premium narrative filmmaking, but only with substantial amounts of human craft, skill, judgement and time. That's not a limitation of the technology. That's the point. The filmmakers who thrive in the next decade will be the ones who bring decades of storytelling instinct to these new tools, and 'Misaligned' is where we put that to work at feature scale." Tilly Norwood first burst into the spotlight in late 2025, but not because of a blockbuster. The AI character became the face of a heated industry debate after

van der Velden announced that Tilly was close to signing with a talent agency. That announcement didn't go down well with many in Hollywood. Actors, filmmakers and industry unions quickly pushed back, raising concerns about AI's growing role in creative jobs. Instead of staying away from the controversy, Tilly's creators leaned into it, using cheeky social media posts that kept the AI actor in the headlines. Later, Tilly appeared in the comedy sketch AI Commissioner, sharing the screen with other AI-generated characters. Misaligned is one of several AI-powered projects currently being developed by Particle 6. Along with film and television productions, the company is also working on AI-led commercial campaigns and co-productions. Tilly Norwood was created in 2025 by Xicoia, the AI division of Particle6 Group, founded by Eline van der Velden. The character's first screen appearance came in AI Commissioner, which received criticism from reviewers at ThGuardian, PC Gamer and The A.V. Club.

(By Our Staff Reporter) : Love it or hate it, AI is slowly finding a bigger place in entertainment. And one of the internet's most talked-about AI personalities is now taking an even bigger leap. After making headlines for all the debate surrounding AI actors, Tilly Norwood is getting ready to headline her very first feature film.

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The New Normal: What ICE's Enforcement Surge Means for Immigrant America

In the span of five days bracketing the Fourth of July weekend, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrested more than 10,000 people nationwide — a pace exceeding 2,000 arrests per day, according to figures reported by NBC News from a source familiar with the operation. Federal officials have described this tempo not as a temporary surge tied to a holiday crackdown, but as the "new normal" the agency intends to sustain going forward.

This is a meaningful shift, and it deserves sober scrutiny rather than reflexive alarm or reflexive applause. The scale is real. The stated tactics have, by the administration's own account, grown less visibly militarized than earlier this year, when masked agents in unmarked vehicles moved through Democratic-led cities and drew fierce local backlash. But a lower-visibility operation moving at more than double the daily volume is not a retreat — it is a scaling up, executed more quietly.

For our readers across the South Asian diaspora — families in Queens, Jersey City, Fremont, and beyond — this is not an abstract policy debate. Green card renewals, visa status adjustments, and even routine immigration court appearances now carry a different weight. Legal immigrants and naturalized citizens are not the stated targets, but the scale of enforcement inevitably produces error, and community trust in due process erodes when arrest numbers become a metric of success rather than a measure of individualized justice.

The administration points to figures suggesting a large majority of arrests involve individuals with criminal charges or convictions, and few dispute that public safety is a legitimate government interest. But numbers alone do not answer the harder question: what happens to due process at this velocity? When enforcement priorities shift from targeted removal of convicted violent

offenders to volume-based quotas, mistakes multiply, and it is often long-settled, tax-paying, law-abiding immigrant families — including many in our own community — who absorb the consequences of an overcorrected system.

There is also a governance dimension worth noting. Congress recently directed additional funding — reportedly \$350 million — specifically to help ICE operate in jurisdictions that decline full cooperation with federal immigration authorities, the so-called sanctuary jurisdictions. That funding fight will continue to play out in statehouses and city halls from New York to California, and our readers should watch it closely, because local cooperation agreements directly affect how enforcement touches our neighborhoods.

This editorial board does not romanticize illegal entry, nor do we dismiss legitimate public safety concerns. We do insist, however, that a nation of 340 million people governed by the rule of law owes every person — citizen, green card holder, visa holder, or undocumented resident — a fair and individualized process before life-altering consequences are imposed. "New normal" should not become a euphemism for diminished accountability.

We urge our community members to know their rights, keep documentation current and accessible, and consult qualified immigration counsel proactively rather than reactively. We also urge our elected officials — at the federal, state, and county level, including here on Long Island — to demand transparency on arrest criteria, detention conditions, and error-correction mechanisms as this enforcement posture becomes permanent policy rather than a temporary campaign.

America has always defined itself, imperfectly but persistently, as a nation that measures justice by its process, not merely its outcomes. As enforcement scales up, so must the safeguards that keep it fair.

By Sharanjit 'Sunny' Thind

help ICE operate in jurisdictions

By Sharanjit 'Sunny' Thind

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

New testimony this week in a Utah courtroom has sharpened the public record in the assassination of conservative commentator Charlie Kirk. An agent testified that the accused shooter, Tyler Robinson, allegedly admitted in text messages to his roommate that he carried out the killing, offering an apology and describing a motive. We note, in keeping with this publication's long-standing editorial standard, that Mr. Robinson remains a defendant whose guilt has not yet been determined by a court of law, and we will continue to describe him as accused, not convicted, pending trial.

Whatever the eventual legal outcome, the assassination itself — a prominent political commentator gunned down in public — stands as a grim marker in a widening pattern of political violence in the United States. In the past several years, the nation has witnessed attacks and attempted attacks on sitting and former presidents, members of Congress, judges, election officials, and now a leading voice in conservative media. No single ideology holds a monopoly on either grievance or violence, and no single party can credibly claim its hands are entirely clean of incendiary rhetoric.

For an immigrant and diaspora community that came to this country in no small part because of its promise of stable, peaceful democratic order, this trend is deeply unsettling. Many of our readers or their parents left nations where political assassination and communal violence were tragically routine features of public life — where a rally, a courtroom, or a place of worship could become a killing ground over ideological or sectarian disagreement. Part of what drew families to America was the conviction that disputes here would be settled at the ballot box and in open debate, not through violence.

That conviction is being tested. Cable news, talk radio, and social media algorithms all reward outrage over persuasion, and public figures across the spectrum have too often treated escalating rhetoric as a costless tool rather than a lit match near dry brush. Political violence does not emerge from nowhere; it is incubated in a climate where opponents are routinely described not as fellow citizens with different views but as existential enemies who must be stopped by any means.

We do not believe this problem can be legislated away, nor should any single tragedy be exploited to justify sweeping new restrictions on speech, assembly, or press freedom — protections our community depends on as much as any other. But we do believe public figures, media organizations including our own, and ordinary citizens bear a shared responsibility to lower the temperature. That means holding our own preferred leaders and commentators accountable for incendiary language, not only those on the opposing side.

It also means law enforcement and the judiciary must be allowed to do their work methodically and transparently, insulated from political pressure in either direction. The preliminary hearing testimony reported this week is part of that process, and it should proceed through the courts rather than through cable-news verdicts rendered before a jury is ever seated. As a publication serving communities that know intimately what it costs a society when political disagreement curdles into political violence, we call on our readers — regardless of party — to model the discourse we want to see: passionate, principled, and unwaveringly nonviolent. That is the inheritance worth protecting, for our children and for the country that welcomed us.

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By TSAI Editorial Board

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

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By TSAI Editorial Board

The Senate Battle After Platner: What It Means for 2026

Democrat Graham Platner's abrupt exit from Maine's U.S. Senate race this week has scrambled what national strategists on both sides viewed as one of the most closely watched contests of the 2026 midterm cycle. Maine Democrats are now moving quickly to organize a nominating convention to select a replacement, an unusual and compressed process that will test the party's organizational discipline with the general election clock already running. The Platner withdrawal lands amid a broader set of Senate storylines this cycle that our readers should be tracking closely, including ongoing questions about the health of Kentucky's long-serving senator, whose recent public medical episode has prompted Kentucky's governor to press for a fuller accounting of his condition and capacity to serve. Senate margins in this closely divided chamber are narrow enough that a single seat's outcome, or a single senator's ability to serve out a term, can shape control of committees that matter enormously to immigration policy, trade posture toward South Asia, and the broader legislative agenda our readers care about. This publication has covered the shifting political landscape of New York's own congressional map extensively, including the NY-18 candidacy questions that occupied much of this editorial board's attention earlier this year. We approach the Maine story, and the broader 2026 Senate map, with the same instinct: these races are not abstractions decided by insiders in Washington and Augusta alone. They are decided, in reasonably close contests, by turnout in communities like ours — South Asian American voters whose participation rates have risen steadily over the past several cycles and whose votes are increasingly courted, if not always earned, by candidates in both parties. What should our readers watch for as Maine Democrats select a new nomi-

nee, and as other Senate contests around the country take shape through the fall? First, candidate positioning on legal immigration reform, including employment-based pathways such as H-1B visas that remain central to the economic lives of many South Asian American families — an issue this board has covered in depth through our reporting on H-1B visa fraud and return migration trends. Second, candidate posture on U.S. trade and strategic relations with India and the broader Indo-Pacific, an area where bipartisan consensus has historically existed but cannot be assumed. Third, and more broadly, the tone candidates strike on political rhetoric and civility, a subject this board addressed directly in our companion editorial this week on political violence in America. We take no position in this space on which party should prevail in Maine or in any other contested Senate race; that is a judgment for voters, not for this editorial board. We do take the position that South Asian American voters, an increasingly decisive constituency in states well beyond our traditional strongholds of New York, New Jersey, and California, should engage with these races on the merits, ask direct questions of every candidate on the issues that matter most to our community, and resist the temptation to sit out a midterm cycle simply because the presidential race is not on the ballot. A single withdrawal in Maine will not decide control of the Senate. But it is a reminder that American politics remains fluid, candidates remain fallible, and the outcome of close elections still rests, ultimately, in the hands of voters willing to show up. We encourage every eligible reader of this publication to register, to study the candidates carefully as they emerge in the coming weeks, and to vote.

By TSAI Editorial Board

State of Nation

Cartoon explained

The main scene: Uncle Sam (who represents the **United States**) is stuck in the middle, looking super tired and stressed. He's trying to hold a peace branch (for calm) in one hand while carrying a big bag of "Military Aid" (weapons and money) in the other. But the bag is leaking cash everywhere!

The players:- On one side, the **Israeli leader** is happily riding a big tank, waving and saying "Thanks buddy!" — showing Israel getting strong support from the US. On the other side, the **Iranian leader** is smirking and juggling little nuclear bombs like they're balloons, saying "Surprise!" — poking fun at the

tension and surprise attacks. **The Twist (political realities):** At his feet, American politics (shown as a blue elephant and red donkey fighting) are pulling Uncle Sam's legs in different directions. One yells "Election Year!" and the other "Diplomacy!" — meaning the US is distracted by its own elections and arguments about whether to fight or talk.

Overall joke: The cartoon is laughing at how the US is trying to juggle helping Israel, dealing with Iran, and handling its messy home politics — all at once. Uncle Sam says "This is fine... totally under control!" even though everything looks chaotic. It's a classic satire on current affairs!

America's Battlefield Dominance Is Under Serious Threat



The US Army buys 50,000 drones a year, set to increase in 2027 to 340,000. Sounds like a lot? Yeah, but Ukraine is producing and launching 4 million a year. Meanwhile, an Iranian missile landing on a Gulf air base destroyed a \$300 million E-3 Sentry early-warning aircraft. America can afford it? Well, maybe, but it was one of a US fleet of just 16 such aircraft, now down to 15.

At the same time, Ukraine's \$300,000-a-pop kamikaze drone boats have displayed in the Black Sea an ability to destroy warships costing hundreds of millions of dollars - they have sunk 13 Russian vessels and damaged many more. As for artificial intelligence, experts believe that this threatens to wipe out the technological lead the US has possessed over actual and potential enemies since World War II.

Warfare, strategy and weapons systems are morphing at extraordinary speed. The US still possesses by far the most capable military. But its ability to dominate a battlefield, never mind an entire region, is under threat in a fashion that military men and women understand better than do many national leaders.

Iran is still standing, after enduring the heaviest fire America and Israel could unleash upon it. Since 2022 Ukraine has fought Russia almost to a standstill. A while back, I was among those who feared that its defenses would collapse as President Donald Trump cozied up to Russia's Vladimir Putin and slashed supplies of arms to Kyiv, especially air-defense missiles.

Instead, we are witnessing an extraordinary Ukrainian fightback, driven by domestically produced weapons largely funded by Europe. The embattled people's ingenuity and passion have turned the tide on the frontlines, teaching us much not only about this war, but about the likely face of all future war.

Ukrainians are killing Russian troops at an estimated 10,000 a month, almost half

a million in total since 2022, at least five times Ukrainian losses. Drones are overwhelmingly responsible for Russian casualties. No sensible analyst suggests that these low-tech incomers make all big-ticket weapons systems redundant. US and Israeli aircraft have been able to pound Iranian targets, delivering more than 13,000 strikes, while suffering a very low loss rate. Both Russian and Ukrainian air defenses are porous.

But the sheer scale of response necessary to meet an incoming drone swarm or missile barrage frightens nations with limited resources. The US has used up about half of its Patriot missile inventory since it and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, together with most of its THAAD interceptors, and it will take years to replenish stocks. If an enemy launches a new offensive anywhere in the world, most obviously China against Taiwan, Trump's war of choice against the Islamic Republic leaves his armed forces ill-prepared to counter it.

There is a great 1880s poem by Rudyard Kipling entitled *Arithmetic On The Frontier*. This remarked wryly on the disconnection between the expense of Queen Victoria's officers and that of the weapons of the Afghan tribesmen which often killed them: "A scrimmage in some border station/a canter down some dark defile/two thousand pounds of education drops to a ten rupee jezail/the squadron's boast, the crammer's pride/shot like a rabbit in a ride."

America pays an estimated \$4 million every time a Patriot missile shoots down an Iranian Shahed drone, which costs Tehran something between \$7,000 and \$35,000. The US Navy shows extreme caution about permitting its big carriers - cost \$13 billion, plus another \$10 billion each for the air wings - anywhere within range of Iranian fire in the Strait of Hormuz.

And AI is, of course, the monster in the room. The technology is advancing so fast that it is hard for even the most

nimble defense-procurement departments to figure out what to buy. Because the US and its allies are open societies, espionage against their cutting-edge corporations is scarily easy. Such Chinese companies as DeepSeek, Moonshot and Minimax are shameless about shadowing every advance made by US pioneers headed by Anthropic PBC, OpenAI and Google, then producing their own models at a fraction of the expense. Attempts to agree international regulation of AI seem bound to fail.

Because of the obvious perils, some of those working in the US AI industry seek to prevent its military exploitation. The Pentagon is demanding unrestricted access to Anthropic's technology for what it deems "any lawful use," but we know how flexibly the Trump administration interprets such words. More than a thousand Google and OpenAI employees signed an open letter calling on their companies to "continue to refuse the Department of War's current demands."

But it is hard to deny the Pentagon access to AI technologies when America's real and potential enemies, especially China, are laboring around the clock to exploit their own versions for military purposes. Whatever our fears about the irresponsibility of Trump's government, the AI arms race is a reality, and few of us want the West to lose it.

Today's situation reminds me of 1906 Anglo-German competition. In that year the Royal Navy, guided by the brilliant admiral John Fisher, launched the revolutionary HMS *Dreadnought*, the first all-big-gun battleship. Then it dawned upon the British and German governments that *Dreadnought* rendered all existing battleships obsolete, fit only for the scrapyard. The Royal Navy and Kaiser Wilhelm II's fleet embarked from scratch upon a contest to outbuild each other before they came to blows, as finally they

did in 1914. The Germans lost because their navy was granted only such resources as were left after funding a huge army. The British won, at the cost of lavishing a quarter of all state expenditure on warships, and woefully neglecting land forces which the Kaiser characterized as Britain's "contemptible little army."

Nobody knows what the outcome of the military AI contest will be, except that the losers will be sorry. It has been widely reported that some misplaced Israeli air strikes on Gaza, which killed many Palestinian civilians, were directed by AI targeting. Though this has never been officially confirmed, the episode illustrates the potential malignity of AI, if licensed to kill.

America, China and Russia are today the only nations which can afford to deploy large forces across the complete military spectrum. Every other country is obliged to make hard choices about where to invest finite resources. Britain has just published a pitiful "Defence Investment Plan," which promises a big drone commitment at the cost of scrapping more warships. The Labour government fantasizes about future maritime forces based on seagoing drones. This might indeed be the future, but the technology remains almost untried, undeveloped and unfunded.

Meanwhile, the Royal Navy continues to sail two giant aircraft-carriers, of which I have been a critic since the turn of the millennium. We cannot afford a credible force of aircraft to fly off them, and they break down with humiliating frequency. Such is their totemic status, however, that no British government can bring itself to act rationally and sell or scrap them. Other medium-sized nations have comparable problems about making brutal defense choices at a time of revolutionary geopolitical change.

If I was making procurement decisions for any European government, I would emphasize technology for detecting and countering undersea threats to our pipelines and communications links. Russian submarines are already probing constantly. In 2022, the destruction of the \$20 billion Nord Stream pipeline carrying Russian gas across the Baltic, almost certainly by Ukrainians using bargain-basement technology, provided a glimpse of infrastructure's inherent vulnerability. When we already face cyberattacks from Russia and China, together with terrorism directed by the former, we should anticipate low-intensity hostilities which persist indefinitely.

The only certainty, as always in human experience, is that we shall meet entirely unexpected threats, from ever-evolving technology. Our consolation should be that, against widespread predictions, we have survived 81 years of the nuclear age. If we can prevent nuclear weapons from becoming linked to AI, humankind has a fair chance of getting through the next eight decades, likewise. But should we fail to do this, the odds against Western civilization become a lot shorter.

By Max Hastings, Bloomberg

Vladimir Putin Hasn't Looked This Desperate In Over 25 Years

As the Russian position weakens, there is possibility of a coup against Putin, for whom just too many things have gone wrong in the last four years.

By Naresh Kaushik

As NATO leaders meet in Turkey for their annual summit, the Russia-Ukraine war is a top issue on the agenda. On the eve of the summit, Moscow bombed Kyiv, killing at least 24 people and causing heavy damage to the city's infrastructure. Monday's bombardment was the second deadly attack on the Ukrainian capital in four days, exposing the country's helplessness against powerful Russian ballistic missiles. Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, is expected to plead at the summit for more air-defence batteries from the US and other NATO members.

Ukraine, however, is not doing too badly at the moment in the war. In fact, it has managed to push the war deep into Russia, with escalating attacks on energy infrastructure that have created nationwide fuel shortages and miles-long queues at petrol stations. Only two of Russia's 83 regions have avoided such shortages. Last week, Russia began importing petrol from India to try to mitigate the deepening crisis. Although the Kremlin didn't comment on imports from India, it did confirm that Moscow was in talks with other countries to purchase petrol. The fact that Russia, the world's second-largest exporter of crude oil and third-largest exporter of refined petroleum products, has been forced to import petrol suggests the tide may be turning in favour of Ukraine in the conflict, now in its fifth year.

The Russian leader, Vladimir Putin, has not looked so vulnerable since he came to power more than 25 years ago. The Ukraine war has shattered the myth of Russia's strength and invincibility as well as Putin's image as a strong leader. The conflict he called a "special operation" in the hope of quickly occupying Ukraine has already lasted longer than the First World War and the Soviet Union's fight against Nazi Germany in the Second World War. In WW2, Russia pushed back Hitler's forces by up to 1,800 kilometres west, from the outskirts of Moscow to Berlin, but in Ukraine its gains are limited to tens of kilometres from the Russian border in the east and south. Russia has been unable to capture the Donbas region, which it has claimed since 2014.

How Ukraine Has Hit Where It Hurts Most Ukraine's attacks on Russia's oil refineries and other energy infrastructure are just one part of its strategy to bring the war to Russia and force its closure. Following its audacious June 2025 drone attack on air bases deep inside Russia, which destroyed dozens of strategic bombers, Kyiv has not looked back. Developed by its own engineers, its long-range drones have been highly effective at penetrating Russian air defences, hurting Moscow

economically and psychologically, particularly in recent weeks.

Last month, Kyiv launched two major attacks in Putin's hometown, St. Petersburg, and the capital, Moscow, both of which have huge symbolic and strategic significance. St. Petersburg was attacked as Putin was about to start an important international economic conference. Guests saw large plumes of smoke rising from a nearby burning oil terminal. Two weeks later, a massive attack on Moscow targeted the capital's largest oil refinery, reportedly disabling it for at least six months.

On Saturday, Ukraine's drones struck a prominent oil depot and a military base in St Petersburg, undeterred by Moscow's major attack on Kyiv two days earlier. Kyiv has even attacked oil refineries in Siberia, nearly 2,000 kilometres from its borders. Several refineries across multiple Russian regions have been repeatedly hit. In the Black Sea city of Novorossiysk, home to Russia's largest oil export terminal, authorities have suspended petrol sales to individuals. Petrol shortages have affected businesses as well as individual households. According to the Russian newspaper Kommersant, up to a fifth of the nation's taxi drivers are staying home because of long queues at petrol stations. Russia's older population may remember food rationing during Soviet rule, but younger people have never experienced anything like it.

Crimea, The Russian Jewel

In an attempt to persuade Putin to resolve the conflict, President Trump last year agreed to recognise Russia's claim to Crimea, which it annexed from Ukraine in 2014, along with other major concessions. Putin and Zelensky didn't agree for different reasons. The annexation of Crimea has been a major success for Putin, boosting his popularity in the country. Since the days of Catherine the Great, Crimea has served as a Russian military stronghold. It has also been the main supply route to Russia's military in occupied southern Ukraine. Thus, Ukraine's targeting of Crimea has hit Russia's nerve.

Attacks on the peninsula have risen sharply in recent weeks, prompting questions about whether Russia can retain what it considers its crown jewel. Crimea's biggest city, Sevastopol, once the proud home of Russia's Black Sea Fleet, has seen the fleet withdraw after repeated Ukrainian strikes. Ukraine has frequently attacked the isthmus linking Crimea to the Russian-occupied part of the Kherson region on the mainland. So the only route - the Kerch Strait Bridge - could be catastrophic for Moscow if destroyed.

Long queues on routes out of Crimea suggest that many residents no longer

consider the peninsula safe to live in. On Sunday, Ukraine's attacks on power stations there plunged much of the peninsula into darkness again. Two weeks ago, Russia had to declare a state of emergency in the Russian-occupied region after Ukraine's strikes shut down petrol stations, power supplies and logistics chains.

Human Cost

Ukraine's drones are also killing machines, used to target Russian soldiers, the main reason for the growing number of their deaths. The war has cost Russia at least 230,407 soldiers, according to a new BBC report based on analysis of cemeteries, war memorials, government registers and obituaries. Western intelligence agencies estimate the figure at more than twice that. Ukraine's losses are also very high. A Ukrainian website reports 213,000 military deaths, while Dutch military intelligence puts the number of dead, wounded and missing at about 500,000.

The Putin administration is finding it increasingly difficult to recruit new soldiers. Now, students have been offered a special one-year contract to serve in a new branch of the military known as "unmanned systems troops" or drone operators. The military has been seeking recruits under 35, who are considered more receptive to "new technologies and speeds", said Russia's defence minister Andrei Belousov in November 2025. In April, the student publication Groza reported that almost 270 universities and colleges had promoted contracts for the drone forces. But many of these young recruits are killed within days of joining the military. Receiving the body bags of their loved ones is a major reason Russians are turning against the war.

What Can Putin Do?

