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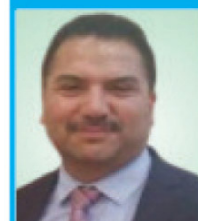


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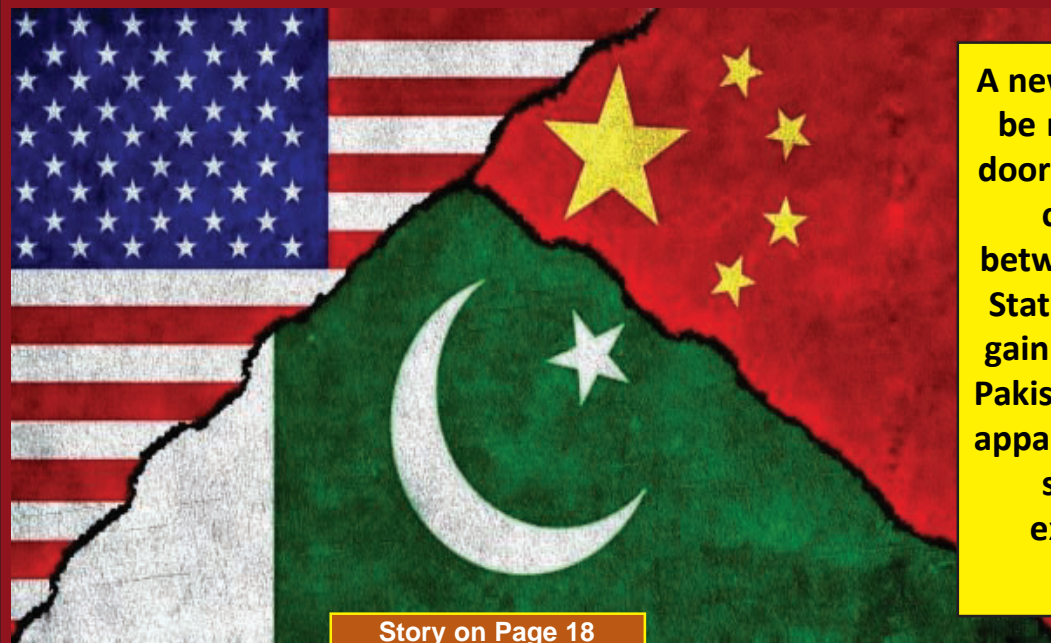
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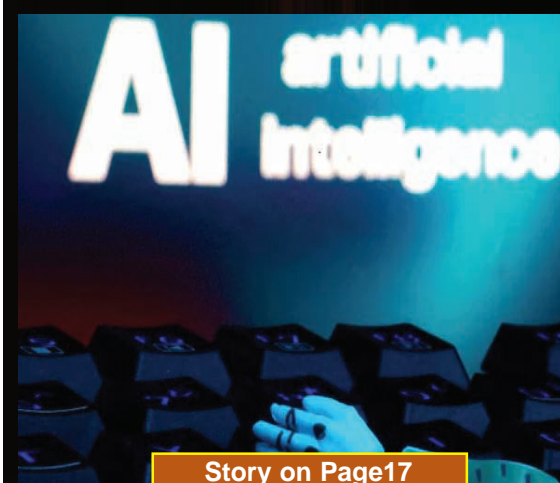
Emerging US China Pakistan Triangle



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A new Cold War may be right on India's doorstep. A growing competition between the United States and China in gaining influence in Pakistan has become apparent recently, in some rather extraordinary events.