From Ukraine's perspective, it's clear that President Zelensky wants to end the war quickly. His pressure is intended to force Putin to agree to a ceasefire deal. But none of Russia's war aims have been achieved. Trump spoke to both leaders on Saturday night and offered to mediate again. Putin must be regretting that he didn't accept the 26-point solution the US offered to both sides, which was more favourable to Russia. As events since then have shown, Kyiv has gained an advantage over Russia through its continued drone attacks. Zelensky and his European partners are unlikely to allow Putin to get the original deal, which they opposed even at that time. Trump's position also appears to have changed as he has praised Ukraine's recent attacks in Russia.

Putin doesn't have any good options left. Although political opposition in Russia is limited, he can't afford to let Ukraine's

drone attacks on Russian infrastructure continue. Russia's economy is in considerable pain because of the West's sanctions and the cost of the war. GDP growth has slumped to 0.4 per cent, and prices continue to rise. In September, elections will be held for the Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament. Putin has been hoping that Ukraine will eventually grow exhausted by the war and give up. But that doesn't appear to be happening any time soon.

Putin is unlikely to follow Trump's example in Iran by cutting his losses and pulling out of Ukraine. He is more likely to continue the war until he can claim victory. That would mean more deaths among his soldiers, worsening military morale, and further devastation of the economy. As the Russian position weakens, there is also the possibility of a coup against Putin. Some Russians are warning of unrest similar to that of 1917, which led to the Bolshevik Revolution.

The Nuclear Option

Putin's allies and hawks may want him to escalate and even consider the nuclear option. In 2024, he revised his country's nuclear doctrine, which stated that an attack by a non-nuclear state, if backed by a nuclear power, would be treated as a joint assault on Russia. However, the use of a nuclear weapon would be a terrible option, and there is no guarantee of its success. A nuclear attack on Ukraine could risk NATO retaliation. That option will also not be approved by India and China, Russia's friends. So, the chances of Putin using the nuclear option are pretty dim. He is more likely to continue with the war. Russian military is still far superior and more powerful than Ukraine's, despite Kyiv getting all the support from Western countries. In fact, Russia's European neighbours still see Moscow as their main threat. Russia's plight in Ukraine is not good news for India. Despite diversification in recent years, India still depends on Russian military hardware and spare parts. Growing pressure on the Russian military will affect the availability of that equipment. Putin's deepening troubles will make him even more reliant on China, which is again not in India's interest. The Modi government has walked a tightrope during the conflict, resisting Western pressure to take Ukraine's side while also disapproving of Putin's invasion. The ongoing war is also adversely affecting India's relations with Europe. India's help in supplying petrol will be welcomed by Russians. Perhaps India can play a bigger role in finding a just settlement of the conflict acceptable to both sides. **By TSAI Editorial Board**

Pak Has A Kashmir Crisis - And It May Already Be Planning To Export It To India

The lie of 'Azad Kashmir' is fast catching up with Pakistan. But it might just use it to push India into a tough spot.

By Tara Kartha

The level of anger in what Pakistan chooses to call "Azad Kashmir" is unprecedented. Unlike other regions of unrest, such as Balochistan and the tribal areas, this is truly a people's movement, apparent from the thousands who have thronged the streets demanding justice. The rage is palpable. Clearly, after years of protests and piecemeal concessions, matters have come to a head. Islamabad has, as always, resorted to the usual repressive measures, arresting leaders and starving the landlocked region of basics like food and medicine, leading to open demands from the movement's leaders that India intervene. That's dangerous talk on both sides.

Meanwhile, resistance fronts in other parts of Pakistan, including the Pashtuns and Baloch, are declaring support. In the latter case, that took the form of an unusually heavy strike against the Coast Guard post in Jiwani. **It is all at a boiling point.**

Pakistan Has Misunderstood The JAAC First, the protests themselves. It is now common knowledge that 'Azad Kashmir' is anything but free. The whole place is run by a Joint Secretary-level office from Islamabad, and the 'King' of the region is the Prime Minister of Pakistan. True, there is a 'President' and a 'Prime Minister' of sorts, with limited powers. From time to time, constitutional amendments have been made to the 'Interim Constitution' - since it is supposed to be 'reunited' with Kashmir - but in the final analysis, the local administration has little say in anything. This is clear through a list of 38 demands that lie at the core of the protests. None of these are new and have been in place for years, but they were codified after the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) was formed in 2023.

This is no political party, and its members are people who suffer daily problems - transporters, shopkeepers, and the like. Proof enough is the list of people who have been punished for supporting them, which includes low-level government employees, including 42 from the education department - among them one lecturer and 32 teachers - 12 from the health department, five each from the electricity and public works departments, three from the local government and rural development department, and two each from the



agriculture and forests departments. Retired teachers have had their pensions revoked. The leadership is also from middle-class families, like Sardar Aman Khan, who has a bounty of some PKR 10 million on his head after he called for Indian intervention; Khwaja Mehran, an advocate from Punjab University who is unlikely to get off lightly since he accused the Pakistan army of providing guns to Kashmiris; and the now-arrested Shaukat Nawaz Mir, a former trade union leader.

Do The Math

Now consider the demands themselves. One is compensation for those killed in protests in the last two years. That includes those who were fired upon by the police for opposing the rising cost of flour and electricity. Things turned ugly by 2025, with security vehicles torched, and some police personnel briefly held hostage. The demands eventually broadened to include putting an end to the privileges given to the elite - that is, all Pakistanis who have been injected into top government positions, not to mention a horde of Punjabis who have settled here, bringing with them the 'Pajero culture'.

Another demand was politically sensitive - an end to the system of 12 reserved seats for refugees in the autonomous region's legislative assembly. These are people who migrated from India and settled elsewhere in Pakistan, mostly in Punjab. Most have never even been to PoK. This suits Islamabad and mainstream political parties, who look at that slice as theirs to use however they see fit. Constituencies are also deeply imbalanced, with roughly 4.3 lakh voters for the six Jammu refugee seats against only about 30,000 voters for the six refugee seats in the Kashmir Valley.

Now look at the math. A total of 53 seats in the house, with 45 elected seats, including these 12 outside of PoK entirely, while the eight 'nominated' seats are open to 'direction' and include an overseas Kashmiri. So, roughly 20 seats of a total of 53 are used to influence the outcome in the house. An interesting conclusion was reached by the AJK Supreme Court Chief Justice Raja Saeed Akram Khan and Justice Khalid Yousaf Chaudhary in an "advisory opinion", which noted that "the 12 refugee seats ... can be altered, reduced, or abolished only through a constitutional amendment enacted strictly in accordance with Article 33". That article states that no amendment can be made without the assent of the Government of Pakistan. So, it could be done. Islamabad just has to see the light and give that concession.

This Is Pakistan's Lifeline

Then there are other demands that simply require Islamabad to prod the bureaucracy in the state, which, unsurprisingly, is almost wholly Pakistani. This includes the entirely justified demand for land, affected by the Mangla dam raising project that was finished in 2009 and which displaced 40,000 people from their ancestral lands. Other demands include an international airport at Mirpur, better hospital facilities, lower taxes on property transfer (which, currently, are almost double what Punjab pays), and an allocation of Rs 10 billion for upgrading a decrepit electricity network. Remember that even when PoK quite literally holds the key to Pakistan's power, providing the mainland with abundant hydropower potential, it suffers from almost continuous blackouts. If PoK goes 'independent', that quite literally may be the end of Pakistan.

As major JACC leaders now ask openly for Indian help, the security scare is only going to grow. Few people realise, or openly acknowledge, that Kashmir is, in fact, Pakistan's 'jugular vein'. That is also why Pakistan's terrorism sponsorship policy in the region has been going on for decades now. Apparently, for Pakistan, India's over-generous allocation of 80% of the water through the Indus Water Treaty is simply not enough. It wants it all.

India Is In A Very Tough Spot

As the protests continue, so does the repression. All this has raised some interesting and uncomfortable points for India.

First, since Delhi sees PoK as its own territory, it has a right to intervene in at least a humanitarian context. Remember, that means a convoy carrying aid, facing up to the inevitable armed opposition at the border. The United Nations has made 'parties to the conflict' legally bound to deliver aid. The question is whether India is a 'party' here. If it is, then international humanitarian law obliges it to provide aid.

The trouble, however, is that none of these laws holds water in actual conflict hotspots. The UN itself has a poor record of enforcing these.

Second, there's the option of pressing other countries to weigh in. Protests in support of PoK have erupted across the UK and also in New Zealand. That could provide space for pressing Islamabad to at least talk to JACC leaders rather than imprison them.

But the final issue is this: If India does nothing at all, then it loses ground on its territorial claims and the moral authority of being the guardian for the people of the area. However, given that people in Kashmir on this side don't seem to be interested in the whole mess, Delhi has little incentive to act. This studied non-interference could also be seen as a signal by Pakistan that Delhi only desires peace and stability, and that adventurism is not on the cards. Let's see if a certain Field Marshal gets that message. Meanwhile, India ought to be cautious. Rawalpindi might likely try to push people towards the border in a bid to embarrass India and paint it as being uncaring towards Kashmiris on the other side. Pakistan has played this game before - years ago. Might be time for India to think about that, and rather quickly.

(Tara Kartha is a former Director, National Security Council Secretariat)

How Diljit Dosanjh's Satluj exposed Punjab's political fault lines

Diljit Dosanjh-starrer Satluj came and went. The competing political readings remain, revealing far more about Punjab's layered discourse than the movie itself.

Diljit Dosanjh's *Satluj*, centred on human rights violations during Punjab's years of unrest, appeared on Zee5 after months of anticipation and disappeared immediately. Its brief availability exposed something more telling than the arguments over its release and blackout.

It demonstrated how differently the same film can be read by different constituencies. It also laid bare a misconception that the loudest online voices somehow represent Punjab.

ONE FILM. SEVERAL SIKH AUDIENCES

The anti-Diljit separatist lobby, particularly in North America, has broadly viewed the film as reducing Punjab's violent years to a Sikh police-versus-Sikh militant conflict, allowing the role of the state, or what it frequently calls the "deep state", to recede into the background.

A tiny but vocal circle of informal fellow travellers in Chandigarh, Jalandhar, Delhi and a few other cities faces a different predicament.

Its campaign centred on securing the film's release. Once *Satluj* became available, attention naturally moved to its portrayal of Punjab, its omissions and its political messaging. The film's withdrawal has restored the easier conversation on alleged censorship.

ANOTHER AUDIENCE. ANOTHER READING

During its streaming, there was never a single Sikh response to *Satluj*. There is rarely a single response by any community to any film that revisits a contentious chapter of its own history.

Many Sikhs supported *Satluj*'s release simply because they believed every film deserves a fair opportunity to reach its audience. Their position should never be confused with that of the ideological ecosystem which invested the movie with far greater political significance.

The episode also exposed an inconsistency. The generosity extended to *Satluj* was not equally available to Kangana Ranaut's *Emergency*. Freedom of expression commands its greatest respect when it survives disagreement with the work itself.

That said, the Sikh audience is only one part of the story.

Many viewers outside the community, particularly among Hindus and those who supported the police's and the government's iron-fisted methods, were equally capable of reaching a different conclusion. Some regarded *Satluj* as a one-sided account that edges towards romanticising militant violence.

Human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra documented illegal cremations and enforced disappearances during those years. He was abducted outside his Amritsar residence in 1995 and later

murdered. Several Punjab Police personnel were subsequently convicted in connection with his abduction and killing. The film's brief appearance also opened another line of discussion.

In today's deeply polarised social media environment, some commentators question the methodology behind Khalra's estimates of those killed in staged police encounters. The film's removal may have interrupted that conversation almost as soon as it began.

THREE DECADES EARLIER

Although *Satluj* centred on Jaswant Singh Khalra, the broader cinematic examination of Punjab's years of militancy is hardly new. Released in 1996, in a far more combustible political climate, Gulzar's *Maachis* questioned the official police narrative on a much larger canvas. *The Loudest Voices Are Still a Poor Barometer of Punjab Since the 2020-21 farm agitation*, a heady mix of comrades and neo-Panthak campaigners, supported by a small circle of dedicated reporters and digital amplifiers, has sought to frame Punjab's political conversation through its own vocabulary and ideology.

Their visibility often creates the impression that they speak for Punjab. They do not. Their online footprint may be substantial. But their electoral influence remains difficult to establish. Long before this coalition acquired its present prominence, Paramjit Kaur Khalra, widow of Jaswant Singh Khalra, unsuccessfully contested the 1999 election. In 2019, she lost the 2019 parliamentary election from none other than Khadoor Sahib, a constituency widely regarded as a Panthak stronghold.

Those electoral outcomes diminish neither Jaswant Singh Khalra's stature nor Paramjit Kaur Khalra's public life. They simply illustrate that admiration, ideological affinity and voting behaviour have never been the same thing in Punjab. State politics springs from a remarkably diverse society. The Punjabi electorate includes Sikh or Hindu Scheduled Castes, OBCs; village and city dwellers; farmers, traders, industrial workers, professionals, government employees and countless others whose concerns seldom fit into a single framework. It's too layered to be spoken for by any digital alliance of Left activists and neo-Panthak campaigners, or by any constituency in the Sikh diaspora, whether pro-India moderates or separatists. Online influence and political influence aren't identical twins. Punjab has repeatedly shown that the two are related far less often than social media would have us believe. Fine words butter no parsnips.

By TSAI Editorial Board

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How Texas Became Hub Of A Terror-Link Kashmiri Outfit's Activities

Across the state, a collection of terror networks and their Islamist partners are using US politicians, institutions and nonprofit infrastructure to advance violent, radical ambitions.

By Sam Westrop

In 2022, Yasin Malik, the leader of a Kashmiri group declared by a US federal appeals court as a terrorist organisation involved in killings, bombings and kidnappings, was sentenced by an Indian court to life in prison. While Malik continues in principle to be re-elected as chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) while incarcerated, JKLF's actual operations have since been managed and supported by a network of radical Kashmiri and Pakistani activists thousands of miles away - in Texas. For many years, until May 2026, Dallas-based Raja Muzaffar served as JKLF's "acting chairman". Through his organisations, the Kashmir Global Council and the South Asia Democracy Watch, Muzaffar partnered with Texas institutions, policymakers, Islamist groups and radical activists across the state.

At a JKLF conference in Dallas in 2024, organised by the group to "highlight the struggle" of its terror leader Yasin Malik, guests included city councilors, along with state representatives and a federal lawmaker.

Following a partnership with Dallas-based Southern Methodist University, in 2025, the Dallas leader of the JKLF terror movement appointed "Dr. Rick Halperin, a renowned Human Rights Advocate and Director of the Human Rights Program at Southern Methodist University" as "Head of the 'Justice for Yasin Malik Campaign'."

Most commonly, however, Muzaffar and other JKLF leaders partner with Islamist operatives. In 2025, Muzaffar and other JKLF leaders organised a joint event from Dallas with Ghulam Nabi Fai of the World Kashmir Awareness Forum to honour the late terrorist leader and JKLF founder Amanullah Khan. Decades ago, Amanullah Khan oversaw a terror campaign against Indian targets, carried out, as admitted by Khan himself, by "militants" trained at terror camps in Pakistan in collaboration with the Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's terror-tied intelligence agency. Later, in 1984, Khan reportedly kidnapped and murdered an Indian diplomat in the British city of Birmingham. In the 1990s, Khan explicitly refused to renounce violence against Indian targets and moved his JKLF operations to Pakistan.

Participants in the Dallas event praised the JKLF terror leader's "legacy of resistance and unity". Alongside senior JKLF officials, leading American-Kashmiri Islamist activist Ghulam Nabi Fai spoke at the Dallas webinar. Fai has long been involved with the violent Jamaat-e-Islami movement and its American proxies. In 2011, federal prosecutors charged Fai with serving as an agent of the Pakistani government. Fai, prosecutors proved, accepted \$3.5 million from Pakistani intelligence to influence American policy on Kashmir. Dallas JKLF leader Raja Muzaffar seemingly continues to consort with Pakistani intelligence operatives today, such as former ISI director Asad Durrani. The Dallas-based leadership of the JKLF also relies on support from an Islamist-controlled Kashmiri and Pakistani diaspora in Texas. One participant at the 2025 event and a longstanding supporter of the JKLF is Mujeeb Kazi, a Kashmiri businessman and head of the North Texas Islamic Council, "an umbrella group for mosques in the Dallas-Fort Worth area." Kazi runs several nonprofit organisations in the area, including

Voice of Kashmir TV. Kazi's broadcasts on "Voice of Kashmir" frequently provide a platform for JKLF leaders, including Toqeer Gilani, who succeeded Raja Muzaffar as JKLF's acting head in May 2026. On Kazi's North



Texas television station, the JKLF is promoted as the solution to Kashmir's struggles, and terror leaders such as Yasin Malik are openly praised.

What Is The JKLF?

The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) was established in the United Kingdom in 1977 to secure Kashmiri independence. Initially supported by Pakistan's ISI, the JKLF and its members have carried out multiple terrorist attacks, mass-murder, and kidnappings. In 2019, India's Ministry of Home Affairs declared, "[JKLF] led by Md. Yasin Malik has spearheaded the separatist ideology in the valley and has been at the forefront of separatist activities and violence since 1988. Murders of Kashmiri Pandits [Hindus] by JKLF in 1989 triggered their exodus from the valley. Md. Yasin Malik was the mastermind behind the purging of Kashmiri Pandits from the Kashmir valley and is responsible for their genocide." Commentators and academic papers frequently describe the JKLF as "secular". However, JKLF has long pursued partnerships with Islamists, and held events that featured Islamist language and rhetoric, including calls for jihad. Although the JKLF is not a designated terrorist organisation under US law, in 2009, a US court of appeals upheld a decision by the federal government to refuse an asylum request by a JKLF member, stating that "[t]he JKLF ... qualifies as a Tier III [undesignated] terrorist organization". The court found "substantial evidence" to "[support] the conclusion that the JKLF has ... killed moderate politicians, detonated bombs in public places, and claimed responsibility for high profile kidnappings".

Following a split in the 1990s within the JKLF, Yasin Malik led a faction, based in the US, the UK, and Kashmir, which in 1994 ostensibly renounced violence and sought a peaceful resolution to Kashmiri secession efforts.

However, Malik's JKLF continued to collaborate with violent Islamists, primarily through Islamist umbrella movements such as the All Parties Hurriyat Conference. In 2005 and 2012, the JKLF in Kashmir reportedly attempted to reunite with its violent rival faction, which had rejected Malik's putative rejection of violence.

Details on the success of this recombination are murky, but according to the India Policy Foundation, "on the instruction of [Pakistan's] ISI", Yasin Malik "has been accepted as chairman" of two leadership centers for

the JKLF: one in the Pakistani city of Rawalpindi, and the other in the United Kingdom and United States.

In 2019, India's Ministry of Home Affairs declared JKLF "an unlawful organisation" and accused Yasin Malik and the JKLF of participating in the "genocide" of Kashmiri Hindu Pandits in 1989, as well as "the murder of Air Force personnel, kidnappings, and funding terrorism".

India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) subsequently claimed that Malik visited the "camps in Muree in Pakistan occupied Kashmir" of the US-designated terrorist organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), "and addressed the LeT cadres there". Lashkar-e-Taiba carried out the 2008 Mumbai attacks, murdering 166 people.

In 2022, Malik pleaded guilty to terrorism charges before an Indian court. The Print reported that he was accused of involvement in

"raising, receiving and collecting funds through various illegal means, including hawala [informal financial exchange] transactions, for funding separatist and terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir".

The court found that Malik and the JKLF carried out these financial operations "in connivance" with members of three terrorist organisations: Hizbul Mujahideen, Dukhtaran-e-Millat and Lashkar-e-Taiba. Leaders of these terrorist partners also find support from the radical Kashmiri networks in Texas.

Expanding Designations

Voice of Kashmir, in Dallas, has disseminated calls for the Kashmiri diaspora to organise in support of Shabir Shah, whom Indian prosecutors have accused of contact with Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists and involvement in a terror finance operation. Hamid Fayaz, a senior leader of the terror-tied Islamist movement Jamaat-e-Islami in Kashmir; and Asiya Andrabi, head of the Islamist group Dukhtaran-e-Millat, which, The Economist notes, "supports terrorists" and advocates jihad. To represent her interests in the United States, the jihadist leader Andrabi appointed a Texas activist named Ghazala Habib. From Houston and Austin, Habib manages a global network of Islamist and Pakistani operatives in coordination with elements of the Pakistani regime and a particular Pakistani political party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf

The PTI openly operates a Texas office that is closely involved with Kashmiri terror supporters. Texas PTI members, through activists such as Ghazala Habib, collaborate with Texas JKLF leaders such as Raja Muzaffar.

Across the state, a collection of terror networks and their Islamist partners are using US politicians, institutions and nonprofit infrastructure to advance violent, radical ambitions. With political attention over-focused on Islamist movements from the Middle East, these South Asian Islamist networks have, until now, operated freely amid a dearth of scrutiny.

Texas policymakers can change this. Texas Governor Greg Abbott's designation of the Muslim Brotherhood marked an important step in the state's fight against Islamism.

Now, let's expand that approach, take fuller stock of Islamist threats across the state, and work to dismantle these Pakistani and Kashmiri networks organising on Texas soil.

By TSAI Editorial Board

“Going To Hit Them Hard Tonight”: Trump Warns Iran After Declaring Deal “Over”

“We hit them very hard last night. Very, very hard. We’ll probably hit them hard again tonight. I’ll give them a little warning. We’re going to hit them hard tonight,” US President Donald Trump said while speaking during a NATO Summit appearance in Ankara, Turkey.



country of launching drones and a missile at ships. On the sidelines of the NATO Summit, Trump claimed that the war happened for the denuclearisation of Iran, and even though the two parties would talk about it during meetings, the Islamic Republic would go into news conferences and announce that such talks never happened.

“I think we’ve made a lot of progress, and they’ll get out of the room; we’ll talk about it like we’re here, they’ll agree on everything, and then they’ll go have a news conference and say, ‘We never even talked about it,’” he said. “They’re cuckoo. There’s something wrong with these people, and for 47 years, they’ve been the

bully of the Middle East, and they’re not the bully anymore; they’re not the bully anymore, and all we want, it’s very simple, they can’t have a nuclear weapon. That’s what I’m there for,” he added.

“Knock Out More Boats Tonight”

Later on, he said that the US could “knock out more boats tonight” and take out electricity and water. However, he turned back on the claims and said he does not want to do that.

US Blockade Only For Iran

Trump warned that the attack tonight may be a big one and that the US could also “take over” Kharg Island. Regarding the US naval blockade, he clarified that it stands only for

Iran, and other countries “can have whatever they want”. Earlier in the day, Trump said that the interim memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Iran is “over”, but he will allow talks to continue. Trump’s remarks came hours after the United States launched massive strikes on Iranian assets in the port cities of Bandar Abbas and Sirik, as well as on Qeshm Island, in retaliation for what it said were Tehran’s attacks on ships in the Strait of Hormuz. Washington has also revoked a licence authorising the sale of Iranian oil. Tehran has hit back with strikes on Bahrain and Kuwait, risking the interim agreement to halt fighting in the war that could break down and drag the Middle East again into a wider conflict.

(By Our Staff Reporter) US President Donald Trump on Wednesday gave Iran a “warning” and said that the United States will strike the Islamic Republic “very hard” tonight. He also stated that he was unhappy with Iran, hours after declaring that the ceasefire was over following attacks on American

military sites in the Gulf. “We hit them very hard last night. Very, very hard. We’ll probably hit them hard again tonight. I’ll give them a little warning. We’re going to hit them hard tonight,” Trump said while speaking during a NATO Summit appearance in Ankara, Turkey. “They are behaving very badly,” he said, accusing the

15-Year-Old Arrested In Japan For Using ChatGPT To Delete 46,000 Anime Accounts

Investigators claim he used ChatGPT to assist in writing a program that automated unauthorised access to member accounts, resulting in the cancellation of 46,812 subscriptions.

(By Our Staff Reporter) A 15-year-old high school student in Japan has been arrested for allegedly using ChatGPT to help develop software that was used in a cyberattack on Bandai Namco Filmworks’ Bandai Channel streaming service. The attack disrupted operations and forced the cancellation of more than 46,000 user accounts.

According to reports citing the Tokyo Metropolitan Police, the teenager is suspected of fraudulent obstruction of business after allegedly exploiting a vulnerability in the anime streaming platform in November 2025. Investigators claim he used ChatGPT to assist in writing a program that automated unauthorised access to member accounts, resulting in the cancellation of 46,812 subscriptions, Straits Times reported.

“I created the source code for the withdrawal process myself. Since the processing was taking a long time, I asked ChatGPT and completed it in a different

programming language,” he said. Police allege that on November 4, 2025, the teen sent fraudulent commands to Bandai Channel’s servers, triggering the mass deregistration of thousands of accounts. The attack disrupted the company’s services beginning November 6, with full operations only resuming in December after repairs to its systems. Bandai Namco Filmworks later reported the incident to police.

Investigators believe the teenager identified a security flaw in the platform and exploited it to gain unauthorised access to account information. The attack also forced the company to temporarily suspend parts of its service. Authorities further allege that even after the company blocked his access, the teen changed his IP address about 30 times to continue sending malicious commands.

The suspect, who was a junior high school student at the time of the alleged attack, had already been arrested in June this year in connection with other

computer-related offences. He reportedly taught himself programming while in elementary school.

During questioning, the teenager allegedly admitted to the accusations and told investigators he had “no grudge” against Bandai Namco Filmworks. Instead, he said he targeted the platform simply because “there were many accounts I could log into”.

“I started using computers when I was in the fourth grade and taught myself everything I know. I happened to be able to access the information and had nothing against the company,” he said. After the breach, Bandai Namco Filmworks notified affected customers individually and urged them to be cautious of phishing and impersonation emails. Users whose memberships had been cancelled were asked to re-register, while the company also announced refunds for subscription fees charged during the service disruption.

Pakistan Cargo Plane Crash: Wreckage Found In Arabian Sea, Search On For 5 Crew

(By Our Staff Reporter) More than 12 hours after a cargo plane disappeared from radar over the Arabian Sea, Pakistani authorities on Wednesday located its wreckage off the country’s southern coast, even as rescue teams continued searching for the five crew members on board.

The Boeing 737 cargo aircraft, operated by private carrier K2 Airways, was flying from Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates to Karachi when it reported a navigational system issue before vanishing from radar on Tuesday evening.

The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) said the wreckage was found in the Arabian Sea near Ormara town after an overnight search involving the Pakistan Navy, the Maritime Security Agency, merchant vessels and military aircraft.

“Efforts are underway to find the missing crew members,” the authority said in a statement, adding that search and rescue operations remain underway.

The PAA also released images showing rescue personnel recovering pieces of

the aircraft’s fuselage from the sea and loading the debris onto a larger vessel. Other photographs showed sections of the red-and-white fuselage bearing the words “K2 Air” laid out on the ship’s deck.

How Did The Plane Disappear?

According to the PAA, the aircraft was approaching Karachi when it reported a navigational system issue. Radar data later showed the plane rapidly descending before contact was lost about 155 nautical miles west of Karachi at around 9:21 pm local time on Tuesday.

Preliminary flight data cited by Flightradar24 indicated that the aircraft first lost altitude, briefly climbed again and then suffered a second, sharp loss of altitude before disappearing from radar.

Before the wreckage was located, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed “deep sorrow, grief and regret” over what he described as the tragic incident involving the privately operated cargo aircraft.

Trump's Board Of Peace Eyes Pilot Humanitarian Zone In South Gaza

(By Our Staff Reporter) The US Board of Peace is planning to establish a pilot humanitarian zone in Rafah, located in southern Gaza, capable of accommodating tens of thousands of vetted Palestinian civilians. The initiative is being designed as a foundational starting point for the territory's post-war civilian governance plan.

The zone is intended to serve as the initial operational base for the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG)—a Palestinian technocratic body slated to oversee day-to-day civilian administration during Gaza's post-war transitional phase.

Security Architecture & Screening Protocols

Under the framework, multinational troops from the International Stabilisation Force (ISF) will secure the designated perimeter. The ISF is intended to act as a physical buffer between Palestinian civilians and Israeli forces.

Key operational details of the

proposed zone include:

Access Control: The NCAG will be responsible for managing access control and overseeing screening mechanisms.

Freedom of Movement: Movement in and out of the zone will remain open to all unarmed civilians.

Militant Screening: A specialized screening mechanism will be deployed to actively prevent armed individuals and militants from entering the perimeter.

Israeli Role: Board officials confirmed that the Israeli military will not be responsible for managing the humanitarian zone or screening civilians. The Israeli military has stated that the proposal is currently under review.

Current Status On The Ground

No construction has begun on the project, and officials stated that the exact location within Rafah has not yet been finalised. Rafah was largely destroyed during the war and remains under Israeli military control following months of intense fighting and airstrikes.

The proposal comes amid prolonged stagnation in implementing the broader U.S.-backed ceasefire plan. Although a ceasefire took effect last October, Israeli forces still control more than 60% of the Gaza Strip. Consequently, the NCAG remains based in Cairo and has yet to enter the territory.

Despite the delays, officials noted that four nations—Morocco, Kosovo, Albania, and Kazakhstan—are actively engaged with the International Stabilisation Force. Additionally, a support site located near the Kerem Shalom crossing on the Israeli side of the Gaza border is nearing completion.

Post-War Transition

The Board of Peace was established earlier this year under a US-backed Gaza ceasefire framework endorsed by the UN Security Council. Its mandate is to facilitate the transition away from Hamas rule while systematically restoring civilian administration and essential public

services.

Earlier this week, Hamas announced the official dissolution of the body that had governed Gaza for nearly two decades, clearing a legal and administrative pathway for the technocratic committee to assume control.

The proposal has drawn sharp criticism from diplomats, international aid organizations, and policy experts. According to a report by AFP, critics argue that restricting civilians to designated humanitarian zones could potentially violate international humanitarian law.

Opponents warn that the framework could amount to forced displacement and severely restrict freedom of movement. Furthermore, critics express concern that the pilot zone might only create a symbolic appearance of political progress while leaving the vast majority of Gaza subject to ongoing military operations.

I've left instructions: Trump says Iran will be bombed if he's assassinated

(By Our Staff Reporter) US President Donald Trump has claimed he has left instructions to launch an unprecedented military response against Iran if Tehran succeeds in assassinating him, saying the country would be bombed at levels that they've never seen before.

Speaking to the New York Post, Trump said Iran had wanted him dead for years but insisted there was no fresh intelligence suggesting an imminent assassination plot.

"I've been on their list for a long time. That's what we're dealing with," Trump told the New York Post.

He added: "The only thing is, I've left instructions, if anything happens, to just literally

bomb them at levels that they've never seen before." The remarks came after reports suggested Israel had flagged intelligence about an alleged Iranian plot targeting the US president. Trump, however, dismissed suggestions that any new threat had emerged.

"No, no. Israel came up with nothing. No, no," he said. "I've been No 1 (on Iran's kill list) for a long time, and it's the way life is."

In a characteristically light-hearted remark, Trump added: "I hope you'll miss me."

Trump's latest remarks are consistent with

comments he made earlier this week, when he claimed he was Iran's "number one target" and defended his administration's military action

insisting that any future flare-up would be brief.

According to the New York Post, Iran has openly sought revenge against Trump since 2020, when he authorised the US drone strike that killed top Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani near Baghdad.

US authorities have also disclosed multiple alleged Iranian-linked assassination plots targeting Trump in recent years, while the President survived an assassination attempt during a campaign rally in Butler in July 2024, when a bullet grazed his ear.

TRUMP SAYS IRAN SOUGHT TALKS, US AGREED

US President Donald Trump said Iran had asked

to continue talks with the United States but asserted that any ceasefire between the two countries had ended.

In a Truth Social post, Trump wrote that Iran had sought further negotiations, but said Washington had made its position clear.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has asked us to continue 'talks.' We have agreed to do so, but the United States has stated to them, in no uncertain terms, that the Cease Fire is OVER! Thank you for your attention to this matter."



Punjab Cop Transferred After US Charges Him In Case Linked To Indian Gangs

The cop is accused of helping gangsters extort \$400,000 from a family in Los Angeles by threatening to file false murder charges against their relatives in India.



(By Our Staff Reporter) Washington: Gurinderjit Singh Nagra -- the Punjab police officer under the United States' scanner for allegedly assisting gangster Jaggu Bhagwanpuria's organised crime group -- has been sent on a punishment posting to police

case and extort money by threatening criminal prosecution.

The allegations are part of one of three indictments unsealed this week as part of 'Operation Hard Ball' -- a multinational probe targeting organised crime groups accused of murder, extortion, drug trafficking, and other crimes across the United States, Canada, and Europe.

The Viral Video

The action against Nagra -- who was the station house officer (SHO) at the Tanda police station -- came after a video of a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) media briefing went viral, where officials accused him of helping gangsters extort \$400,000 from a family in Los Angeles by threatening to file false murder charges against their relatives in India.

The authenticity of the claims made by US prosecutors has not been independently verified.

However, after the video went viral, Hoshiarpur Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Sandeep Kumar Malik ordered that SHO Nagra be moved to the police lines as a precautionary measure.

The SSP specified that so far, Punjab police have received no official confirmation or communication from New Delhi or the Punjab government regarding the alleged FBI claims.

However, the police have ordered an inquiry against the official under a Jalandhar superintendent of police. Officials said the facts will become clear only after the inquiry is completed, and any further action will be taken based on the

investigation report.

The US Claims

US prosecutors have alleged Gurlal Singh, an alleged member of the Bhagwanpuria gang, provided information about a victim in LA to Nagra "for purposes of falsely accusing" the individual of murder.

US media reported that Nagra then allegedly contacted the victim's father and informed him that criminal charges would be filed against him unless the money was paid. He also threatened to name the victim in the murder investigation.

The US charges against the police official are part of a broader case involving 37 defendants accused of participating in three transnational organised crime groups operating across several countries.

Pakistan Willing To Take Back Child Rapist 'Daddy' From UK, But Also Wants Munir Critics Deported

Pakistan has sought the extradition of Akbar, a member of former prime minister Imran Khan's cabinet, and Raja, a Pakistani journalist and ex-military officer, last December over allegations of spreading "fake news" and anti-state propaganda.

(By Our Staff Reporter) Islamabad: Islamabad has demanded the extradition of political dissidents and critics of Pakistan's defence chief, Asim Munir, from the United Kingdom if London wants to secure the deportation of the ringleader of a Rochdale grooming gang -- a Pakistani national -- who targeted girls as young as 12.

The UK Telegraph and The Drop Site reported that the Pakistani government formally proposed a controversial exchange after London started looking into deportation options for Shabir Ahmed, 73, after he was released from prison recently after serving part of his sentence. Known as 'Daddy' by his victims, Ahmed had dual British and Pakistani citizenship before he was jailed for 22 years in August 2012 for 30 child sexual offences, including rape. But he lost his British citizenship after he was convicted.

Ahmed cannot be returned to Pakistan, despite being stripped of his UK citizenship, because Britain's Immigration Act 1971 exempts Commonwealth citizens who came to Britain before 1973 and have lived in the country for at least five years.

Pakistan's Controversial Proposal

The Telegraph reported a senior Pakistani government official saying that Britain needs to "respect the issues that matter" to Pakistan rather than resort to "arm-twisting" and threats to return the child rapist to Pakistan. Earlier, Islamabad has refused to take back Ahmed and two other ringleaders of the Rochdale grooming gang because they claim they were not Pakistani, having renounced their citizenship.

However, the Pakistani official told the UK newspaper Islamabad was prepared to think "out of the box" and "beyond normal procedures" on what it might agree to pave the way for a possible return of Ahmed to Pakistan.

Pakistan's Demand

Islamabad has, in exchange, reportedly raised concerns with Britain about several dissidents and political activists living in the UK. Among them are two critics of Pakistan's political and military dispensation -- Shahzad Akbar

and Adil Raja-- who are subject to formal extradition requests by Islamabad.

Pakistan has sought the extradition of Akbar, a member of former prime minister Imran Khan's cabinet, and Raja, a Pakistani journalist and ex-military officer, last December over allegations of spreading "fake news" and anti-state propaganda.

Islamabad has also repeatedly asked the UK to hand over Altaf Hussain, the London-based founder of the Muttahida Qaumi opposition movement, who has been living in exile in the UK for three decades.

"There are people using British soil to destabilise Pakistan, in violation of several British laws, but the UK has done absolutely nothing about them," the Pakistani official told The Telegraph.

"The UK tells us these miscreants are law-abiding and following UK law. They tell us they have to protect their human rights and free speech. We have shared evidence that they incite hatred, violence and social unrest, but the UK does not listen to us. Why double standards?"

Inside UK-Pak Negotiations

According to the reports, the British and Pakistani governments have been negotiating the deportation of the grooming gang leaders, including Ahmed, for nearly a year in anticipation of his release. "Our position is that they [the UK] must listen to us too. Both sides need to apply standards. Pakistan cannot be railroaded into agreeing to terms and conditions that are suitable only to the UK," the official said. "The UK knows what our demands are. We have made our demands and concerns categorically clear to the UK. Some people in the UK are only playing media games. They are not being honest," they added. The Pakistani official has alleged that the British government has issued threats in "private and in public" to impose visa restrictions on Pakistan and cut overseas aid for the South Asian nation if Islamabad resists the return of Ahmed. "These demands are being made about somebody who is now around 75 and who has spent more than 60 years in your country. How is he our national when he is actually not our national? This is arrogance and a colonial mindset. It is unacceptable to us," the official said.



What Is Trauma? The More People Talk About It, The More It Means



Trauma is everywhere today—but what does it really mean? This explainer traces its history, evolving definitions, and the risks of overusing the term.

By The South Asian Insider Weekly News Desk

It's the word of the decade. "A major signifier of our age." "The invisible force that shapes our lives." But what is "trauma"? Although it occupies the cultural spotlight, its meaning has never been hazier. Can we bring it into focus? "Trauma" derives from the ancient Greek for wound. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, this external bodily injury meaning dates back to 1684. Late in the 19th century, "trauma" acquired a second meaning as psychological injury. In 1894, for example, the US philosopher and psychologist William James wrote of "permanent 'psychic traumata'", likening them to "thorns in the spirit".

A third, figurative meaning emerged in the 1970s. "Trauma" now referred to suffering or adverse events in general. Just as "schizophrenia" and "hysteria" originated as clinical diagnoses and later picked up new, broader senses, trauma expanded and became a metaphor.

Trauma in psychology and psychiatry ----- In the mental health disciplines, the definition of trauma has followed a winding path. In 1952's first edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), it referred exclusively to physical injury.

No diagnosis corresponding to the psychological meaning of "trauma" appeared until 1980, when DSM-III introduced post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

DSM-III listed an array of PTSD symptoms and a definition of the kind of traumatic events responsible for them. For a diagnosis to be made, the event would have to evoke significant distress in almost everyone and be "outside the range of usual human experience".

Controversially, later editions of the DSM loosened this criterion. For example, events that were indirectly witnessed – rather than directly

experienced – came to be included. Emphasis shifted from an event's objective severity to the subjective distress it caused. Consequently, a wider range of experiences became traumatic.

These changing rules for diagnosing PTSD point to a fundamental ambiguity in the psychiatric meaning of "trauma".

It can refer to a harmful event, as when a catastrophe is described as a trauma. But it can also name the event's psychological impact, as when a person is said to suffer from trauma.

As a result, "trauma" awkwardly straddles the objective and the subjective, cause and effect.

Concept creep ----- The relaxation of the DSM's definition of a traumatic event is an example of "concept creep" – the gradual broadening of harm-related concepts. Studies have demonstrated this trend in large historical datasets.

For example, a study by my research group shows that "trauma" came to be used in a wider range of semantic contexts from 1970 to the late 2010s. That broadening is found in general text, such as news media and fiction, as well as academic articles.

"Trauma" is also increasingly used in less emotionally fraught contexts, implying that its connotations have become milder and normalised.

Interestingly, one driver of trauma's broadening appears to be the growing cultural prominence of the concept. Books now mention it six times more often than they did half a century ago, and in psychology articles the factor is 25. The more we talk about trauma, the more it means.

The everyday uses of 'trauma' ----- The public has embraced "trauma" and run with it. As a recent review observed, "the definition of trauma is more restricted in clinical psychology and psychiatry than in common parlance".

Studies find that people define a wider range of adversities as traumas

than the DSM, stretching the concept from so-called "big-T" traumas to relatively "small-t" traumas. For example, they extend it to experiencing poor housing conditions and street harassment.

Social media is implicated in these broadened definitions. TikTok videos commonly describe minor embarrassments as traumas (for example, "I sat in chocolate and didn't realise") and innocuous experiences, such as mind-wandering, as signs of it.

Some of these uses are tongue-in-cheek and knowing. They poke fun at broad definitions (for example, "trauma is when you open the cookie tin to find sewing materials"). In the same spirit, participants in a recent Irish study were ambivalent about such definitions, "welcoming trauma's de-stigmatisation but deploring its potential trivialisation".

Benefits and costs of broad definitions ----- This ambivalence points to a backlash against expansive definitions, but that backlash carries risks. Trivialising trauma may be wrong, but people can be harmed by events that are not "big-T" traumatic. Those who have experienced adversity deserve compassion whether or not their experiences meet diagnostic benchmarks.

People who question the concept creep of "trauma" are sometimes accused of lacking compassion, glossing over adversity and policing language. If someone wants to describe their experience as traumatic, who are you to invalidate them? However, some objections to the inflation of "trauma" are legitimate and grounded in compassionate concern. Holding a broad definition may harm people.

One study found that people induced to hold such a definition experienced more distress and intrusive thoughts after viewing a confronting video clip than those induced to hold a narrow one. Another showed that people who held broader trauma concepts were more

distressed by an upsetting clip.

Perceiving something to be traumatic may contribute to making it so. Attributing distress to trauma implies that the injury we have suffered is enduring, indelible, overwhelming and identity-defining.

For the writer Will Self, trauma has become: "the idea that certain species of experience have the ability to injure us in lasting ways, such that we carry the wound – and, indeed, the experience itself – forever with us, often without our even knowing." Understanding the cause of our suffering in this way – beyond our control, permanent and profoundly impactful – is the opposite of what is likely to promote recovery. It is a pattern associated with depression and hopelessness.

Another reason to resist the expansion of "trauma" is conceptual clarity. If all adversities become trauma, and all distress is ascribed to it, the concept becomes a blunt instrument.

"Big-T" trauma is already widespread – three quarters of Australian adults have experienced such an event, such as a life-threatening car crash or the unexpected death of a loved one – without diluting it with small-t troubles.

The expansive view of trauma promotes the increasingly popular view that distress can be explained by adverse life experiences alone. The idea we should move from asking what's wrong with people to what happened to them sounds humane, but it can lead to simplistic trauma determinism.

Life experiences matter, but they're not all that matters. Only 4 per cent of people who experience a DSM traumatic event develop PTSD, for example. Many biological, psychological and cultural factors play a role in mental ill health, not just traumatic experiences. Questioning the expansion of "trauma" is essential if we are to avoid diluting and misusing the concept. This expansion is driven by benevolent societal trends but it has a downside. At this cultural moment, when "trauma" is everywhere, we need to think clearly and critically about it.

In Panipat: How the world's textile trash gets a second life

Every day, tonnes of textile waste from India and around the world arrive in Panipat. We travelled there to see how the city weaves a new life from discarded textiles.

By The South Asian Insider Weekly News Desk

When you are in Panipat, giant trucks piled high with clothes are a common sight. Every few minutes, you see another one pass by. Some carry heaps of second-hand garments, others carry factory scraps. Different kinds of textile waste, but all in staggering quantities.

These trucks offer only a glimpse of Panipat's massive recycling industry. Every single day, nearly 3,000 tonnes of textile waste arrives in the city. Over a year, it processes around one million tonnes of discarded textiles from across the globe. The numbers are hard to grasp until you step inside one of the warehouses where these trucks unload. Under the dimly lit godowns stand mountains of clothing stretching as far as the eye can see. Surrounded by these towering piles, you suddenly feel like a speck of dust. And this is just one warehouse. There are hundreds more across Panipat, each packed with discarded garments waiting to be given a new life. This is also when the scale of the fast-fashion problem really hits you. You realise these aren't just heaps of fabric. They are a snapshot of how much clothing the world throws away. These heaps also remind you of what Panipat does every day. If this city wasn't recycling them, much of this waste would end up in landfills.

Maybe that pair of denim jeans you donated to an NGO months ago, or that distressed T-shirt you threw in the bin, could end up in Panipat too.

Every day, second-hand clothing, factory scraps and textile waste arrive here from across India and around the world. What happens next is what sets Panipat apart.

Through a vast network of warehouses, sorting units and recycling factories, discarded textiles are transformed into recycled fibres and yarn before finding their way back into international and domestic markets as blankets, carpets, clothing and home furnishings. Basically, it is circular fashion in action every single day. Some of the most known global fashion brands also rely on this



ecosystem to recycle textile waste and meet their sustainability goals.

To understand how this works, we travelled to Panipat and followed the journey of discarded textiles through the city's recycling ecosystem, from the moment they arrive to the point they are transformed into new products.

The process begins with the arrival of textile waste. It broadly falls into two categories. The first is pre-consumer waste, which includes factory offcuts, fabric scraps and rejected materials that never reached the market. The second is post-consumer waste, which includes clothing and other textiles that have been used and discarded by consumers.

Both kinds of waste come from India as well as abroad.

Imported consignments arrive through ports such as Kandla and Mundra in Gujarat before making their way to the city. The bales contain everything from woollen winterwear and cotton T-shirts to denims and innerwear.

As for domestic textile waste, it mostly comes from some of India's largest textile manufacturing clusters, such as Tiruppur, Ludhiana and Surat. Domestic post-consumer waste is sourced through NGOs and local collection networks. Then there is also a growing number of donate-to-recycle programmes that encourage people to divert unwanted clothes away from landfills. Respun, a textile recycling

company in Panipat, is one of them.

"People in India don't throw away their clothes easily. They wear them for years, then pass them on to someone else or use them as dusters. In richer countries, people may wear a garment just once or twice before donating it or throwing it away," said the caretaker of a sorting unit.

The massive sorting houses

Sorting houses are the first stop for clothes whose stories have ended but are about to begin a new life in Panipat.

The scale of these sorting warehouses is overwhelming. Many of them are tucked behind the famous Barsat Road - the market from where shopping hubs like Delhi's Sarojini Nagar buy second-hand clothing.

Inside these units, workers spend eight to nine hours a day sitting amid (and atop) the mountains of garments. Their job

is to sort every piece by hand - by colour, fibre, quality and end use. Garments that are still wearable are separated and sold in bulk to second-hand markets. The rest are packed onto trucks and sent to recycling mills.

This is what the clothes look like after sorting. This colour-based sorting serves a larger purpose. It helps eliminate the need for dyeing and bleaching - one of the most polluting stages of textile manufacturing - which requires large amounts of chemicals and water. Wastewater from dyeing units, left untreated, is often discharged directly into drains, contaminating nearby water bodies.