Artificial Intelligence could turn internet into a Black Mirror world run by big tech



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Trump will cut you loose Democrats grill Kash Patel



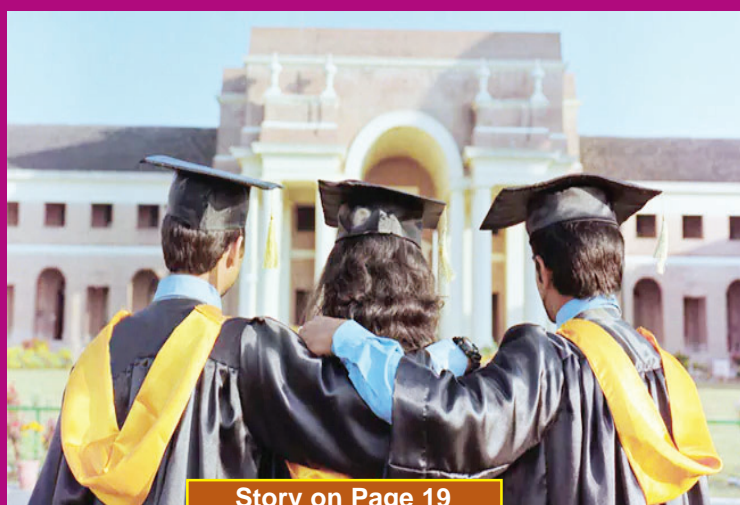
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Thank you, Narendra: Trump's olive branch after weeks of India-bashing on oil



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Degrees For Dollars? Inside The Foreign University Gold Rush In India



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'Brain-Eating Amoeba' Kills 19 In Kerala. How It Spreads, How To Stay Safe

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Narendra Modi at 75: A Statesman Bridging India with the World



When Prime Minister Narendra Modi turns 75 on September 17, 2025, it will mark more than a personal milestone. It offers a moment to reflect on how one of the most consequential leaders of the 21st century has shaped India's journey and global standing. Born in Vadnagar, Gujarat, Modi's rise—from a modest childhood to becoming India's longest-serving prime minister in recent decades—is a story of grit, vision, and unrelenting drive. Over the past decade, he has redefined India's engagement with its diaspora and elevated its voice on the world stage in ways few leaders before him have managed.

Strengthening the Diaspora Bond

Among his most defining initiatives has been a heartfelt outreach to the global Indian community. Modi recognized early that the diaspora was not just a cultural bridge but a strategic partner in nation-building. In July 2025, during his visit to Trinidad and Tobago, he extended Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) eligibility to sixth-generation descendants of the Indian

diaspora—recognizing communities that left the subcontinent more than a century ago yet preserved language, culture, and traditions with devotion. A similar announcement in Mauritius earlier in March extended OCI privileges to the seventh generation of Indian-origin citizens there. Coupled with the launch of a modernized OCI portal in May 2025, these moves underscored a clear message: India no longer views its diaspora from a distance. It embraces them as stakeholders in the country's rise.

Global Recognition and Diplomacy

Parallel to this people-centric approach has been Modi's transformation into one of the world's most decorated leaders. In 2025 alone, he became the first Indian to receive Mauritius's highest civilian honor, the Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean. He was awarded Cyprus's Grand Cross of the Order of Makarios III. These joined a growing list of honours from nations as varied as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Dominica—signals that the world now views India as both a rising power and a responsible partner.

But Modi's diplomacy is not about accolades. It is strategic and forward-looking. His historic visit to Cyprus—the first by an Indian prime minister—paved the way for cooperation in energy and technology. In London, a landmark trade deal with Prime

Minister Keir Starmer promised to expand markets for Indian textiles and automobiles while deepening collaboration in services and innovation. Across the Indo-Pacific, Modi has carefully positioned India as a stabilizing force amid shifting geopolitical currents.

Building Consensus on the World Stage

At moments of global division, Modi has shown skill in forging consensus. The 2023 G20 Summit in New Delhi was a notable example. Amid rifts over the Russia-Ukraine war, he steered member states toward a joint declaration rooted in cooperation. India's presidency also saw the African Union inducted as a permanent member of the G20—widely hailed as historic and emblematic of Modi's commitment to amplifying the voice of the Global South. From the launch of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor to the Global Biofuel Alliance, Modi has consistently positioned India as a driver of sustainable and inclusive growth.

Technology and Innovation as Diplomacy

Under Modi, India's technological achievements have become a key instrument of soft power. National Space Day has highlighted India's milestones in lunar and interplanetary exploration, advanced propulsion systems, and semiconductor development. Meanwhile, India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has found adoption in countries like Mauritius and Trinidad &



Tobago—an example of Indian innovation shaping global financial systems.