To curb this pollution, the Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) sealed 132 illegal bleach houses in Panipat over the last 10 years, according to a reply obtained under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. Despite this, many illegal bleaching units continue to

operate on agricultural land in villages around Panipat.

Ironically, the process that helps reduce the need for dyeing and bleaching also begins in a much less organised part of the industry. Industry professionals describe sorting as a "Tier 4" activity, carried out mostly by small, unorganised units that depend almost entirely on manual labour.

The work is painstaking. Every garment has to be checked by hand. Buttons, zips and tags are manually removed before the fabric can move to the next stage of recycling.

The pay is meagre, and the working conditions are often harsh. During summer, the tin-roofed sorting units become unbearably hot. With little ventilation and limited use of electrical appliances, workers rely on a handful of pedestal fans for relief as they spend long hours amid towering piles of discarded clothing.

AI, by the way, could soon transform Panipat's sorting scene.

"We are developing AI-based automated sorting systems. Over the next six to seven months, we plan to introduce conveyor belt systems equipped with AI to sort textiles on a much larger scale," said Harshit Kakkar of HSN ECOTEX spinning mill, adding that the technology is intended to assist workers rather than replace them. Unlike the largely informal sorting units across Panipat, HSN ECOTEX has an organised, in-house sorting process.

Inside a spinning mill





Once sorted, the piles are loaded onto trucks and sent to spinning mills across the city. On our way to the H.R, we passed truck after truck carrying neatly segregated loads. One was filled entirely with white garments. Another carried only black fabric scraps.

The mill we visited processes both pre-consumer factory scraps and post-consumer clothing. Spread across two acres, it employs around 150 people. It also runs on solar power, and almost every bit of textile that enters the facility finds a use, making the recycling process nearly zero waste.

"We have a specialised waste collection system that captures even the fine fibres and lint generated during the recycling process. Even this waste is collected and supplied to cardboard manufacturers," said Kakkar.

Once sorted, the fabric waste is fed into large shredding machines that cut it into small, rectangular pieces. The process is only partly mechanised. Workers manually feed the fabric into the machines and collect the shredded pieces at the other end. The workers then use their hawk eyes to check the shredded pieces for contamination. In this case, contamination refers to anything that doesn't belong, such as stray fibres of a different colour, leftover pieces of another fabric or any other material that could affect the quality of the recycled fibre. Even a small amount of contamination can alter the colour and consistency of the final product, so workers inspect every batch and remove it by hand. These fragments are then passed through

massive recycling machines that carefully open up the fabric, separating it back into loose fibres. Within minutes, what started as discarded T-shirts, jeans or sweaters is transformed into soft recycled fibre that closely resembles raw cotton.

A few minutes inside a textile recycling unit is enough to leave your clothes covered in fine fibres. Workers wear masks and head coverings, particularly in the shredding and processing sections, where fine fibres and textile dust are generated. The mill also uses a centralised fibre collection system that continuously sucks up airborne lint and textile dust. The recycled fibres are then compressed into bales before moving to the spinning section. Here, they pass through a series of cleaning and blending machines that remove impurities, align the fibres and convert them into long, continuous strands.

But not every recycling unit in Panipat looks like this. In many smaller, informal facilities, worker safety often takes a back seat. Employees spend long hours sorting and processing textile waste for low wages, without adequate protective gear. A CNN investigation brought these working conditions into the spotlight, showing workers exposed to dust, fibre and hazardous conditions.

The government, however, rebutted the report. It acknowledged that some issues do exist - especially in smaller informal units - including worker safety, environmental compliance, and handling mixed-fibre textiles. However, it said these should be seen as challenges in a sector that is still evolving

and improving, rather than as a reflection of the entire industry.

Industry leaders in Panipat agree with this argument. They insist that only a small fraction - around five to ten per cent - of recycling units operate without proper safety and environmental practices. Yet those few facilities, they say, have come to define the public perception of Panipat's recycling ecosystem.

"The concern relates to a very small, unorganised segment of the industry. More than 90 per cent of the organised recycling industry doesn't bleach fabrics at all. I would urge people to focus on what the organised recycling industry is actually achieving, rather than judging the entire sector by the actions of a small percentage of unorganised operators," said Pradeep Kakkar, Vice President of Northern India Rotor Spinners Association and owner of HSN ECOTEX. At his facility, health checkups of all employees are conducted.

"Even when we hire a new employee, if someone has a lower-than-average fitness level, we assign them to a role where they can work while seated instead of standing for long hours. We also conduct regular health checkups, provide insurance, and monitor whether the work is affecting employees' health," he said, while showing us records of workers' periodic health checkups and consultations with a pulmonologist.

Anyway, back to the recycling process.

In the final stage, we stepped into the spinning section, where the constant hum of hundreds of rotor spinning

machines filled the hall. The noise was so intense that workers wore earplugs as they moved between long rows of machines, each steadily twisting the cotton-like fibres into yarn.

Large white cans lined the floor, feeding soft slivers of recycled fibre into the machines, while overhead, freshly spun yarn wound itself onto bobbins in a continuous, almost hypnotic rhythm. Within minutes, the loose fibres had been transformed into neat cones of yarn, ready to be sent to weaving and knitting units, where they would eventually become everything from T-shirts and denim to blankets, rugs and bath mats.

From recycled yarn to Banjara Market and the USA

these yarn cones are then transported to clients ranging from manufacturing units in the vicinity to international fashion brands.

At Mohan International, the manufacturing unit we visited, recycled yarn is first woven into rolls of fabric on large looms. Karigars then cut the fabric into pieces based on the design and the buyer's requirements, stitch them together and finish the edges with piping.

The pieces then move to the tufting section, where more recycled yarn is used to create the soft texture of the bath mats. In the final packaging section, workers attach labels, brand tags and price tags before packing the products for dispatch.

Stacks of finished bath mats in different colours lined the warehouse, all made from recycled yarn that had once been discarded clothing or factory waste. These products don't just stay in India. They are exported to markets around the world, with the United States being the factory's biggest buyer.

The circular journey doesn't end there. Even the leftover pieces find a buyer. Excess production and rejected products are sold to scrape dealers, creating a market of their own.

"Even the carpets you get in Banjara Market go from here. They are all excess production," a factory representative told us. The textile waste generated during manufacturing is sent back for recycling and spun into yarn

again, ensuring that almost nothing goes to waste.

Bath mats are just one of the many products made from recycled yarn. In Panipat, the same yarn is also transformed into stylish clothing.

At Aadi Sustainability Solutions Pvt Ltd, Parvinder Kadyan blends 30 per cent recycled yarn with virgin cotton to manufacture denim jeans for several leading brands like Wrogn and Ed-a-mamma.

According to Kadyan, textile recycling is becoming increasingly important as the fashion industry grapples with two major challenges: declining availability of raw materials and the growing volume of textile waste.

Cotton production is declining globally, while polyester continues to depend on crude oil, a finite resource. At the same time, the world is generating enormous amounts of textile waste. Recycling is one solution that addresses both problems. If a garment contains 30 per cent recycled fibre, it replaces 30 per cent virgin material while also preventing that much textile waste from ending up in landfills or the environment," he explained.

The environmental benefits are significant. "When we compare a recycled denim garment with one made entirely from virgin materials, the environmental impact is around 40 to 45 per cent lower," he said. Every year, the facility diverts around 24,000 tonnes of textile waste from landfills, giving discarded fabric a second life. The next time you donate or throw away your clothes, there's a chance it could end up in Panipat. And if it does, its story may not be over after all. It may simply be waiting for a new beginning. Our driver, Laddee Mehra, who spent two days taking us across the city's sorting units, spinning mills and factories, perhaps summed up Panipat best. "Panipat ki ye khaas baat hai ki kisi bhi cheez ko sona banaa dete hai," he said.

The speciality of Panipat is that it can turn anything into gold. It may sound like an exaggeration. But after watching discarded clothes become fibre, yarn, fabric and finally new products, it's hard to disagree.



How Mysore's Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan helped America gain Independence

As the US marks 250 years since its Declaration of Independence, here's why Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, the rulers of India's Mysore, were admired in America during its war of independence against Britain. This is how the war in Mysore stretched British power, which played a decisive role in the American War of Independence.

"Come, all ye lads who know no fear... Embark in our Hyder-Ally!" These words were not sung on the streets of Mysore in India. They echoed through Philadelphia during the American War of Independence. Ballads celebrated a warship named after Hyder Ali, public toasts hailed him as a hero, and for many Americans fighting the British Crown for Independence, the ruler of India's Mysore was a symbol of resistance against empire. Even a ship was named after the ruler of Mysore.

As George Washington battled British forces in North America, Hyder Ali and later his son Tipu Sultan were fighting on another front of the same Imperial power. It was thousands of kilometres away from northern America, in southern India. The two never exchanged letters, nor did the state of Mysore send troops to America. But the two theatres became intertwined in Britain's imperial ambitions and France's attempt to humble Britain after the latter's defeat in the Seven Years' War of 1756-1763.

The American Revolution, historians say, was not just an American story. It stretched from

the Caribbean and Europe to the Indian peninsula. Britain's East India Company, the same corporation whose tea helped trigger the Boston Tea Party, was simultaneously locked in a costly war against Mysore. French fleets and finances supported both Washington's revolutionaries (or rebels) and Hyder Ali's armies, forcing Britain to fight on multiple fronts at once.

As the United States marks the 250th anniversary of its Declaration of Independence (1776) this weekend, the celebrations offer an opportunity to revisit a largely forgotten chapter from the late eighteenth century. The declaration came in 1776, but the American Revolutionary War (between Britain and its 13 North American colonies) had begun in 1775. Britain's decisive defeat came in 1781, and American independence was formally recognised only by the Treaty of Paris in 1783. That was a time when the rulers of Mysore, Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, were admired across America as comrades in a struggle against British imperial power.

The admiration did not mean

Mysore "won" America its independence. The Second Anglo-Mysore War (1780-1784) opened another major front against Britain just as the American Revolutionary War was entering its decisive phase. But historians agree that the simultaneous wars forced Britain to fight on multiple fronts, adding to the pressures that ultimately shaped the outcome of the American Revolution.

DID MYSORE BECOME BRITAIN'S BIGGEST PROBLEM?

By the late 1770s, Imperial Britain had started consolidating power in the Indian subcontinent after the battles at Palassey and Buxar, and taking on other European powers in the region. Imperial Britain was also fighting a few rebellious colonies in northern America. France, on the other hand, had entered the American War of Independence in 1778 against Britain, which transformed it into a global conflict. The war and hostilities spread across Europe, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia. In India, the flashpoint became Mysore.

According to the Museum of the

American Revolution's "Revolution Around the World" series, Britain seized the French-controlled port of Mahe in 1779 after France allied with the American colonies. Mahe was then crucial to Hyder Ali, who relied on it for military supplies from France. The British attack prompted Ali to launch the Second Anglo-Mysore War (1780-1784) against the British East India Company.

The French, eager to weaken Britain everywhere it could, dispatched Admiral Pierre Andre de Suffren to support Mysore. Britain suddenly found itself defending an empire stretched across continents, including North America.

Chicago-based historian Blake Smith, in his 2016 piece in Australian news outlet Aeon, noted that George Washington and Hyder Ali "fought against a common enemy, and shared a common ally". France deliberately backed both the American rebels and Mysore as part of a broader strategy to avenge its defeat in the Seven Years' War by "stoking colonial rebellions against Britain".

WHEN MYSORE, AMERICANS FOUGHT COMMON ENEMY

BRITAIN THOUSANDS OF MILES APART

While there was no military alliance between Washington and Mysore's Hyder Ali, there was a convergence of interests.

While Washington struggled through Valley Forge before eventually prevailing at Yorktown, Hyder Ali repeatedly challenged the East India Company's expansion in southern India. One of his greatest victories came at the Battle of Pollilur (near present-day Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu) in 1780, where the forces of Mysore inflicted one of the East India Company's worst defeats. The battle was part of the Second Anglo-Mysore War. The British suddenly had to divide soldiers, ships, money and political attention between America and India. American scholar, Richard Sambasivam, in his 2016 piece in the Journal of the American Revolution (JAR), noted that British army commander, Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown and Hyder Ali's victories in India were celebrated together in New Jersey's Trenton. On October 28, 1781, just days after Yorktown, townspeople raised 13 ceremonial toasts. The eleventh

honoured "the great and heroic Hyder Ali... raised up by Providence... to check the insolence and reduce the power of Britain in the East Indies". For revolutionary Americans, Hyder Ali had become an Indian ruler they hailed. That's because he was Britain's other enemy.

THE AMERICAN SHIP THAT BORE HYDER ALI'S NAME

Perhaps the clearest symbol of that admiration for Hyder Ali's contributions floated off the American coast. In 1781, Pennsylvania commissioned a warship named Hyder Ally, an Anglicised version of Hyder Ali. American historian Blake Smith noted that the vessel demonstrated the "affinity American elites felt for Mysore's cause". American poet Philip Freneau celebrated it in verse that went...

"From an eastern prince she takes her name,
Who, smit with freedom's sacred flame,
Usurping Britons brought to shame."

The following year, the Hyder Ally defeated the larger British warship General Monk in one of the young American navy's most celebrated victories.

American scholar Sambasivam recounted that the triumph sparked celebrations across Philadelphia. Ballads praising Hyder Ally were echoed along with those of the ship's 23-year-old commander, Commodore Joshua Barney. Pennsylvania later presented Barney with a ceremonial gold-hilted sword depicting both the Hyder Ally and the captured British vessel.

WHY BRITAIN COULDN'T FOCUS ONLY ON AMERICA

Historians have argued that Britain's difficulties in America cannot be understood without looking at the imperial conflicts it was involved in across the globe. The Museum of the American Revolution, on its website, notes that the war in India demonstrated how European rivalries produced global consequences of drawing Indian powers into conflicts that extended beyond the Atlantic. In a 2021 analysis, Karnataka-based scholar Ameen Ahmed argued that Britain's struggle against Mysore forced it to rethink its priorities. Around one-fifth of the Royal Navy's ships of the line operated in the Indian theatre, where Admiral Suffern's French fleet challenged British dominance. This limited Britain's

ability to concentrate resources elsewhere, including North America.

The argument is not that Mysore alone decided America's Independence. But it stretched Imperial Britain's war efforts and made them expensive and messy.

THE EAST INDIA COMPANY CONNECTED BOSTON TO BENGAL

However, the connection between American Independence and India had begun even before the shooting started in the wars in the present-day US.

The Boston Tea Party in December 1773, itself revolved around tea sold by the East India Company, the same corporation which was expanding the British footprint in India.

Writing in The Boston Globe in 2023, Johns Hopkins historian Sarah Pearsall argued that the story of the American Revolution "had its roots in Bengal, among other places". She noted that many American colonists viewed the East India Company as a symbol of imperial overreach after witnessing reports of its conduct in India.

"The American Revolution involved people far beyond our borders in all kinds of ways... It was

international from the beginning," Pearsall wrote.

AFTER HYDER ALI, TIPU SULTAN ALSO CAPTURED AMERICAN IMAGINATION

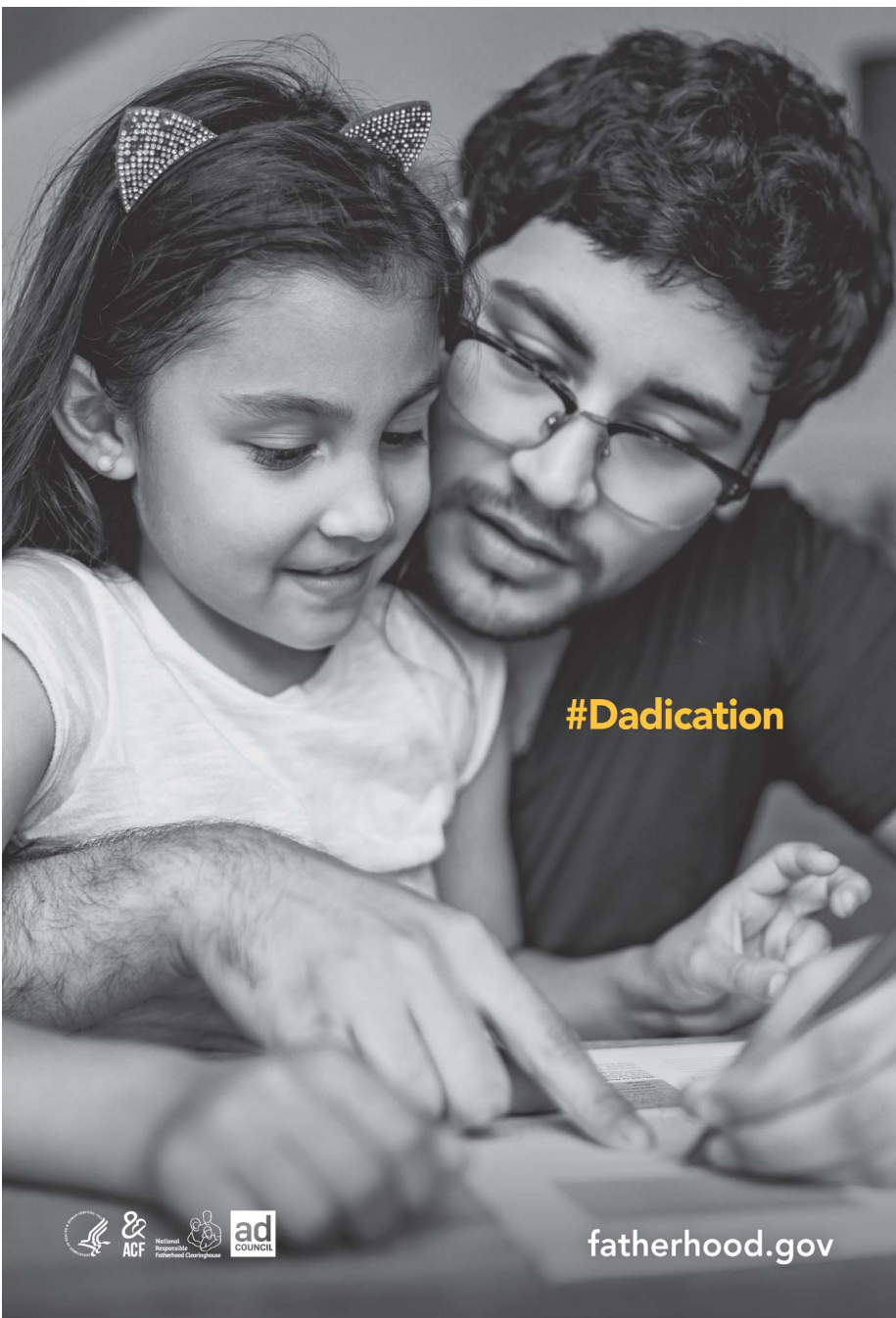
Hyder Ali died in 1782, a year before the Treaty of Paris formally recognised American independence. His son, Tipu Sultan, inherited both the throne of Mysore and the war. American fascination with Mysore did not end with Hyder Ali.

Chicago-based historian Blake Smith noted that newspapers across the young United States frequently reported on Tipu's struggle against Britain. School textbooks included sections on Mysore. Racehorses were named after Hyder Ali. Even court records mention horses named "Hyder Ali", suggesting that the Mysore rulers had become familiar names in early elite American society.

When Tipu was killed defending Srirangapatnam in 1799, some Americans mourned his death. Smith cited a Fourth of July sermon delivered in 1800 by Baptist minister John Russell. He described Tipu as a ruler who "defended his power with a spirit which showed he

deserved it. His death was worthy of a king". But that admiration proved short-lived. It was a casualty of shifting geopolitics and realpolitik. After its independence, American merchants sought access to Indian markets controlled by the very British East India Company that it and Mysore had fought. Washington's administration opened consulates in Company territory rather than establishing relations with independent Indian kingdoms, who were fighting against Imperialist Britain. America shifted to building an expanding republic of its own. As Blake Smith wrote, "Within a generation, Americans lost their sense of solidarity with the Indian Subcontinent," as Mysore and its rulers were gradually "written out of the story of the American Revolution". So, to conclude, Washington did not win alone. Nor did Hyder Ali or Tipu Sultan fight for American independence. But they forced Britain into a war whose consequences shaped the journeys of the world's two democracies, India and the United States.

By Sushim Mukul



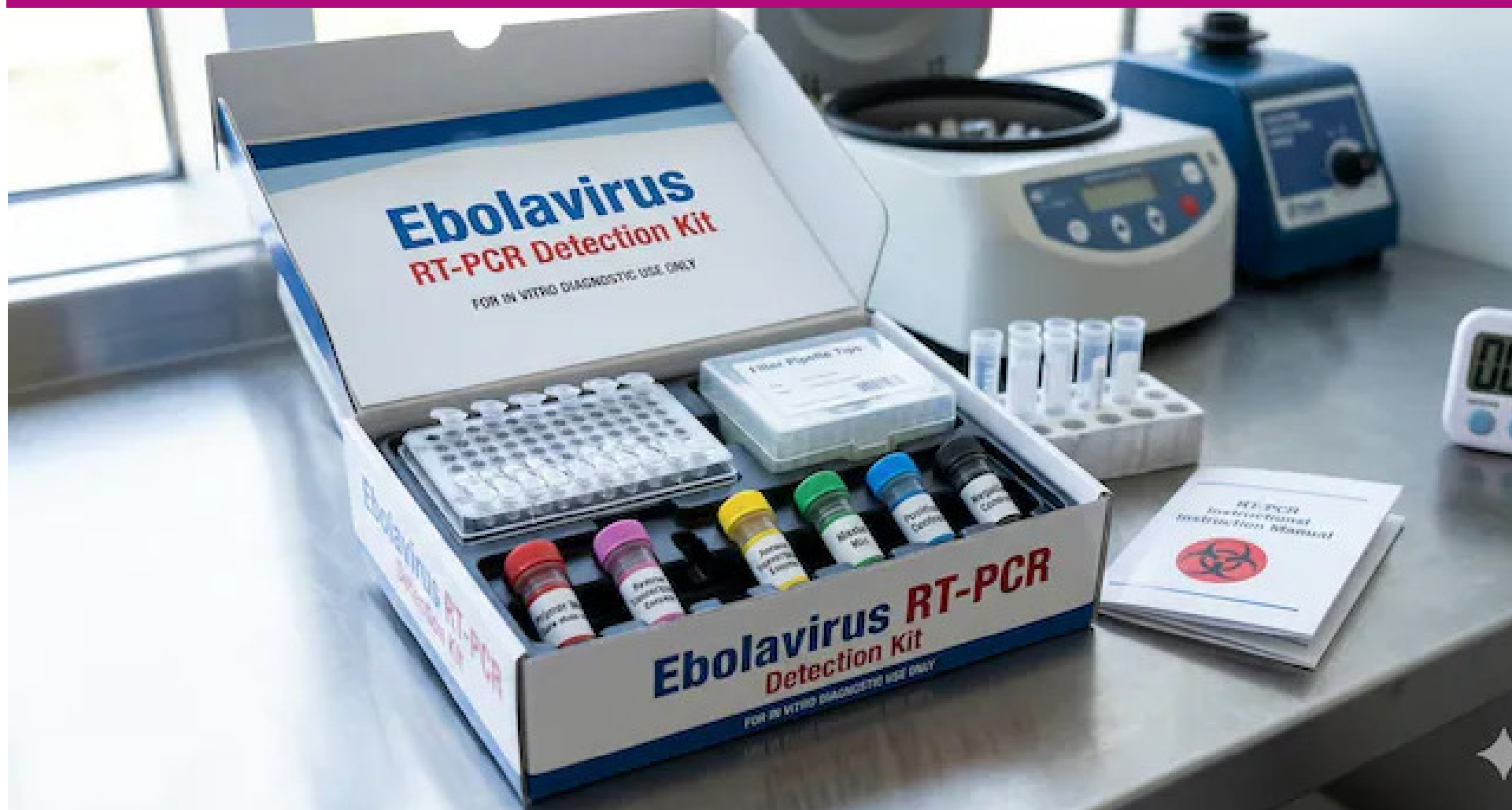
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Ebola Outbreak: Why RT-PCR Is The Gold Standard For Testing Infections

According to WHO, it can be difficult to clinically distinguish Ebola disease from other infectious diseases such as malaria, typhoid fever, shigellosis, meningitis and other viral haemorrhagic fevers.



The ongoing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda continues to spread rapidly in the affected areas. The World Health Organisation has declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). According to WHO, more than 900 suspected cases have been reported and "the epidemic in the DRC is much larger." The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported a total of 906 suspected cases, 105 confirmed cases, 223 suspected deaths, and 10 confirmed deaths have been reported in DRC. Additionally, in Uganda, a total of 7 confirmed cases and 1 confirmed death have been reported.

Till now, no Ebola cases have been confirmed in India. On Tuesday, a 28-year-old woman, who travelled from Uganda, was isolated for observation at a state-run hospital in Bengaluru. According to the officials, her sample was sent to the National Institute of Virology (NIV) for testing, and she tested negative. The government is closely monitoring the situation.

Ebola testing: How RT-PCR helps with rapid diagnosis

According to WHO, it can be difficult to clinically distinguish Ebola disease from other infectious diseases such as malaria, typhoid fever, shigellosis, meningitis and other viral haemorrhagic fevers because symptoms at the early stage of the disease are similar.

Ebola testing relies primarily on the Reverse

Transcription-Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) globally. RT-PCR is considered the gold standard for testing infections primarily because it directly detects the genetic material of a pathogen in blood or fluid samples with precision and sensitivity. Unlike other tests that look for your body's immune response, RT-PCR finds the actual virus or bacteria, even at the very beginning of an infection. Ebola is a high-risk pathogen, therefore, testing is exclusively centralised and conducted under the highest biological containment standards.

WHO has mentioned that samples collected from patients pose a serious biohazard risk. Laboratory testing on untreated samples must be done in the highest safety conditions. When transporting untreated biological specimens across the country or internationally, use a triple packaging system.

It catches infections early

Due to the massive amplification power, RT-PCR doesn't need a large viral load to work. It can catch the virus just days after exposure, often well before symptoms even begin, making it invaluable for stopping outbreaks early.

Features of RT-PCR

RT-PCR combines reverse transcription of RNA into complementary DNA (cDNA) followed by amplification of specific DNA targets using polymerase chain reaction (PCR).

RT-PCR is highly sensitive and can detect even small amounts of RNA. It's also specific, allowing for the amplification of a particular RNA sequence. As a result, it does not miss early-

stage or low-viral-load infections.

When combined with Real-Time PCR (qRT-PCR), it allows scientists to precisely measure the exact amount of target RNA in a sample.

It's widely used in clinical diagnostics, especially for viral infections like Covid-19, as it can identify specific viral RNA in a sample.

One-step RT-PCR techniques combine reverse transcription and amplification in a single tube, making the process relatively fast.

RT-PCR for Ebola

RT-PCR is primarily used for Ebola testing as it provides the extreme sensitivity and specific detection needed to safely contain a highly lethal pathogen before it spreads. Additionally, the Ebola virus is an RNA virus; standard PCR cannot read it directly. RT-PCR uses a specialised reverse transcription enzyme to convert the viral RNA into DNA so it can be amplified and detected.

RT-PCR can identify the virus 24 to 48 hours earlier than rapid antigen tests, which is crucial given that Ebola can progress to severe hemorrhagic fever rapidly.

WHO also recommends the following diagnostic methods for Ebola testing:

Antibody-capture enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA)

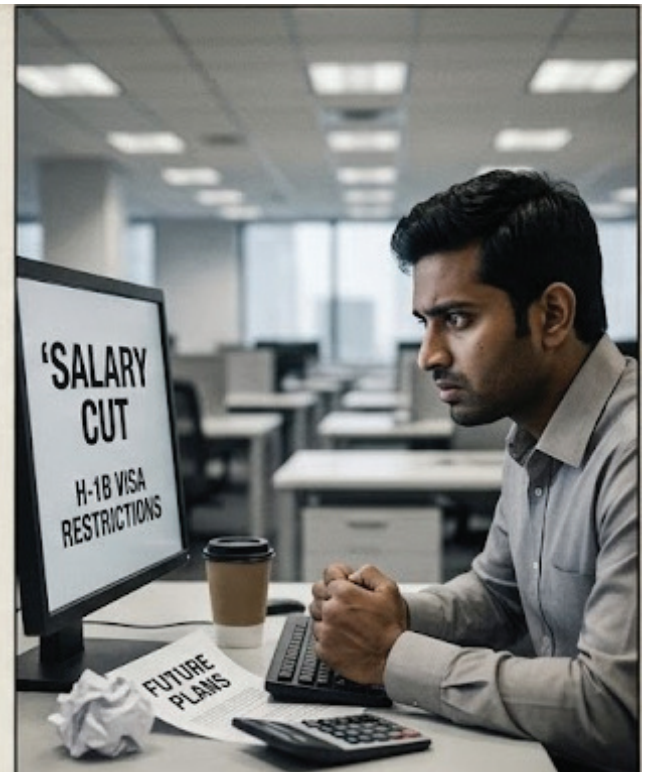
Antigen-capture detection tests

Virus isolation by cell culture

The Ebola outbreak in Congo and Uganda has been attributed to the Bundibugyo strain of Ebola, for which there are currently no approved vaccines or specific antiviral treatments.

The Immigration Squeeze: Deaths in Detention, Agents at the Door, and an H-1B Wage Shock

A wrongful-death lawsuit out of Texas, a chilling surveillance case in upstate New York, and rising salary floors for skilled-worker visas mark a hardening enforcement landscape — with Indian nationals squarely in the crosshairs of the green-card backlog.



By The South Asian Insider
Weekly News Desk | New York | July 10, 2026

NEW YORK — Three stories that broke over the July 4 holiday week, taken together, sketch the outline of America's immigration system at the nation's 250th birthday: harsher at the border of detention, more watchful of dissent, and more expensive at the front door of legal skilled migration.

A Death in Texas, a Lawsuit in Court

The family of a Cuban man who died at a Texas ICE detention facility — a death authorities characterized as a “likely homicide” — has filed a wrongful-death lawsuit against the federal government. The case lands amid mounting scrutiny of conditions inside the rapidly expanded detention network, and it will be watched closely by South Asian community advocates: Indian nationals have made up a growing share of ICE detainees in recent years, many of them asylum seekers who crossed after long journeys through Latin America.

Agents at the Door in Rochester

In upstate New York, David Streever discovered that criticizing immigration enforcement can bring enforcement to your doorstep.

After Streever sent a critical email to the former head of ICE, federal agents attempted to track him to his home and hotel, and left him a warning notice suggesting his email may have been illegal — visits captured on his doorbell camera. He is now suing. For a diaspora community that writes letters, signs petitions and speaks at public meetings on immigration policy, the case raises a question with First Amendment stakes far beyond one Rochester household: whether petitioning the government now carries the risk of a knock at the door.

The H-1B Wage Shock Arrives Meanwhile, the machinery of legal immigration keeps ratcheting upward in cost. H-1B salary floors are rising from this month under the Department of Labor's annual update to prevailing wage data — routine in mechanism, but landing atop an extraordinary run of restrictions. A weighted, wage-tilted lottery took effect for this year's cap season under a rule finalized in February. A proposed DOL rule published in March would go further, raising required minimum salaries by 21 to 33 percent depending on experience level, with finalization targeted for late 2026 or early 2027. Premium processing fees rose March 1. And the \$100,000

fee on new H-1B entries imposed last September continues to reshape employer behavior even as litigation over it winds through the appeals courts.

The paradox: even as new entries are squeezed, H-1B renewals have surged to record highs — more than 273,000 continuing-employment petitions approved early in the fiscal year — because extensions for workers already in the country face no annual cap. The system is quietly bifurcating into a fortress with a heavily tolled gate and a large population sheltering inside it. For Indian professionals, who dominate the H-1B category and face decades-long EB-2 and EB-3 green-card backlogs under per-country limits, the combination means fewer new arrivals, longer waits, and careers increasingly hostage to visa-stamping appointments and continuous-vetting reviews that now extend beyond initial approval.

The Constitutional Backdrop Hanging over all of it is the Supreme Court's birthright citizenship ruling, whose fallout continued to dominate legal commentary through the holiday week, and the administration's structural reshaping of the federal workforce that administers these systems. USCIS, for its part, continues expanding capacity on

its own terms — opening a new asylum office in Atlanta on July 8, following a San Antonio location in May — even as its adjudications grow more exacting.

For our readers — the H-1B engineer in Jersey City, the student on OPT in Queens, the

parents waiting out an F-4 sibling petition filed two decades ago — the through-line of this holiday week's news is unmistakable. The legal pathway is narrowing, the price of admission is rising, and the margin for error, for everyone in the system, has never been thinner.

THE IMMIGRATION SQUEEZE:

**DEATHS IN DETENTION,
AGENTS AT THE DOOR,
AND AN H-1B WAGE SHOCK**

DEATHS IN DETENTION

Lives lost behind bars.
Families left with answers.

AGENTS AT THE DOOR

Knock today.
Life changed forever.

AN H-1B WAGE SHOCK

Higher fees.
Lower salaries.
Big impact on skilled professionals.

**POLICY. ENFORCEMENT. ECONOMY.
THREE PRESSURES. ONE NATION.**

How 'Operation Hard Ball' Busted Western Narrative On Khalistani Terror & India-Based Jail Gangs

in a massive geopolitical and intelligence twist, a sweeping international law enforcement crackdown has completely dismantled the multi-year narrative pushed by Western media and Canadian leadership against Indian security agencies. Codenamed Operation Hard Ball, the joint investigation led by the US Department of Justice and the FBI has unmasked the true face behind extrajudicial assassinations on foreign soil. The federal indictments explicitly reveal that these operations were not orchestrated by Indian state actors but were instead a sophisticated, commercial subcontracting nexus run by

Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), utilising notorious India-based jail gangs for Western Khalistani operations. For nearly three years, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau aggressively accused Indian agencies of planning targeted hits on foreign soil, most notably the June 2023 killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Surrey, British Columbia. However, the newly unsealed US Department of Justice indictments have turned that narrative on its head. The US federal prosecutors have specifically named jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi and his North American lieutenant, Satinderjeet Singh alias Goldy Brar, as the actual masterminds who ordered the assassination, mapped the logistics, and provided the weapons.

Behind this global syndicate lies a deeper, more sinister architecture managed by Islamabad. Pakistan's ISI has been providing a safe sanctuary, logistics, and strategic direction to pro-Khalistan terrorist commanders sheltered in Lahore, such as Babbar Khalsa International's (BKI) Harwinder Singh Rinda and Lakhbir Singh Landa. Acting as the puppet masters in the ISI's age-old strategy to destabilise Punjab, these Pakistan-based terrorists have actively outsourced operational tasks to domestic Indian gangs. Gangsters like Lawrence Bishnoi and Jaggu Bhagwanpuria, constantly on the lookout for massive financial injections and high-tech weaponry, have willingly stepped in as the boots on the ground. This lethal logistics pipeline is not



entirely new to Indian intelligence. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) had previously proved that the Bishnoi gang supplied the foot soldiers for the audacious 2022 Rocket-Propelled Grenade (RPG) attack on the Punjab Police Intelligence Headquarters in Mohali. That strike was directly ordered by the ISI-backed BKI network operating from Pakistan, showcasing how seamlessly local criminals could transition into executing high-level terrorist operations.

Furthermore, over the last few years, Punjab has witnessed a series of targeted killings aimed at sowing communal discord. High-profile assassinations have targeted local Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) leaders, Hindu outfit leaders, Shiv Sena activists, and Dera Sacha Sauda followers—including the brutal November 2022 murder of Pradeep Kumar. Indian intelligence reports have conclusively proved that these local hits were deliberately assigned to regional criminal syndicates like Bishnoi and Bhagwanpuria to give Pakistan a shield of plausible deniability and save it from direct international blowback.

The financial engine fuelling this transnational nexus is equally staggering. These groups generate billions of dollars through the Surrey-based Ricky Dhanda drug cartel, moving massive shipments of narcotics across the highly sensitive US-Canada border. This drug money is supplemented by the aggressive extortion of wealthy non-resident Indian (NRI) businessmen, prominent Punjabi singers, and

international kabaddi leagues. Once collected, this immense cash flow is laundered through international channels and routed

back to purchase sophisticated, military-grade hardware—including automated weapons and

RPGs—to be deployed inside India.

The landmark Mohali investigation completely shifted the paradigm of how India views domestic organised crime. The NIA's findings conclusively proved that the traditional line between a common gangster and a hardline terrorist has completely evaporated. Gangsters like Lawrence Bishnoi are no longer merely fighting over local protection rackets or regional turf wars. By accepting cross-border funding, sophisticated weaponry, and guarantees of safe passage from ISI-backed Khalistani groups, these jail-based gangs have effectively transformed into outsourced mercenary modules designed entirely to bleed India from within and terrorise the diaspora abroad.

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Summer Fancy Food Show 2026: A Global Celebration of Food

Where India Served More Than Flavors—it Served Its Future



More Than an Exhibition

For me, the Summer Fancy Food Show represents something much bigger than a trade fair. It is where innovation meets tradition.

It is where small family businesses can become international brands.

It is where cultural identity transforms into economic opportunity.

As someone working in film, media and international business, I also recognize striking similarities between the entertainment and food industries. Both rely on storytelling. Both create emotional connections. Both have the power to cross borders without translation.

Looking Ahead
India's impressive participation at the Summer Fancy Food Show 2026 sends a clear message: Indian food is no longer viewed merely as ethnic cuisine—it is becoming a mainstream global category. The collaboration between government agencies, exporters, entrepreneurs and globally respected culinary leaders such as Chef Vikas Khanna demonstrates how coordinated efforts can significantly strengthen India's international brand.

As global demand for authentic, sustainable and premium foods continues to rise, India is well positioned not only to increase exports but also to become one of the world's leading voices in specialty foods. From my perspective in New York, this year's Summer Fancy Food Show was not simply about showcasing products—it was about showcasing India's confidence, creativity and growing influence on the global stage.

By Raaj Raahi
New York

Every year, New York becomes the meeting point of global innovation, culture and commerce. This year, the **Summer Fancy Food Show 2026**, held from **June 28–30 at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center**, once again proved why it is North America's premier specialty food exhibition. Thousands of exhibitors, buyers, distributors, retailers, chefs and food entrepreneurs from across the globe gathered under one roof to explore the future of specialty foods. As someone based in New York and working extensively with international industries, I have attended many global trade events. However, the 2026 Summer Fancy Food Show stood out not only because of its scale but because it reflected how food has become a powerful tool of cultural diplomacy, economic growth and global branding.

A Truly Global Marketplace

Walking through the exhibition halls was like taking a culinary journey around the world. Companies from Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and North America showcased everything from artisanal cheeses and gourmet chocolates to organic snacks, plant-based innovations, premium beverages and sustainable food technologies.

The event was much more than a food exhibition—it was a platform where international business partnerships were formed, export opportunities expanded, and emerging brands gained access to global markets. **India's Strongest Presence Yet** What impressed me most was India's record-breaking participation.

For the first time, India showcased **more than 70 exhibitors** under a unified **India Pavilion**, jointly organized by **APEDA (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority)** and the **India Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO)**. The pavilion represented India's largest-ever participation in the history of the Summer Fancy Food Show. It featured a wide range of products including basmati rice, spices, ready-to-eat meals, organic foods, frozen products, beverages, snacks and value-added agricultural products. One of the pavilion's biggest attractions was the **Indian Mango Showcase**, highlighting premium export varieties alongside innovative mango-based creations. Another highlight was the **Basmati Culinary Showcase**, demonstrating how Indian basmati rice can be adapted across international cuisines. Michelin-starred chef Hemant Mathur curated daily tastings for buyers and visitors.

Chef Vikas Khanna: India's Culinary Ambassador

One of the defining moments of the event was the presence of internationally acclaimed **Chef Vikas Khanna**, who jointly

inaugurated the India Pavilion with India's Consul General in New York, Binaya S. Pradhan. Chef Vikas Khanna has long served as one of India's greatest culinary ambassadors. Through his restaurants, books, television appearances and humanitarian work, he has elevated Indian cuisine on the global stage. His participation brought tremendous visibility and credibility to India's showcase.

Speaking during the inauguration, Chef Khanna reminded everyone that every product displayed represented the hard work of millions of Indian farmers, food processors, manufacturers, exporters and workers. His message beautifully captured the idea that food is not merely a product—it is the story of an entire nation and its people.

Indian-American Entrepreneurs Building Bridges

Beyond the official India Pavilion, numerous Indian-American entrepreneurs also exhibited products reflecting the evolution of Indian cuisine in America. Traditional Indian ingredients were presented alongside modern innovations such as healthy snacks, plant-based foods, fusion beverages, premium teas, spice blends,

ethnic frozen meals and wellness products designed specifically for the North American consumer. It was equally encouraging to see entrepreneurs from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Thailand, Korea, Japan and other Asian countries presenting authentic regional products. Their participation demonstrated how Asian cuisine continues to influence global food trends.

Food as Soft Power

Today's consumers are not simply buying food—they are buying authenticity, heritage and stories.

India has an extraordinary opportunity in this changing marketplace. Whether it is turmeric, millets, spices, tea, coffee, mangoes, basmati rice or ready-to-eat foods, India possesses products that are increasingly valued by health-conscious consumers worldwide.

Industry estimates presented during the show suggest that the North American market for Indian consumer packaged food products could represent a **US\$30–50 billion opportunity over the coming decade**, driven by demand for authentic flavors and premium ingredients.



Louis Vuitton court victory against Chinese tea chain stirs up a debate over copyrights

HONG KONG (AP) — A debate over ownership of traditional Chinese symbols has cropped up after a court ordered a local tea chain to pay French luxury brand Louis Vuitton \$1.5 million over trademark infringement claims. Chinese state-media and online commentators are questioning if the four-petal flower design in the fashion house's 130-year-old signature monogram is derived from patterns dating back to ancient China. Some are accusing the company of "monopolizing" traditional Chinese patterns.

A court in the eastern city of Suzhou recently ruled that the logo of the Molly

Tea, whose signature drinks are based on jasmine and other floral-based teas, infringed on Louis Vuitton's trademark monogram. It ordered the tea company to pay 10.3 million yuan (\$1.5 million) to the French company, according to local media reports that carried copies or details of what they said was the ruling.

Intellectual property fights between Western and Chinese brands are not uncommon. International brands like American sneaker maker New Balance have taken Chinese firms to local courts and sometimes prevailed in intellectual property and trademark cases. The judgement has been trending online in

China.

The state owned newspaper Beijing Daily said Tuesday in a post on the popular online platform Weibo that the ruling exposed a gap in protections of ancient Chinese heritage and symbols. "Why did a Chinese enterprise end up paying more than 10 million yuan in damages to a French company for using a design that resonated with the spirit of China's centuries-old patterns?" it said.

"Chinese netizens accuse LV of attempting to monopolize ancient motifs after lawsuit against tea brand," said a headline in the Global Times, a state-owned English language

newspaper. It asserted there was "widespread frustration" over a foreign brand controlling a design believed to be part of China's cultural heritage.

A photo and caption accompanying the article showed patterns on a Tang Dynasty rosewood "pipa," a kind of Chinese traditional lute, side-by-side with the Louis Vuitton monogram pattern. Louis Vuitton is celebrating the 130th anniversary of its monogram designed in 1896, which it has called a "universal symbol of creativity." The monogram was "inspired by neo-gothic ornamentation and the influence of Japonism," its parent LVMH's website says.

Bezos' Blue Origin valued at \$130 billion in first outside fundraising round

Blue Origin competes in many of the same markets as SpaceX, including heavy-lift rockets and lunar landers.



The funding round comes hot on the heels of a blockbuster IPO by Elon Musk's SpaceX last month. Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin is raising about \$10 billion, in its first outside funding round that will value the rocket company at \$130 billion, sources told CNBC's Andrew Ross Sorkin.

Bezos is set to contribute \$2 billion into the round, along with about \$4 billion from hedge fund Coatue Management, according to people familiar with the matter, who asked not to be named because the details are private. The remaining \$4 billion has seen significant demand, with several major investors expected to participate, the people said.

The funding round comes hot on the heels of a blockbuster initial public offering by Elon Musk's

SpaceX

last month. SpaceX raised nearly \$86 billion, including the underwriters' option, making it the largest IPO on record and minting Musk a trillionaire. The company is now valued at about \$2 trillion. Bezos told CNBC in May that the company was "considering" outside investment, but it had not happened yet.

"It's a good time, actually, to start thinking about the future and bring on some other outside investors," he said.

Bezos, who founded Amazon and stepped down as its CEO in 2021, has turned more of his attention to Blue Origin, which he founded in 2000. It competes in many of the same markets as SpaceX, including heavy-lift rockets, lunar landers and

satellite internet, though Musk has a significant lead in several of those areas. Bezos has in the past funded Blue Origin solely through sales of his Amazon stock. In 2024, Bezos said he believed Blue Origin will one day be a bigger company than

Amazon. Blue Origin suffered a setback in late May when one of its New Glenn rockets exploded on a Florida launchpad during a static hot-fire test. The company is in the process of reconstructing the damaged pad and determining the root cause of the anomaly.

Bezos and Blue Origin CEO Dave Limp have set an aggressive goal to return New Glenn to flight by the end of 2026. The rocket is key to Blue Origin's upcoming missions for NASA as well as customers like Amazon and AST SpaceMobile

Four states seeking \$1.4 trillion in penalties in child social media addiction trial, Meta says

Four states are seeking \$1.4 trillion in penalties from Meta over claims that the social media giant designed Facebook and Instagram to be addictive to children and withheld information from the public about the harms the apps pose to young users, Meta said in a court filing on Monday. The case is being brought by California, Colorado, Kentucky and New Jersey. Meta disclosed the trillion-dollar figure in its response to the attorneys general filings on how penalties should be calculated if the states win at the trial set to begin next month in Oakland, California. The company said the number, which is near Meta's market capitalization of around \$1.5 trillion, was not supported by the evidence.

"A sanction of that size has no analog in the history of consumer protection enforcement," the company said in the filing. A Meta spokesperson told FOX Business in a statement that "The plaintiffs' outlandish calculations have no basis in fact or law. We'll continue to defend ourselves against headline-seeking demands that are untethered from reality." The states' filings are sealed, but they said during a hearing last month that they were calculating the penalties by multiplying the

number of violations by fine amounts established by state law. They said the number of violations is based on the estimated number of young users impacted by Meta's social media platforms. Nearly 30 states have sued Meta in federal court, with most of them claiming the company violated the federal Children's Online Privacy Protection Act by collecting data from children without proper parental consent. The trial will address all claims brought under that law, as well as the four states' allegations that the tech giant violated their state laws aimed at protecting consumers by misleading the public about the safety of their platforms. Meta has denied the allegations, saying the attorneys general lack evidence that it misled the public about its platforms' alleged addictiveness since social media addiction is not an established psychiatric condition. The company has also pushed back on accusations that it violated the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act because it marketed Facebook and Instagram to a wider audience and not only children under 13. Another 14 states have brought claims under their own laws, which will be heard at a separate trial next year. Late last month, U.S.