A Philosophy of Global Solidarity

Perhaps most enduring has been Modi's emphasis on compassion and global solidarity. The Vaccine Maitri initiative during the COVID-19 pandemic—through which India supplied over 160 million doses to nearly 100 countries—cemented India's role as a lifeline in crisis, rooted in the philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam ("the world is one family").

The Modi Legacy at 75

As Narendra Modi celebrates his 75th birthday, his legacy extends beyond India's borders. For the diaspora, his initiatives have brought renewed pride and belonging. For the international

community, his leadership has made India a trusted partner, a mediator in turbulent times, and a visionary for a more equitable global order.

This milestone is not just about one man's life. It is the story of a nation's ascent under a leader who built bridges: between India and its diaspora, the Global South and developed world, tradition and modernity, aspiration and achievement.

At 75, Narendra Modi stands as both a symbol of India's journey and a steward of its future—embodying the confidence of a country determined to shape, not just witness, the course of world affairs.

By Jagdish Sewhani
President
The American India Public Affairs Committee

Cricket chairman disbarred for lies about Oxford

The chairman of Essex County Cricket Club (ECCC) has been disbarred by the Barristers' Tribunal Service over claims he lied about studying at Oxford University.

Criminal lawyer Anurag Mohindru faced an allegation of fabricating his academic credentials to boost a job application to a top barrister's chamber.

Mr Mohindru was immediately suspended following the five-day tribunal, pending any appeal, and was ordered to pay nearly £55,000 in costs. A second professional misconduct charge was dropped.

ECCC said its board would meet at the weekend "to discuss an appropriate course of action".

The allegation against Mr Mohindru

dated back to between late 2012 and early 2013, when he applied for tenancy to 23 Essex Street Chambers (23ES).

The Bar Standards Board (BSB) stated that Mr Mohindru had "deliberately exaggerated his academic achievements and qualifications in an attempt to improve his tenancy prospects". The BSB claimed that Mr Mohindru first lied about his medical experience during an interview with 23ES, saying that he had studied biomedical science at Oxford University.

This was followed up with a CV in which Mr Mohindru claimed he studied medicine at the university from 1993 to 1994 before continuing his studies in the US, it was alleged.

The BSB said that inquiries made by Oxford University found no record of a student by the name of Anurag Mohindru.

Mr Mohindru denied "knowingly" providing false information, and he was "certain" he did not send the document given as evidence at the tribunal. His CV was said to have been created with at least two other people.

The tribunal was heard by the Bar Tribunals and Adjudication Service (BTAS), an independent disciplinary body that serves to maintain public confidence in the country's legal professionals.

Mr Mohindru was also ordered to pay costs of £54,780 to the BSB. Both Foundry Chambers and 23ES have been approached for comment.





Hofstra Center of Suburban Studies Asst. Vice President and Executive Dean Lawrence Levy making a presentation to American Punjabi Society President Gary Sikka, Sr. Vice President Mohinder S. Taneja, Vice President Paul S. Bindra and CEO of NuWay Media Group Sharanjit S. Thind. Event recently took place at Mint Restaurant and Lounge in Garden City, Long island. (Picture: APS)

Man arrested over 'racially motivated' rape

A man has been arrested on suspicion of rape by police investigating reports of a racially motivated attack on a woman in the West Midlands.

The woman, in her 20s, reported being attacked by two men on Tuesday morning near Tame Road in Oldbury. West Midlands Police said a man in his 30s was detained on suspicion of rape on Sunday evening and was in custody. Home Secretary and Birmingham Ladywood MP Shabana Mahmood urged anyone with information about the attack to speak to police, as she condemned such crimes "in the strongest possible terms". Speaking in Parliament in response to a question from Smethwick MP Gurinder Singh Josan, she said the horror of a sexual assault motivated by race was absolutely appalling. The government would not



stand for any incitement to racial hatred or violence, she added.