We visited 10 Delhi neighbourhoods after SC's 'right to walk' ruling. Here's what we found



Last week, the Supreme Court declared something millions of Indians do every day but rarely think about as a fundamental right - the right to walk.

Calling safe, demarcated footpaths an essential part of Articles 19 and 21 of the Constitution, the Court said that if a road exists, authorities have a duty to provide and maintain footpaths. It went a step further, holding that a pedestrian's right to walk overrides the privilege of motorised vehicles.

The judgment is ambitious. It is also deeply at odds with what a walk through Delhi looks like today. Over two days, India Today Digital visited ten locations across the capital from affluent markets and government districts to residential neighbourhoods and coaching hubs to see what exercising this newly affirmed constitutional right actually entails.

The answer, more often than not, involved stepping off the footpath and onto the road.

Where the footpath isn't a footpath anymore

The first obstacle wasn't traffic. It was the footpath itself. In East Delhi's Trilokpuri, heaps of sludge and garbage occupied almost an entire pavement. It appeared to be waste removed from a nearby drain during a cleaning exercise, only to be dumped where pedestrians were expected to walk. A cane furniture vendor had taken over another stretch of the pavement, forcing people onto the carriageway.

Mukherjee Nagar, better known as Delhi's coaching capital, presented a different version of the same problem. Makeshift stalls lined sections of the footpath. One shopkeeper agreed to speak to India Today Digital, but only off camera. "The MCD itself allowed us to set up here. If they demolish these shops now, we'll be ruined," he said.

His predicament highlighted a larger contradiction. The city has, in many places, normalised encroachments

that leave pedestrians with nowhere to go. Even where shops weren't the problem, neglect was. Sections of the pavement reeked of urine, pools of stagnant muck made walking difficult, and low-hanging signboards repeatedly interrupted the path.

A constitutional right, in practice, had to negotiate garbage, commerce and neglect before it could negotiate traffic.

When the footpath exists, but only for name's sake

In Vasundhara Enclave, the problem wasn't the absence of footpaths but their usability. Trees have grown through many stretches, with large cut-outs consuming much of the available space. Removing mature trees isn't the answer in a city choking on pollution. But the result is that pedestrians repeatedly have to climb down onto the road before getting back onto the pavement. We watched an elderly man, walking with a stick, choose the road over the pavement because negotiating the constant obstacles was harder than walking beside moving traffic.

We saw another couple in their 60s who spoke about the situation in Vasundhara Enclave. "I don't know about all Delhi footpaths. I've been staying in Vasundhara Enclave since 2002, and since then I've never seen the Vasundhara Enclave footpaths in good condition. They are in a very bad shape, mostly broken. Hawkers have occupied the footpaths, and there is very little space for people to walk. As a result, people have to walk on the road and risk their lives," he told Media.

"About the trees, I wouldn't say anything because I'm a tree lover. So I'm okay accommodating the trees, but I'm not okay accommodating animals, dog or human excreta, or hawkers on the footpaths," he added. On Outer Ring Road, a pavement next to a foot overbridge narrowed to the point where only one person could comfortably pass. Two-way pedestrian movement was practically impossible.

Elsewhere, footpaths simply ended without warning. We would take a few steps before the pavement abruptly disappeared, forcing us back onto the road until another stretch reappeared.

Privilege has an address

If Delhi proves anything, it is that functioning footpaths are not impossible. They are simply unevenly distributed. In Connaught Place, Khan Market and Greater Kailash's M Block Market, walking almost felt effortless. The pavements were clean, unobstructed and well maintained. There were no piles of garbage, no overflowing drains and no visible encroachments. The roads were clean, the market areas smelled fresh, and for once, pedestrians did not have to constantly look over their shoulder for oncoming traffic. Walking here felt less like navigating an obstacle course and more like what a footpath is actually meant for. The illusion, however, lasts only until you step outside the market. Just beyond Khan Market, a lane lined with money exchange counters, xerox shops and fruit juice stalls had spilled onto the footpath, leaving little room for pedestrians. The contrast existed within a matter of metres. On one side was a pavement that served its purpose. On the other was one that had quietly surrendered it.

Encroachment isn't only a hawker problem

Not every obstruction came from hawkers or civic neglect. In the residential colonies of Greater Kailash and Lajpat Nagar, some of the encroachment came from residents themselves. Cars were parked on footpaths, potted plants had been placed outside homes, landscaped patches spilled onto public walkways and boundary extensions further narrowed the space available for pedestrians.

Individually, these appeared like minor inconveniences. Collectively, they erased the very public space meant for walking, forcing pedestrians back

onto the road.

Even premium roads aren't exempt

If premium neighbourhoods demonstrated that well-maintained footpaths are possible, premium roads showed that they are not immune to neglect.

Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, home to media organisations and political offices, was largely free of encroachments. But one sight stood out. Rows of clothes hung across sections of the pavement, left out to dry. People nearby pointed us towards a dhobi ghat in the vicinity, explaining that the clothes belonged there.

The footpath remained walkable, but the scene served as another reminder that even in some of Delhi's most prominent stretches, pavements are routinely treated as spaces available for any use other than walking.

Delhi mayor's response

Perhaps nowhere did the Supreme Court's words feel more immediate than Hauz Rani in Malviya Nagar. Barely 600 to 700 metres from Max Hospital, near the site where a devastating fire claimed 23 lives last month, we found a stretch of footpath in a deplorable condition. Broken slabs, uneven surfaces and damaged sections made it difficult even for an able-bodied person to walk comfortably. "It has been like this for over a year," a local bystander told India Today Digital. When we shared these observations with Delhi Mayor Pravesh Wahi, he acknowledged that there may have been shortcomings. "There may have been shortcomings on the part of the officials. I will hold a meeting with deputy commissioners and the concerned officials and ensure these issues are addressed," he said. The Supreme Court has settled an important constitutional question. Walking is not a favour extended by the state but a fundamental right. The harder question still remains unanswered: Who, exactly, will make that right walkable?

9 Places In India That Feel Like Europe During Monsoon



Munnar, Kerala: Blanketed in vibrant green tea carpets, Munnar during the rains mirrors the rolling, misty hills of the Scottish Highlands. The low-hanging clouds, crisp air, and gushing roadside waterfalls create a moody, emerald paradise perfect for scenic, contemplative drives. (Image: Pexels)



Mahabaleshwar, Maharashtra: With its heavy fog, dense canopy, and dramatic cliffsides overlooking deep valleys, Mahabaleshwar evokes the misty allure of the English Lake District. The constant drizzle, moss-covered stone structures, and cool, wind-swept viewpoints create an intensely atmospheric, European-style retreat. (Image: IncredibleIndia)

Ooty, Tamil Nadu: Built by the British, Ooty retains a nostalgic, English countryside charm that peaks in the rainy season. The stone churches, terraced tea gardens, and fog-shrouded lakes mimic the moody, romantic landscapes of a classic, rain-washed United Kingdom estate. (Image: Wikipedia)



Mandu, Madhya Pradesh: When the rains arrive, Mandu's ancient Afghan architecture and ruined palaces are framed by vibrant, mossy green landscapes. The mist swirling around its historic stone arches and reflective pools strongly evokes the romanticism of a ruined Scottish castle. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)



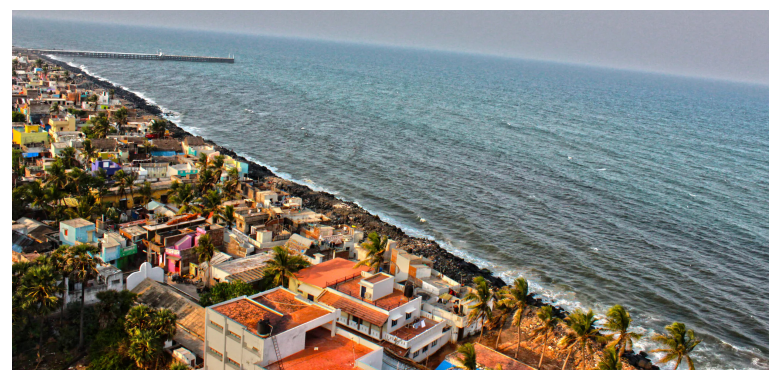
Khajjiar, Himachal Pradesh: Dubbed the "Mini Switzerland of India," this breathtaking meadow turns exceptionally lush during the monsoon. Surrounded by dense deodar forests and a central lake under heavy, dramatic skies, it perfectly captures the serene essence of a quiet Swiss countryside. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)



Coorg, Karnataka: Often called the "Scotland of India," Coorg's mist-covered coffee plantations, sprawling estates, and roaring waterfalls evoke the Scottish countryside. The damp earth, endless canopy of green, and chilly, rain-washed air make it an enchanting, ethereal escape from reality. (Image: Wikipedia Commons)



Valley of Flowers, Uttarakhand: Blossoming into a vibrant alpine wonderland, this UNESCO site resembles the colourful meadows of the Austrian Alps. Fed by monsoon showers, thousands of wild orchids, poppies, and lilies bloom against a backdrop of dramatic, snow-dusted Himalayan peaks. (Image: Wikipedia)



Pondicherry: The rain-slicked cobblestone streets of the French Quarter feel exactly like a coastal town in southern France. The bright mustard-yellow colonial mansions, dripping bougainvillea, and cozy cafes offer a distinctly European aesthetic that is amplified by romantic monsoon showers. (Image: Pexels)

Loneliness is booming and so is the business around it

Loneliness is no longer just a feeling. It's becoming content, community and commerce. As creators build audiences around solitary lives and businesses promise connection, is modern loneliness finally being seen?



Documenting loneliness

While these influencers champion solo living and enjoying one's own company, documenting it can also reinforce labels like "friendless" or "living alone" as identities. Namrata Jain, a Mumbai-based psychotherapist, says this is where the problem begins. "When you repeatedly document your loneliness online, you are rehearsing that emotional state. Algorithms then feed you similar content, and slowly they normalise and reinforce your isolation," she says. "When an emotion transforms into an identity, it activates confirmation bias. Your brain starts looking for evidence to prove the label true—like seeing a friend's late reply or a quiet weekend as proof of permanent isolation rather than an ordinary event. Before you know it, a temporary feeling becomes a core character trait." Loneliness already carries stigma and shame. When people begin to see it as part of who they are, they become less likely to recognise it and that only deepens the cycle.

(Our Staff Reporter) A person films themselves eating dinner alone on a Friday night. Puts it on Instagram. Another spends the weekend visiting a museum, alone. Shares on Instagram and captions: "You live alone and have no friends, are child-free, so your nights look like this." Collectively, they've been watched millions of times. The internet calls them "loneliness influencers." Yes, you read that right. Documenting and consuming a carefully aestheticised solitary lifestyle has become a content genre of its own. The comments section brims with responses like, "This is me," and "I've never felt so seen." It's well established how loneliness is a rising health concern. What's happening rapidly now is that people have realised it is also a problem worth solving offline, and it's more than proper therapy.

While one end of the spectrum is turning loneliness into content and identity, the other is building businesses around the growing need for connection. Across India, supper clubs, curated social experiences and community platforms are bringing strangers together through jamming sessions, dinners and shared

activities, all with the promise of helping people find their 'tribe'. Interestingly, there are paid services that allow people to hire companion - to accompany them for a hospital visit, go grocery shopping, or simply be there to listen. No expectations, no demands. You can even pay to play nostalgia-driven games like kho-kho and pitthu with people. From 'loneliness influencers' to companion-for-hire apps, a new economy is emerging around our need to belong.

Cashing in on loneliness (where's the problem?)

In this fragmented social world, everyone is looking for a real connection (We are not talking about dating). Before making any judgements about "capitalising on loneliness" and stuff, it's important to comprehend where it stems from.

Social isolation

Shashwat Narhatiyar, co-founder of Misfits started this community with his friends. Sharing his story, he says, "We used to feel socially isolated and didn't have a lot of friends here. So, we started doing these gatherings at our own place, and we opened them up to anyone and everyone. We started seeing a lot of people coming in and looking for a vibe, for friends, to

socialise. As our WhatsApp members kept growing, we realised that people really wanted something like this and what if we could scale it up and help others."

Samya Gupta, experience curator and founder of At Sams' Club, has a similar story. She wanted to create a space for people to find company because she is a big believer in friendships.

"I genuinely feel I was able to get through everything because I had a great support system around me. That made me realise that everyone deserves to have that kind of friendship and support system. We're not meant to live life alone. We're all social beings by the very virtue of evolution, and I believe the quality of life is much better when you have a community to belong to."

Believe it or not, there's data that points to 'friendship recession'. According to a Harvard study, the proportion of U.S. adults with no close friends has quadrupled since 1990, while the time spent with friends has shrunk from 6.5 hours a week to just four. And it's not just internet chatter about the difficulty of making and maintaining adult friendships.

Who is in attendance?

According to a report by the

World Health Organisation (WHO), loneliness is most prevalent among young people aged 13 to 29 globally. And that's the dominant audience for these businesses as well.

For Narhatiyar and Gupta, the majority of the attendees are between 20 and 35 years of age. They are mostly corporate professionals and migrants. But it's not just a Gen Z or millennial thing. Gupta was pleasantly surprised by the curiosity among people in their 40s and 50s.

In her experience, there are two broad buckets—people who come for the activity and want to experience the curated or themed night, and people who come for the people.

While it is difficult to understand exactly why people might join, Gupta believes loneliness is not the only driver. "It's become an urban culture. Everyone is doing it because everyone is doing it. They want 'exciting' weekend plans." People want to talk without being judged. For older users, it is often about routine companionship—reading, conversation, board games, doctor visits, airport pick-ups, or just having someone spend time with them. They just want another human being to be present, listen properly, and not

make them feel weak for needing company," Shradha Chaturvedi, founder and CEO of Get Companion, an app-based platform where people can hire companions. "One of the most interesting things about our customer behaviour is that our peak hours are between 9 pm and 2 am. Discussions during that time mostly relate to work stress, infidelity, not being able to meet family expectations, and emotional struggles. Most of our users fall between the ages of 24 and 42, proving how work-life stress is taking a toll on people's mental health," says Chaturvedi. There's a common thread here. It's all happening largely in urban centres like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Gurugram and others. For generations, people were surrounded by family and lived in tight-knit residential communities, fostering a sense of belonging. But with the rise of nuclear families, the desire for greater freedom and privacy, and a digital-first culture, the default social infrastructure seems to be collapsing with every passing year. As a result, there is now a need to outsource what used to happen organically.

Always Thinking About Food?

Here's What 'Food Noise' Really Means, According To An Obesity Expert

(News Agency) You've just finished lunch. You're physically full, yet your mind is already wandering towards the biscuit tin, leftover dessert or a packet of chips. If this sounds familiar, you're not alone. The phenomenon, often referred to as "food noise," is gaining attention among obesity specialists as more people realise that constant thoughts about food aren't always linked to true hunger.

Dr Neha Shah, Bariatric and Metabolic Surgeon, Chief Obesity Specialist and co-founder, The Good Weight, one of the most common complaints she hears from patients is what she calls the "2 pm problem." "You've eaten lunch, you're not actually hungry, and yet there's this nagging voice cataloguing everything in the pantry. That's food noise, the persistent mental chatter about eating that has nothing to do with actual physical need," adds Dr Shah.

She emphasises that this isn't simply a matter of poor willpower. "It's biology. And honestly, I think we've spent years blaming patients for something their hormones were doing to them all along."

The Hormone Problem

Dr Shah explains that hormones play a much larger role in regulating appetite than most people realise. Ghrelin, often referred to as the "hunger hormone," naturally rises before meals and should fall after eating. Leptin, meanwhile, signals to the brain that the body has had enough food.

"It sounds simple on paper," says Dr Shah. "But in many of my patients, especially those who've spent years dieting on and off, that entire signalling system begins to break down."

She notes that ghrelin may remain elevated for longer than normal, while



leptin resistance gradually develops, making it harder for the brain to recognise fullness.

"The brain simply stops receiving the 'I've had enough' signal with any clarity," she explains.

According to Dr Shah, insulin resistance further complicates the picture by causing energy crashes between meals that can feel like genuine hunger, even shortly after eating a substantial meal.

The Food Pattern Problem

What people eat and when they eat, also has a significant impact on food noise. Dr Shah points out that diets high in refined carbohydrates and ultra-processed snacks often create rapid spikes in blood sugar, followed by equally sharp crashes. "Each crash is interpreted by the brain as an emergency," she says. She frequently sees patients skipping breakfast, only to find themselves reaching for biscuits or fried snacks by mid-morning. "It's not indiscipline," Dr Shah explains. "Their blood sugar has genuinely dropped." Irregular meal timings, long workdays and unpredictable

schedules only make matters worse by preventing hunger hormones from settling into a predictable rhythm.

The Sleep and Stress Problem

Sleep deprivation and chronic stress are often overlooked contributors to constant hunger. According to Dr Shah, even a single night of inadequate sleep can increase ghrelin while lowering leptin, making people feel significantly hungrier the following day regardless of how much they ate. "Add cortisol from chronic stress into the equation, and you've created a hormonal environment that's almost designed to produce food noise," she says.

She recalls seeing patients who believed they simply lacked self-control, only to discover that weeks of sleeping four or five hours a night were largely driving their cravings.

What Actually Helps?

Rather than focusing solely on eating less, Dr. Shah recommends improving meal quality. "Protein comes first," she says. Adding eggs to breakfast instead of relying only on toast, or pairing rice with

a generous serving of dal, helps slow digestion and reduces rapid fluctuations in blood sugar.

"Protein and fibre slow stomach emptying, preventing the sharp glucose spikes and the crashes that follow." She shares that one patient added sprouts to her breakfast for just a week before noticing that her usual mid-morning cravings had almost disappeared. Meal timing matters too. "You don't have to eat at exactly the same minute every day," Dr. Shah says, "but keeping meals within a fairly consistent window helps because ghrelin follows an internal clock." Sleep, she adds, is another powerful yet often underestimated intervention.

"Even two additional hours of sleep over a few consecutive nights can measurably improve ghrelin and leptin levels." For some individuals, particularly those living with insulin resistance or a long history of repeated dieting, lifestyle changes alone may not completely quiet food noise. In such cases, Dr Shah discusses GLP-1 receptor agonists, which work directly on appetite regulation rather than relying solely on willpower.

Listen to the Noise

Ultimately, Dr Shah encourages people to stop blaming themselves for constant cravings and instead investigate their underlying cause. "Don't just try to push through the noise," she says. "Ask where it's coming from first. Sometimes it isn't in the kitchen at all, it's in your bloodwork, your sleep diary or a source of stress that hasn't yet been recognised." Understanding food noise as a biological response rather than a personal failing is the first step towards building healthier, more sustainable eating habits.

Scientists Develop 'Smart Bandage' That Heals 90% Of Burns In Just 7 Days

(Our Staff Reporter) The process of healing burns is a painful one that requires meticulous care. Burn care specialists use the skin peeling technique, along with painkillers, to remove dead tissue from burns and expose healthy skin. The degree of the burn, along with the inflammation of the skin, influences the time duration required for healing. A small burn wound typically requires about 4 days for complete healing, although the process can be painful for the burn patient. It can be even longer for burns that penetrate the upper layer of the skin, and if the environment is unfavourable for cell movement. To shorten this time duration and make the process of burn healing more effective, scientists from the University of Newcastle have developed a plasma-based hydrogel. The form of it is a smart bandage that can cover the wound as well as soothe inflamed skin, shortening the duration of healing. Laboratory testing found that nearly 90% of wound closure is possible within seven days compared to the 50% rate with conventional dressings. The smart bandage is based on a technology that could improve burn care by reducing painful dressing changes and minimising infection risk.

What Is The New Smart Bandage?

The new smart bandage has been developed by

researchers using a flexible polymer backing. The components of soft hydrogels are used to create this smart bandage. The combination of hydrogels and polymer backing has been combined with plasma engineering. Burn dressings involve covering the burn wound that can often slow the recovery process as the skin needs to heal. Damaged skin heals better when it is kept open, as the skin cells can breathe, but to avoid skin infections, after a burn, the skin is bandaged. The wound dressing needs to be changed periodically, as the skin is delicate during the burn healing process. Along with this, the risk of infection increases when wounds are repeatedly exposed to the open air.

Conventional dressing for burn wounds uses bandages made up of cotton gauze, paraffin, and absorbent dressing. But the environment isn't ideal for skin healing, which makes the new innovation a step in the right direction.

According to researchers, traditional burn wound care often requires repeated bandage changes that can damage healing tissue and delay recovery.

How Does the Smart Bandage Work?

Hydrogel mimics the way human skin tissue behaves, and when it is combined with a polymer layer, the wound dressing can stay stable and flexible. The use of

plasma engineering makes the smart bandage offer a strong, long-lasting adhesion required for better skin recovery. When a smart bandage with these special features is used, the combination treatment involving liquid treatments and antibacterial therapies can easily seep into the skin. The Key Finding: 90% Of Burns Healed Within 7 Days The effectiveness of the burn wound healing within a span of 7 days with the use of the smart bandage can minimise infection risk. When compared with standard burn wound dressing, 50% wound closure happens after 7 days.

The benefits of the smart bandage are the following:

Faster burn recovery along with a reduced secondary infection rate.

Potential reduction in infection risk as the skin is exposed when the dressing is changed.

Less patient discomfort, which makes recovery from burns painful.

Fewer hospital visits for frequent dressing changes.

Could This Mean Fewer Dressing Changes?

Yes, the smart bandage can increase efficacy and offer better coverage. The skin is already traumatised when it is burnt, so the process of treatment, when shortened, can lead to better healing.

How To Make Pure Ghee At Home Without Making Butter First



Homemade ghee is prized for its rich aroma, flavour, and freshness. Traditionally, many households prepare ghee by first churning cream into butter—a process that can be time-consuming and leaves behind extra utensils to clean.

Another common shortcut, heating cream directly, often causes the milk solids to stick to the bottom of the pan, resulting in burnt residue and wasted

ghee. A simple kitchen technique, however, can help you skip the butter-making step and extract more ghee directly from fresh cream. Here's how.

Collect the fresh cream (malai) from boiled milk over several days and refrigerate it until you have enough.

Transfer the chilled cream to a deep bowl and stir it continuously in one direction for about 2–3 minutes using a ladle or whisk.

This helps create a smooth, lump-free consistency, making it easier to separate the fat.

Step 2: Use Ice Water And A Glass

This is the key trick. Add a little ice-cold water or a few ice cubes to the cream. The sudden drop in temperature causes the milk fat to firm up.

Next, take a sturdy glass tumbler and use its base to gently press and rotate the cream in circular motions inside the bowl. As you continue, the butterfat begins to gather together and separate from the remaining liquid (buttermilk), floating around the glass.

Step 3: Drain The Excess Liquid

Once the fat has separated, carefully tilt the bowl and pour out the excess buttermilk or water. Removing this liquid before heating is an important step.

Excess moisture can cause the milk solids to stick to the bottom of the pan and absorb some of the ghee during cooking, reducing the final yield.

Step 4: Heat To Make Ghee

Transfer the separated cream mixture to a heavy-bottomed pan and cook it over a medium flame. Since most of the water has already been removed, the cream melts quickly. Within 5–7 minutes, clear golden ghee begins to separate from the milk solids. Once the milk solids turn light golden and the ghee develops its characteristic nutty aroma, switch off the heat.

Allow it to cool slightly before straining it into a clean, dry glass jar for storage.

Tips For Better Homemade Ghee

Always use well-chilled cream for easier fat separation.

Stir the cream before adding ice water to achieve a smooth texture.

Remove as much excess liquid as possible before heating.

Cook on a medium flame to prevent the milk solids from burning.

Store the prepared ghee in an airtight container and always use a dry spoon while serving.

Why This Method Works

Cooling the cream helps the milk fat solidify, making it easier to separate from the liquid. With less moisture left in the mixture, the ghee cooks faster, produces less burnt residue at the bottom of the pan, and may result in a cleaner extraction with minimal waste.

Note: Results can vary depending on the quality and fat content of the cream. While this method can simplify the process, the quantity of ghee obtained ultimately depends on the cream used.

Rainy Day Cravings? Make This Delicious Aloo Tikki Chaat In Minutes

Nothing complements a rainy day quite like a plate of hot, crispy Aloo Tikki Chaat. With its golden potato patties, tangy chutneys, creamy yoghurt, and crunchy toppings, this popular North Indian street food strikes the perfect balance of spicy, sweet, and savoury flavours.

You can create this crowd-favourite snack at home with simple pantry ingredients in under an hour.

Ingredients

For the Aloo Tikki

4 medium potatoes, boiled and mashed
2 tablespoons cornflour or rice flour
1 teaspoon grated ginger
2 green chillies, finely chopped (optional)
1/2 teaspoon roasted cumin powder
1/2 teaspoon red chilli powder
1/2 teaspoon garam masala
2 tablespoons chopped fresh coriander
Salt to taste
2–3 tablespoons oil or ghee for shallow frying

For the Chhole (Chickpeas)
Preparation

1 cup boiled chickpeas
1 small onion, finely chopped
1 small tomato, finely chopped
1/2 teaspoon ginger-garlic paste

1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds
1/2 teaspoon coriander powder
1/2 teaspoon chole masala or garam masala
1/4 teaspoon turmeric powder
Salt to taste
1 teaspoon oil
For the Chaat Topping

1/2 cup plain yogurt, whisked
2–3 tablespoons tamarind chutney
2–3 tablespoons mint-coriander chutney

1/2 teaspoon roasted cumin powder
1/2 teaspoon chaat masala
Sev for garnish
Finely chopped onion (optional)
Fresh coriander leaves
Pomegranate seeds (optional)
How to make it

Prepare the chhole

Heat oil in a pan and add cumin seeds. Add chopped onion and sauté until golden.

Stir in ginger-garlic paste, then add chopped tomato.

Cook until the tomatoes soften, then add turmeric, chole masala, and salt.

Add boiled chickpeas and a splash of water; simmer for 5–7 minutes until slightly thickened.

Make the aloo tikki

Mix mashed potatoes with cornflour, ginger, green chillies,



roasted cumin powder, red chilli powder, garam masala, coriander leaves, and salt.

Shape the mixture into round, slightly flattened patties.

Shallow-fry on medium heat until both sides are crisp and golden brown.

Assemble the chaat

Place the hot tikkis on serving plates.

Spoon warm chole generously over the tikkis.

Add whisked yogurt, tamarind chutney, and mint chutney.

Sprinkle roasted cumin powder, chaat masala, sev, chopped onion, coriander leaves, and pomegranate seeds.

Serve immediately while the tikkis are still hot and crispy.

Use cooled boiled potatoes so the tikki mixture stays firm.

If the mixture feels sticky, add a little extra cornflour or rice flour. Keep the chole slightly thick so it sits well over the tikkis.

Whisk the yogurt until smooth and chill it for a refreshing contrast.

Adjust the chutneys to make the chaat sweeter, tangier, or spicier to taste.

Aloo Tikki Chaat is quick to prepare, requires everyday ingredients, and delivers authentic street-style flavours at home. Whether you're enjoying a cup of tea on a rainy evening or entertaining guests, this comforting snack is sure to be a hit. Pair it with hot masala chai, and you've got the perfect monsoon indulgence.

Chicken With Skin Or Without? Which One Is Actually Healthier

Chicken is one of the most loved foods among non-vegetarians, finding its way onto plates as curry, fry, or grill almost every week. For many, a meal simply doesn't feel complete without it, but a common health question still divides opinion: should chicken be eaten with the skin or without it?



Why is Chicken Considered Healthy?
Chicken is popular because it is low in fat, high in protein, and contains certain 'good' fats that the body needs. This makes it a staple in many balanced diets, especially for those focused on fitness or muscle building.



What About Chicken Skin? Chicken skin is quite different from the meat itself. According to nutritionists, nearly three-quarters of chicken skin is fat. However, most of this fat is unsaturated, which is considered beneficial. Unsaturated fats help support heart health and assist in controlling cholesterol levels.



Eating chicken with the skin significantly increases calorie intake. For instance, around 170 grams of skinless chicken provides roughly 280 calories, most of which come from protein. The same quantity with skin contains about 380 calories, as fat is also a major source of energy. This difference can matter depending on your health goals.



What is the Best Way to Eat Chicken? Cooking chicken with the skin on and removing it afterwards is often considered the best option. This method enhances flavour while reducing the amount of fat absorbed during eating.

Who Should Avoid Chicken Skin?
People trying to lose weight, or those with heart disease, diabetes, or high cholesterol, are generally advised to choose skinless chicken. It is a safer and lighter option for such conditions.



Storage And Safety Tip: Once chicken is fully cooked, it can be refrozen safely, as the cooking process destroys harmful bacteria.



Whether you eat chicken with or without skin should depend on your health, lifestyle, and dietary goals. When consumed in moderation and prepared properly, chicken remains a well-balanced and nutritious food.

Bhavitha Mandava on ramp, Ananya Panday takes front row at Chanel show in Paris

Bhavitha Mandava walked the Chanel runway while Ananya Panday took her place in the front row as the fashion house unveiled its latest haute couture collection at Paris Haute Couture Week on July 7.

(News Agency) Bhavitha Mandava, the celebrated model whose career began almost by accident, returned to the Chanel runway this time leaving behind the now-famous (and infamous) sweater-and-jeans look. The Hyderabad-born model, who is now a Chanel House Ambassador, walked the runway in a whimsical beige dress accented with striking red feather trims.

Just in case you don't know: Here is why Mandava is called an accidental model—and the story behind the now-famous sweater-and-jeans reference. At the Grand Palais in Paris, transformed into a garden for the occasion, French luxury fashion house Chanel unveiled its latest collection by creative director Matthieu Blazy on Day 2 of Paris

Haute Couture Week. The presentation marked Blazy's second haute couture collection for the house since he took over as creative director in December 2024.

For the new collection, Blazy took inspiration from a leather-bound collection of fairy tales he found in the home of Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel, the founder of the iconic brand. He saw Chanel's career as a fairy tale, too, and translated that vision into the looks for this collection. That is why the collection was bright and whimsical, featuring florals, butterflies, sleeping bears, swans, ducks, and other storybook-inspired motifs - almost as if the clothes were bringing the pages of the book to life. The dress Mandava sported on the runway fit the

fairy-tale theme perfectly.

"I also low-key feel like Cinderella after what has happened with Chanel," Mandava told The Nod magazine at the show, referring to her own fairytale-like rise in the fashion industry. Actress Ananya Panday, Chanel's Indian brand ambassador, also attended the couture show in Paris. Dressed in coordinated denim separates, the actress brought understated glamour to the show. She wore a light-blue denim jacket paired with a matching midi skirt, both accented with checkered embroidery. Keeping the accessories monochrome, she completed the look with a black-and-white handbag and a pair of colour-block heels. India's presence at Paris Haute Couture Week doesn't end there. Rahul



Mishra presented his latest couture collection on Day 1, while Manish Malhotra is all set to make his much-anticipated couture debut at the prestigious fashion week on July 8.

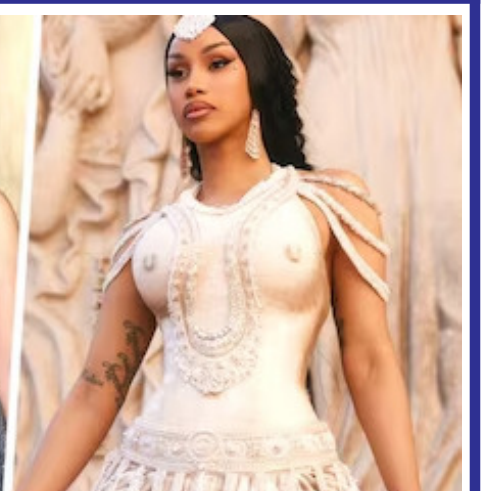
Rahul Mishra's Devi had Isha Ambani, Cardi B looking like living sculptures

Cardi B and Isha Ambani attended Rahul Mishra's Paris Haute Couture Week showcase, both dressed in striking looks from the designer's latest collection.

(News Agency) Fashion designer Rahul Mishra unveiled his new collection, Devi - easily one of his most breathtaking to date - at Paris Haute Couture Week. Inspired by centuries-old Indian temple sculptures, the collection brought the grandeur of these stone carvings to the runway, with models walking in dramatic ensembles in shades of stone grey, black, antique gold and beige.

Mishra, a magician with embroidery, replicated the intricacy of these sculptures uncannily on fabric. Everything from the drapery to the layered necklaces, waist belts and armlets was rendered onto the garments through his mastery of hand embroidery. While the sartorial creations were mind-blowing - almost as if someone had breathed life into those ages-old temple sculptures - the front row was equally intriguing. Pop sensation Cardi B and Reliance Retail Ventures Executive Director Isha Ambani sat side by side, both dressed in looks from the new collection.

Isha Ambani, who is also known globally



for her fashion-forward choices, arrived in a figure-hugging stone-grey ensemble featuring a corset bodice and a draped skirt. The colour palette and intricate embroidery made the outfit look as though a sculpture had come to life. She paired it with a sleek grey dupatta, while a statement diamond necklace sparkled beneath it. Ambani completed the look with Herms's coveted bejewelled Birkin bag. It is known to be one of the world's rarest and most expensive handbags, for it is crafted from 18-karat white gold and

encrusted with 3,025 diamonds totalling 111.09 carats.

Grammy-winning rapper Cardi B, a frequent wearer of Rahul Mishra's creations, wore an ivory ensemble from the Devi collection. The figure-hugging gown also resembled a carved stone sculpture, with intricate hand embroidery creating the illusion of layered necklaces cascading over the bodice. Beaded shoulder ornaments and an ornate, lattice-like overskirt echoed temple jewellery and sculptural drapery. She

completed the look with a matching ivory maang tikka, while similar embellishments were woven into her long, open hair.

Rahul Mishra became the first Indian designer to showcase at Paris Haute Couture Week in 2020 and has been a regular on the official calendar ever since. Over the years, he has also emerged as a global fashion force, with international celebrities including Selena Gomez, Beyonc, Zendaya and Gigi Hadid wearing his creations.

Actor Anjali Anand on body-shaming: Society sees my weight before my job

Actor Anjali Anand addressed the trolling around her weight while speaking about Dhamaal 4. In an exclusive interview, she said the backlash reflects how women are still judged by appearance before talent.

(News Agency) Actor Anjali Anand said conversations around a woman's appearance continue to overshadow her work, even in 2026. Speaking to India Today about the response to her role in Dhamaal 4 and the trolling around her weight, the actor said society still judges women by how they look before recognising their talent. Speaking about the response to the Dhamaal 4 trailer, Anjali said, "I'm just overwhelmed by everything. I'm just hoping that everybody loves the film and things work out. I just hope I get a lot more beautiful parts from this. And yeh jo bhi noise ho rahi hai mere baare mein (whatever noise is being made about me), it just becomes nice and turns out to be great for me," she said. When asked if it was disappointing that discussions about female actors still revolve around their weight rather than their work, Anand said it reflects society's mindset. "Yeah, and I think that is still happening

because society still reflects that. Society still believes, and still sees my weight first before my job. So jab tak woh hota rahega, tab tak main yeh kaam karti rahungi (as long as that continues to happen, I will keep doing this work) to prove ki that's wrong."

Writing better roles for women The actor believes filmmakers still have a long way to go in writing meaningful roles for women who don't fit the conventional heroine mould. "There's still a long way to go when it comes to writing better roles for women. That's what I'm trying to do. The more people see me, the more their thinking opens up. They'll start believing that they can write something better for this actor, for this role- something that uses her skills rather than just her body.

Talking about signing the film, Anand admitted she had mixed emotions because of the subject it touches upon. "It's a big turmoil

because it's a very big responsibility if you're taking up something so vulnerable, something you stand up against all the time. Something that you know is not right. Something that should not be done in society." She added, "But then I thought that this is still being done in society, and we're just showing society what their reality is. And if they're offended by that, that means they're doing this as well."

Beyond fat shaming

According to Anand, appearance-based judgment goes far beyond weight. "It's not just about fat shaming. People shame others for being too thin, for their skin colour, for not having hair, for how they look, what they wear, which brand they wear- everything. The day that stops, which honestly may never happen, what we can do is present these issues in a different light and show people what's possible. Reflecting on how women are being written in



mainstream cinema today, Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Anand said she has noticed a gradual shift. "Things are changing slowly. Earlier, characters like Miss Mimi were just shown eating burgers, or Sweetu was reduced to having a double chocolate frappuccino and muffins. There was no stand taken for those characters. But with Sweetu, things began to change. Then came Gayathri in Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani, who stood up for herself," she said. The actor added, "Women today have agency. There's a community standing behind them. They've been given space, and they're owning that space. It's a slow process because there are so many people in this country and the world, but the change will reach everyone eventually."

Citizen Vigilante: Plot, Cast And Why Everyone Is Talking About The Controversial Film Elon Musk Shared On X

Armie Hammer's comeback film Citizen Vigilante has sparked global debate. Here's everything to know about its plot, cast, controversy, Elon Musk's support and where to watch it.

(News Agency) After several years away from Hollywood, Armie Hammer has returned to the big screen with Citizen Vigilante, a film that has become one of the year's most polarising releases. Directed by German filmmaker Uwe Boll, the action thriller has generated headlines not just because it marks Hammer's comeback following the allegations that derailed his career, but also because of its themes of vigilantism, immigration and violence. Billionaire Elon Musk publicly promoted the film on X, introducing it to millions of users. Here's everything you need to know about Citizen Vigilante.

What Is Citizen Vigilante About?

Citizen Vigilante follows Sanders, played by Armie Hammer, a former American soldier living in Europe who loses faith in the legal system after witnessing violent crime and corruption. Frustrated by what he sees as a justice system that has failed ordinary citizens, Sanders begins hunting down criminals himself, targeting rapists, gang members and corrupt officials. As his

actions gain attention online, he becomes a controversial public figure whose methods divide opinion.

Who Stars In The Film?

Armie Hammer leads the cast as Sanders in what is widely regarded as his first major acting role since his Hollywood career stalled in 2021 following abuse allegations and leaked messages involving violent sexual fantasies. Hammer was investigated by the Los Angeles Police Department but was never charged with a crime.

The film also stars Costas Mandylor, best known for the Saw franchise. It is written and directed by Uwe Boll, the filmmaker behind Postal, BloodRayne and several video game adaptations that have made him one of cinema's most controversial directors.

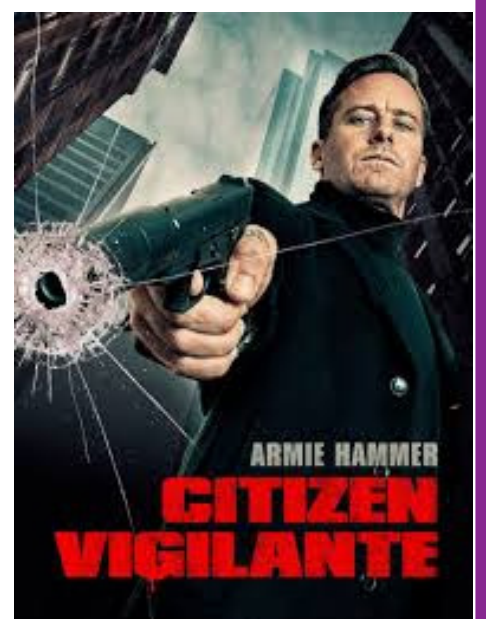
Why Is The Film So Controversial?

The controversy extends far beyond Hammer's casting. Critics have accused Citizen Vigilante of portraying migrants as violent criminals while glorifying vigilante justice and presenting a bleak vision of modern

Europe. Reviewers have argued that the film promotes anti-immigration rhetoric and normalises extrajudicial violence, while supporters have defended it as a fictional action thriller tackling issues they believe mainstream cinema avoids. The debate intensified after Germany's film classification authority declined to classify the movie, preventing it from receiving a conventional theatrical release in the country. Director Uwe Boll criticised the decision as censorship, while opponents argued the film's violent depiction of immigrants justified the move.

Why Is Elon Musk Being Linked To Citizen Vigilante?

The film reached an even wider audience after Elon Musk shared Citizen Vigilante on X for a limited period, allowing users to watch it for free. Musk also amplified posts praising the film, helping it gain attention online despite its poor critical reception and distribution hurdles. The move divided opinion, with supporters welcoming the



exposure and critics accusing Musk of boosting a film they viewed as promoting anti-immigrant messaging. His endorsement nevertheless turned Citizen Vigilante into a much bigger talking point than many independent releases typically become.

Obsession Becomes Surprise Box Office Smash, Crosses \$400 Million Globally



(News Agency) Not every box office success begins with a massive budget or a star-studded cast. Sometimes, all it takes is a fresh idea, strong word-of-mouth and audiences who can't stop talking about it. That's exactly what's happened with *Obsession*, a horror film that has quietly turned into one of 2026's biggest success stories. Two months after hitting theatres, *Obsession* has crossed the \$400 million mark at the worldwide box office. The supernatural horror film has now collected \$403 million globally, with \$245 million coming from North

America and another \$157 million from international markets.

What's even more impressive is the film's tiny budget. Directed by YouTuber-turned-filmmaker Curry Barker, *Obsession* was made for just \$750,000. It later became one of the hottest titles at the Toronto International Film Festival, where Focus Features picked up its distribution rights for \$14 million, making it one of the festival's biggest genre film deals.

Even after spending eight weekends in cinemas, *Obsession* continues to pull

audiences. During the July 4 holiday weekend, the film added \$5.3 million domestically and \$12 million overseas. It is now inching closer to the \$250 million milestone in North America alone—an achievement few original films have managed in recent years. The film had opened with a promising \$17 million in North America in May. But instead of slowing down after release, it kept growing. In a rare feat, *Obsession* recorded four consecutive weekends that earned more than its opening weekend, thanks to strong audience reactions and glowing word-of-mouth.

Much of the film's success has been driven by younger audiences, especially Gen Z moviegoers. The story follows Bear (played by Michael Johnston), a music store employee who makes a Faustian bargain using a supernatural toy to make his crush Nikki (Inde Navarrette) fall in love with him. What begins as a romantic wish soon spirals into terrifying consequences. The film's performance has also challenged the belief that younger audiences are losing interest in theatres. Alongside A24's horror hit *Backrooms*, *Obsession* has shown that original horror films can still draw

crowds. Directed by YouTuber Kane Parsons, *Backrooms* has also enjoyed a hugely successful run, earning \$347 million worldwide so far. The film had opened with a promising \$17 million in North America in May. But instead of slowing down after release, it kept growing. In a rare feat, *Obsession* recorded four consecutive weekends that earned more than its opening weekend, thanks to strong audience reactions and glowing word-of-mouth. Much of the film's success has been driven by younger audiences, especially Gen Z moviegoers. The story follows Bear (played by Michael Johnston), a music store employee who makes a Faustian bargain using a supernatural toy to make his crush Nikki (Inde Navarrette) fall in love with him. What begins as a romantic wish soon spirals into terrifying consequences. The film's performance has also challenged the belief that younger audiences are losing interest in theatres. Alongside A24's horror hit *Backrooms*, *Obsession* has shown that original horror films can still draw crowds. Directed by YouTuber Kane Parsons, *Backrooms* has also enjoyed a hugely successful run, earning \$347 million worldwide so far.

The Big Bang Theory's Leonard Returns! Johnny Galecki Ends 7-Year Acting Hiatus



(News Agency) For years, millions of fans watched Leonard Hofstadter stumble through science, friendships and love in *The Big Bang Theory*. Even after the sitcom ended, many hoped to see Johnny Galecki back on screen one day. That wait is finally coming to an end but with a twist.

After staying away from acting for seven years, Johnny Galecki is all set to make his comeback with *Kowalski*, a new stage production in Chicago. Instead of returning to television, the actor is stepping onto the theatre stage, taking on the role of legendary

playwright Tennessee Williams. Best remembered for playing Leonard Hofstadter in *The Big Bang Theory*, Galecki will star in *Kowalski*, written by Gregg Ostrin and directed by Colin Hanlon for Lookingglass Theatre Company.

According to *Variety*, the play will run from September 19 to October 25.

Set in Provincetown in 1947, *Kowalski* imagines the first meeting between playwright Tennessee Williams and Hollywood icon Marlon Brando. The production explores how that encounter eventually influenced

Williams' iconic play *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which premiered in 1951. After years away from the spotlight, Galecki said this project felt too special to pass up. He shared, "The planets aligned. Gregg's writing, Colin's vision, and the feeling that after seven years of quietly observing life, I finally had something new to bring back to the work. Add to that the privilege of portraying one of my artistic heroes, and it became impossible to say no."

Playwright Gregg Ostrin also spoke about the heart of the production. "At its heart, 'Kowalski' is about the collision of extraordinary talents and the lasting impact those encounters can have on art and culture."

Long before he became the lovable physicist Leonard, Galecki had already built an impressive acting career. He appeared in the hit sitcom *Roseanne* and starred in films including *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*, *Prancer*, *Suicide Kings*, *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, *Vanilla Sky*, *Hancock*, *In Time* and *Rings*.

But it was *The Big Bang Theory* that turned him into a global television star. His portrayal of Leonard Hofstadter

earned him an Emmy nomination and made him one of the most recognisable sitcom actors of his generation.

For many fans, Leonard, Sheldon, Penny, Howard and Raj weren't just TV characters—they became part of their everyday lives. Even years after the show's finale, clips and memes from the sitcom continue to go viral, keeping its nostalgia alive.

When *The Big Bang Theory* ended, Galecki made a few appearances on *The Conners*, reprising his role as David from *Roseanne*. His last major film appearance came in 2019.

Soon after, he stepped away from Hollywood altogether. The actor left California after nearly 30 years and moved to Tennessee, choosing a much quieter life away from the entertainment industry.

In recent years, Galecki has largely stayed out of the public eye, focusing on raising his children and spending time with his family.

Fans did get a pleasant surprise in 2025 when he reunited with his *The Big Bang Theory* co-star Kaley Cuoco for a mobile game advertisement, sparking fresh hopes of seeing him act again.

SATLUJ: The Film That Refused to Stay Silent

After years of censorship battles and a brief streaming debut, Diljit Dosanjh's controversial film has become more than a movie—it has become a national conversation about history, artistic freedom, and the public's right to watch and decide.

(By Raaj Raahi)

NEW YORK - Every generation produces films that are remembered not merely for their performances or box-office success, but for the conversations they ignite. Some become milestones because they redefine cinema. Others become significant because they challenge society to revisit chapters of history that remain uncomfortable, controversial, or unresolved.

Satluj, formerly titled Punjab 95, belongs to the latter category. Even before audiences watched a single frame, the film had already entered public discourse. It had spent more than three years navigating the certification process, reportedly facing demands from India's Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) for extensive edits before release. According to multiple media reports, more than 127 modifications were sought, including changes to the title, references to Punjab, the use of real names, and terminology relating to alleged human rights violations and extrajudicial killings.

Then came an unexpected twist.

On July 3, 2026, the film quietly premiered on ZEE5 under the title Satluj. For the first time, viewers had access to the original, reportedly uncut version. Yet the availability proved remarkably brief. Within approximately 48 hours, the film disappeared from the streaming platform for audiences in India. The sudden removal immediately reignited debates surrounding artistic freedom, historical storytelling, and the role of cinema in democratic societies.

According to ZEE5, the platform continues to support the film and its creative vision and is exploring legal avenues to restore the film for Indian audiences.

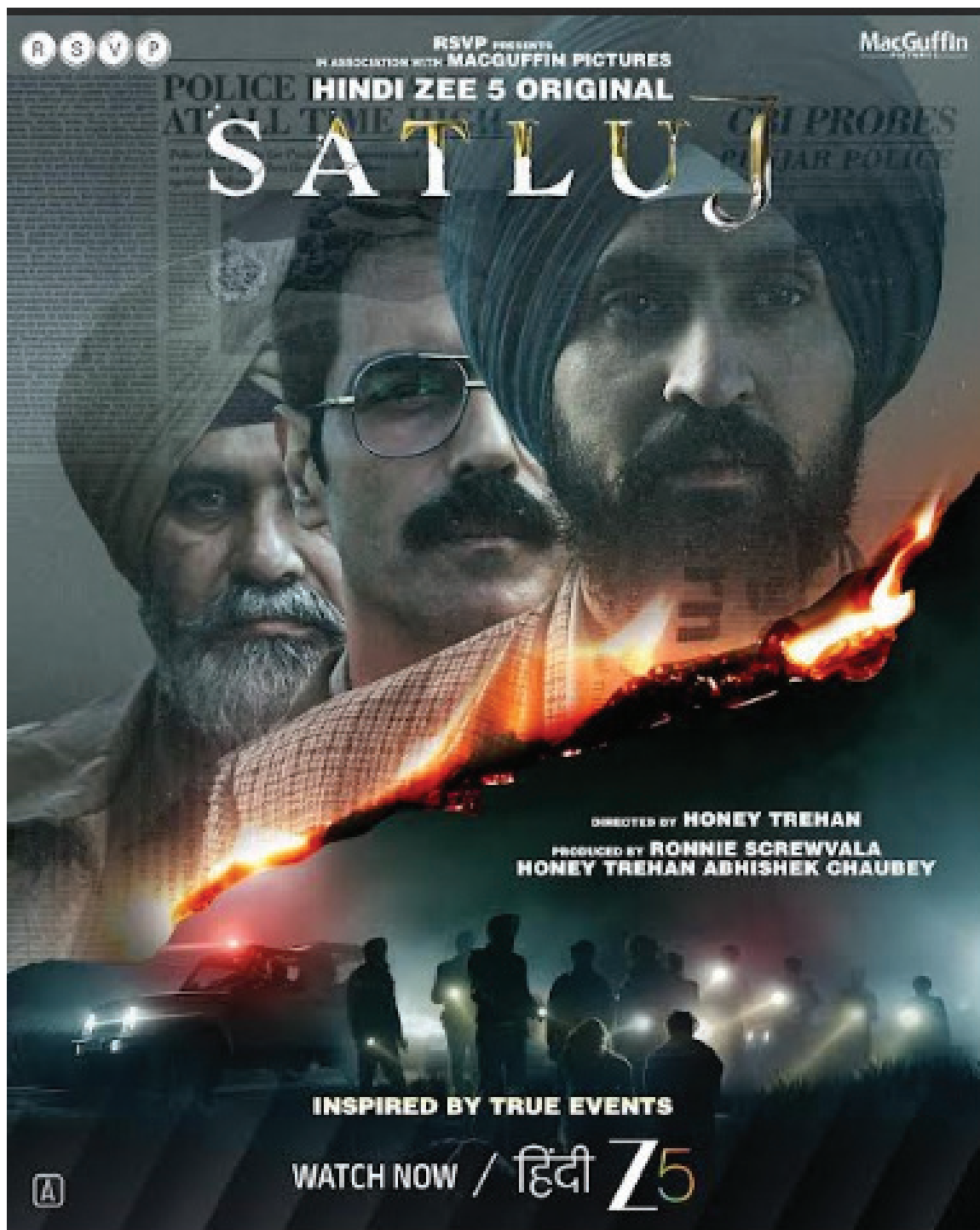
Whether that happens remains to be seen.

What is already certain is that Satluj has become one of the most discussed Indian films of the year.

More Than a Biographical Drama

Directed by Honey Trehan, Satluj draws inspiration from the life of slain human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khrala.

Khrala became internationally recognized after documenting



allegations of thousands of unidentified cremations and disappearances during Punjab's insurgency period. His investigations attracted worldwide attention before he himself disappeared in 1995. His killing later became the subject of legal proceedings and remains one of the most significant human rights cases associated with Punjab's turbulent years.

Rather than presenting itself as a conventional political thriller, the film explores the personal cost of pursuing truth under extraordinary circumstances. It is, above all, the story of one individual's determination to document what he believed the world needed to know.

"Cinema is at its most powerful when it encourages audiences to confront difficult questions rather than offering easy answers."

Diljit Dosanjh's Most Restrained Performance

For audiences accustomed to seeing Diljit Dosanjh in energetic commercial entertainers, Satluj reveals another dimension of his acting. His portrayal avoids theatrical excess. Instead, Dosanjh delivers a performance built on restraint, quiet determination, and emotional authenticity. Much of the film's power comes not from dramatic speeches but from silence, facial expressions, and moments of reflection. It is arguably among the strongest dramatic performances of his career. The supporting cast also contributes significantly, creating a believable world that avoids sensationalism despite the gravity of its subject matter.

The Burden of History

Films based on real events inevitably invite scrutiny.

Some viewers approach them seeking historical documentation.

Others expect dramatic storytelling.

Still others judge them through political or ideological lenses.

The challenge for filmmakers lies in balancing historical inspiration with cinematic storytelling.

Satluj attempts precisely that balance.

It does not claim to be a courtroom record or an official historical document.

Instead, it uses cinema to revisit events that continue to generate debate decades later.

This distinction is important.

Throughout global cinema, filmmakers have explored wars, political upheavals, civil rights movements, and historical injustices—not because every

interpretation is universally accepted, but because storytelling helps societies engage with their past.

Films rarely settle historical debates.

They often begin them. When Censorship Becomes the Story

Ironically, much of the public conversation surrounding Satluj has focused less on its content than on the circumstances surrounding its release.

Reports of prolonged certification disputes, extensive suggested edits, and the film's sudden removal from streaming have transformed Satluj into a broader discussion about artistic freedom.

Every nation establishes certification systems intended to classify and regulate films according to its laws and public policies.

Filmmakers, meanwhile, often argue that artistic expression requires sufficient space to address difficult themes honestly.

Finding the balance between these interests has long been one of cinema's greatest challenges—not only in India but around the world.

In many cases, controversies surrounding films eventually become as historically significant as the films themselves.

Whether Satluj ultimately joins that list will depend on what happens next.

"Audiences should have the opportunity to watch a film, evaluate its merits, and form their own informed opinions."

The Responsibility of Cinema Cinema occupies a unique place in society. Unlike news reports, it seeks emotional truth alongside factual inspiration. Unlike textbooks, it presents history through characters and personal journeys.

Unlike political speeches, it invites audiences to experience events through empathy.

This is precisely why films inspired by real events often provoke powerful reactions.

Their purpose is not necessarily to deliver definitive historical conclusions. Rather, they encourage discussion. For journalists, critics, historians, and audiences alike, discussion remains essential. Democratic societies grow stronger when difficult subjects can be examined thoughtfully and respectfully.

Effective leadership is measured not by rank or authority, but by the positive impact made on others," Riddhi Chauhan

Chauhan joined NJROTC The Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (NJROTC), supported by the U.S. Navy, with the intention of strengthening her leadership abilities and contributing meaningfully to her school community. What began as an opportunity for personal growth soon evolved into a calling for public service.

(By our staff reporter) Every weekday before most students arrive at Benjamin N. Cardozo High School in Queens, New York, Riddhi Chauhan is already on the drill field. As the sun rises, she leads morning practice, preparing cadets for inspections, competitions, and ceremonies. By the time the first bell rings, the high school senior has already begun another day of guiding nearly 300 fellow students as Battalion Commanding Officer of the Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (NJROTC).

(Compiled from a Press release) Images provided by Press release.



AAPICON 2026 – The Story of a Convention That Became a Celebration

This year, one of the most anticipated moments of the AAPI Convention 2026 in Tampa was the presentation of the AAPI Humanitarian Award to Smt. Nita Ambani, honoring her global philanthropic leadership in healthcare, education, and community upliftment. The ceremony drew a packed audience and underscored AAPI's commitment to recognizing individuals who embody service and compassion.



Trump Administration Launches Sweeping Proactive Probe Into H-1B and PERM Visa Fraud



WASHINGTON, D.C. — In a significant escalation of high-skilled immigration enforcement, the Trump administration has launched "Project Firewall," a sweeping, first-of-its-kind federal investigation into systemic fraud and abuse within the H-1B and PERM work visa programs. Moving away from the historical case-by-case, complaint-driven approach, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) is aggressively targeting massive IT services and outsourcing providers. Senior federal officials have explicitly named industry giant Cognizant, alongside firms like Infosys, as primary targets under scrutiny.

The focus on Cognizant follows a major federal class-action verdict in California, where a jury found the company liable for a "pattern or practice" of intentional discrimination against non-South Asian and non-Indian workers. Federal investigators are probing allegations of "ghost job" submissions—where visa applications were allegedly filed for non-existent roles to stockpile H-1B workers—and discriminatory "benching" practices, where local U.S. workers were benched and terminated while foreign visa holders were given preferential project placement.

US Charges Punjab Police Officer Over Cross-Border Extortion Scheme

(Our Staff Reporter) LOS ANGELES, CA- U.S. prosecutors have charged a Punjab police officer in a sweeping racketeering case, alleging he worked with an organized crime syndicate to falsely implicate victims in a murder case and extort money by threatening criminal prosecution. Politics The allegations are contained in one of three federal indictments unsealed on July as part of 'Operation Hard Ball,' a multinational investigation targeting transnational organized crime groups. The indictment identifies Gurinderjit Singh, also known as Gurinderjit Singh Nagra, Gurinder Jeet Singh and Rajinder Singh, as a Punjab police officer charged with attempted interference with commerce by extortion. According to the indictment, Gurinderjit Singh worked with members of the Jaggu Bhagwanpuria organized crime group to falsely implicate victims in India in the January 2026 murder of a man identified only as "B.S." and then demanded money to remove their names from the criminal case. Announcing the charges in Los Angeles,

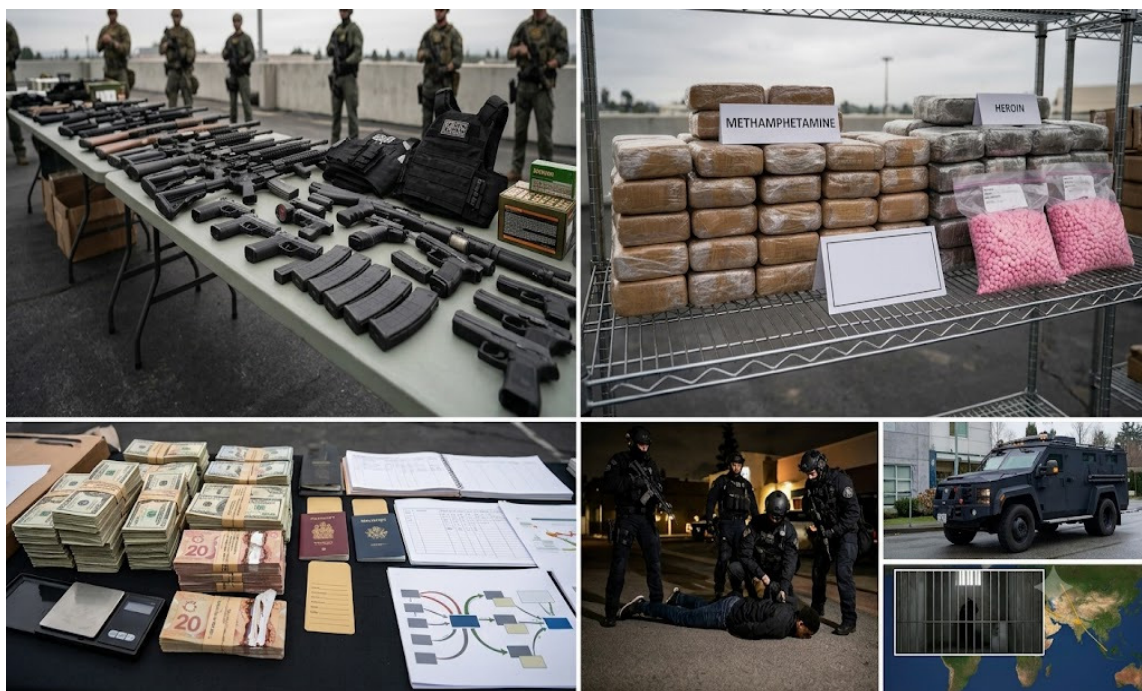
First Assistant U.S. Attorney Bilal A. Essayli said the indictment alleges the gang "would partner with corrupt law enforcement officials in India to falsely accuse enemies of crimes within India." Essayli said Gurinderjit Singh, identified by prosecutors as a police officer in Punjab, is charged with attempting to extort victims in Los Angeles by threatening to file false murder charges against them in India. According to prosecutors, alleged Jaggu Bhagwanpuria gang member Gurlal Singh provided information about one victim to Gurinderjit Singh "for purposes of falsely accusing" the individual of murder. The officer allegedly contacted the victim's father and warned that the victim, his father and his sister would all be named as accused unless money was paid. Prosecutors further allege that on May 24, 2026, Gurinderjit Singh participated in a press conference in Punjab where he publicly accused members of the family of arranging "a contract" to have the victim murdered and announced they would be formally named as accused.

Motel Manager Arrested In Federal Sex Trafficking Sweep In Los Angeles

(Our Staff Reporter) LOS ANGELES, CA – A motel manager has been arrested as part of a federal crackdown on an alleged sex trafficking network operating along Los Angeles' Figueroa Corridor, where authorities say members of the Hoover Criminal Gang exploited dozens of women and minors over several years. Hotels & Accommodations Mukeshkumar Rambhai Ahir, 45, manager of the Stadium Inn & Spa motel in South Los Angeles, is among 10 defendants taken into custody in the case. Federal prosecutors have charged him with financially benefiting from the gang's alleged sex trafficking operation and structuring cash deposits to hide the source of the funds. According to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Central District of California, Ahir deposited \$64,581 between September 2024 and January 2026 that he allegedly knew came from the gang's trafficking of children and adults. Prosecutors also accuse him of breaking the cash into smaller deposits to avoid federal reporting requirements. Ahir was arrested during coordinated raids on July 1 targeting alleged traffickers operating along the Figueroa Corridor, a South Los Angeles stretch long associated with prostitution and human trafficking. Authorities described it as the second major joint operation

by federal and local law enforcement in the area since last year. The arrests are linked to a 65-count superseding indictment unsealed on July 1, which alleges that members and associates of the Hoover Criminal Gang controlled a prostitution and sex trafficking operation in the corridor between February 2021 and June 2026. The indictment identifies 51 alleged victims and adds seven new defendants, including six alleged gang members facing charges that include racketeering conspiracy, child sex trafficking, drug trafficking conspiracy and money laundering. Investigators allege the group targeted vulnerable girls and young women, including minors, runaways and children in foster care, recruiting them through social media and direct contact. Victims were allegedly lured with promises of a luxurious lifestyle before being subjected to intimidation, violence and coercion. Law Enforcement According to prosecutors, victims were forced to turn over all money earned through commercial sex work to their pimps. Those who resisted allegedly faced beatings, branding, public humiliation and the withholding of food, drugs or affection. The indictment also alleges that traffickers supplied victims with drugs such as oxycodone and amphetamines to create addictions they could later exploit.

"Operation Hardball": Coordinated Global Strike Smashes Transnational Crime Rings



(Our Staff Reporter) LOS ANGELES — In one of the most sophisticated international law enforcement operations in recent history, federal authorities in the United States, Canada, and Europe have executed "Operation Hardball," a massive multi-agency crackdown dismantling violent, India-based transnational organized crime syndicates. The multi-year investigation resulted in the unsealing of three separate indictments charging 37 defendants, with 24 suspected gang members arrested in a series of highly synchronized raids

spanning from southern California to Georgia. The operation targeted brutal, cross-border enterprises—including the notorious Lawrence Bishnoi syndicate—which allegedly orchestrated high-profile extortions, cross-border drug trafficking, and the June 2023 political assassination of a prominent figure outside a Sikh temple in British Columbia, Canada. Ringleaders remarkably directed operations utilizing smuggled cellphones from inside Indian prisons. During the crackdown, tactical units executed dozens of warrants, seizing:



AMERICA'S DEADLIEST SHOOTINGS ARE ONES WE DON'T TALK ABOUT

On any given day in America, too many of our mothers, brothers, partners, and friends are taken from us by gun suicide. But tomorrow's deaths could be prevented. Take the next step to store all your guns more securely: locked, unloaded, and away from ammo.



EndFamilyFire.org



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American Eagle Appoints Indian-Origin Ravi Thanawala As CFO

(Our Staff Reporter) Indian-origin executive Ravi Thanawala has been named the new Chief Financial Officer of American Eagle Outfitters, adding another prominent Indian-origin leader to the executive ranks of a major U.S. retailer. The apparel company announced that Thanawala will join as Executive Vice President and CFO on August 3. He will succeed long-time finance chief Mike Mathias, who will move into a non-executive strategic adviser role to Chief Executive Officer Jay Schottenstein.

The appointment comes as American Eagle Outfitters works to strengthen its leadership team while navigating a challenging retail market and focusing on long-term growth. Thanawala brings more than 20 years of experience across the retail, apparel, and consumer sectors. He

joins American Eagle from Papa John's, where he most recently served as Chief Financial Officer and President, North America. He joined the pizza chain as CFO in 2023, became CFO and Executive Vice President, International in 2024, and took on the additional responsibility of leading its North American business in November 2025. During a leadership transition, he also served as the company's interim Chief Executive Officer. Before Papa John's, Thanawala



spent nearly three years as Chief Financial Officer of Nike's North America business, overseeing finance for the sportswear company's largest regional market. Earlier in his career, he held several senior finance and operations roles at ANN, the parent company of Ann Taylor and LOFT. His responsibilities included managing Asia operations, global logistics, international trade, and later leading the company's finance function. Over the years, Thanawala has built a career focused on improving financial performance, strengthening operations, and

supporting long-term growth for consumer-facing businesses. American Eagle CEO Jay Schottenstein said the company believes Thanawala's deep retail experience and leadership background make him well positioned to help guide the retailer through its next phase of growth. Thanawala succeeds Mike Mathias, who has been with American Eagle for much of the past three decades. Mathias joined the company in 1998 as a finance manager for stores and operations. After leaving briefly in 2016, he returned the following year and was appointed Chief Financial Officer in April 2020. American Eagle said Mathias will work closely with Thanawala through the rest of fiscal 2026 to ensure a smooth transition before continuing as a strategic adviser to the CEO through July 2027.

Murder Charges Against Pasadena Doc Dharmesh Patel, Accused In Tesla Cliff Crash, Dismissed



(Our Staff Reporter) BELMONT, CA – In the case that drew national headlines, attempted murder charges against Pasadena radiologist Dharmesh Patel have been dismissed after he completed a court-approved mental health diversion program, ending the criminal case over a 2023 crash in which prosecutors alleged he deliberately drove his family's Tesla off a Northern California cliff. Dharmesh Patel Tesla cliff crash case Death & Tragedy Patel, 45, had faced three counts of attempted murder after the January 2023 incident at Devil's Slide along Pacific Coast Highway. His wife, Neha Patel, and the couple's two young children were inside the vehicle when it plunged about 250 feet. All four survived. A San Mateo County judge approved Patel's entry into California's mental health diversion program in August 2024, allowing him to undergo treatment instead of continuing through criminal prosecution. As part of the program, Patel received psychiatric care, participated in family therapy and provided the court with regular updates while living with his parents in Belmont.

Following his successful completion of the two-year program, the San Mateo County Superior Court dismissed the charges this week, according to the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office. District Attorney Stephen Wagstaffe said prosecutors

had opposed diversion because they believed the allegations were too serious, arguing Patel had acted with premeditation in attempting to kill his wife, two children and himself. But once Patel fulfilled all of the court's requirements, dismissal followed under the terms of the diversion program, leaving prosecutors with no legal basis to object. Patel remained in custody from the time of the crash until he entered the diversion program. During court proceedings, multiple psychologists testified that he was experiencing a psychotic episode caused by major depressive disorder when the crash occurred. The court had previously heard that Patel feared for the future and believed his children could become victims of sex trafficking. Criminal Law Investigators said Patel's wife told first responders after the crash that he had intentionally driven the vehicle off the roadway. Before the incident, Patel worked as a radiologist at Providence Holy Cross Medical Center in

Mission Hills. While the criminal charges were pending, the Medical Board of California obtained a court order preventing him from practicing medicine. He later surrendered his medical license. The board has not indicated whether the dismissal of the criminal charges affects his ability to seek reinstatement. California created its mental health diversion program in 2018 to allow eligible defendants whose mental illness contributed to an alleged offense to receive treatment rather than prosecution. The law has faced growing scrutiny in recent years. Last week, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed legislation giving judges broader authority to deny diversion when they determine a defendant poses a risk to public safety. Had the crash resulted in a death, Patel could have faced a potential sentence of 25 years to life for first-degree murder. Instead, Patel leaves the case without a criminal conviction after completing court-ordered treatment.

Bakersfield, CA, Newborn Death Case Concludes With Final Sentencing

(Our Staff Reporter) BAKERSFIELD, CA – A Kern County court has sentenced the last defendant in the 2018 killing of a newborn whose body was later found buried in the backyard of a southwest Bakersfield home. City & Local Guides Bakhshinderpal Singh Mann was sentenced to six years in prison after pleading no contest last year for his role in the case. He received credit for time already served. Canadian authorities captured Mann in 2021. Prosecutors said the baby's grandmother, Beant Kaur Dhillon, drowned the infant in November 2018. Investigators said Dhillon told them she acted because she believed her unmarried teenage daughter's preg-

nancy would bring shame to the family. She was sentenced in 2021 to 25 years to life in prison. The baby's grandfather, Jagsir Singh, was also charged in the case. According to police, Singh said he was not home when the baby was born or killed but learned what had happened afterward. He told investigators he allowed the baby to be buried in the backyard and did not seek medical care for his daughter because he feared his wife would throw him out of the house and that he could be deported. Singh was charged with aiding a felon, felony child abuse, and conspiracy. He died by suicide in March 2019 before the case was concluded.