Ch Supt Kim Madill said the arrest was a "significant development in the investigation". Thanking the community for their support, she said:

"The investigation remains ongoing and we would urge people not to speculate as we work to identify and trace all those who may have been involved."

The arrest came hours after

members of the Sikh community gathered in protest over the incident. The victim, who has a right to anonymity, has released a public statement through the Sikh Federation (UK) which said she was "truly humbled" by the love shown by her local community.

Of the attack, she said: "I would never wish this on anyone. All I was doing was going about my day on my way to work, and what has happened has deeply affected us. "Through it all, my family has been my rock, and my community has stood strong beside me." West Midlands Police previously said it was looking for two men and wanted "to speak with anyone in the area who may have seen" them. A force spokesperson had said the men made a racist remark during the attack.

ICE Detains Green Card Holder Dad with Tumor After 30 Years in US—Attorney

Paramjit Singh, a green card holder who immigrated to the United States from India more than 30 years ago, has been in federal custody for over a month after being detained by immigration agents in Chicago on July 30, according to his attorney. Singh's attorney Luis Angeles told Newsweek the detainment has been "nothing short of horrific" for him and his family. Newsweek also reached out to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for comment via email.

Why It Matters

President Donald Trump campaigned on mass deportation of undocumented immigrants, specifically targeting those with violent criminal records, and his administration ramped up immigration enforcement since his return to office in January. However, many Americans have been critical of his immigration policy as individuals with misdemeanors, decades-old infractions or in some cases no criminal records at all have been swept

up in the heightened enforcement.

Singh's case underscores the concerns raised by many immigration advocates about the administration's approach to border security and deportations.

What to Know

Singh, a lawful permanent resident who operates a business in Fort Wayne, Indiana, was detained at Chicago O'Hare Airport on July 30 after he returned from a trip to India, his family and attorney told local news station WPTA. His family said he makes this trip several times per year.

Singh has a brain tumor and a heart condition and was kept inside the airport for five days. His condition deteriorated to the point where he had to be taken to the emergency room, the news station reported.

His family was not notified of the ER visit until they received a bill for his medical stay, Angeles told Newsweek. Angeles said the alleged offense stems

from an incident involving the use of a pay phone without payment, which he said is a "minor infraction for which he has already taken full accountability, served his time, and paid his debt to society." Efforts to secure his release have been "exhaustive but frustrating," Angeles said. "We filed for a bond redetermination and successfully won the bond hearing. However, DHS has continued to employ what I would describe as legal—yet arguably unethical—tactics to prolong his detention, despite being fully aware of his severe medical condition, which requires emergency surgery. The government is holding him without justifiable cause, exacerbating his health risks and causing immense distress to his family," he said.

Several green card holders have been detained based on decades-old legal issues. A similar case that garnered



national attention was that of Jemmy Jimenez Rosa, a Massachusetts mother who was held for 10 days based on a decades-old marijuana conviction. She was also taken to the hospital while being held in the airport without access to medication.

Khalistanis threaten siege of Indian consulate in Canada over Nijjar killing

US-based Khalistani outfit Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) has announced a siege of the Indian Consulate in Vancouver, Canada, on September 18 over the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar. The terrorist group issued a poster showing the Indian High Commissioner to Canada as a marked man. These can reignite tensions in India-Canada ties.

A US-based Khalistani terrorist outfit, Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), has called for a 12-hour "siege" of the Indian Consulate in Vancouver, reigniting concerns about the security of Indian diplomats and missions in Canada. The separatist group, which has been banned in India since 2019, announced that the protest would take place on Thursday, September 18, over the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada in June 2023. A provocative SFJ poster showed the Indian High Commissioner to Canada, Dinesh Patnaik, in the crosshairs. In its statement, the SFJ accused Indian missions in Canada of running a surveillance network against Khalistan supporters. The poster branded Patnaik the "new face of Hindutva terror in Canada", echoing the outfit's long-standing hostility towards Indian diplomats posted in the country.

The Khalistani terrorist group claimed the planned "siege" would serve as a symbolic protest against what



it termed "state-backed espionage and intimidation" of Khalistan activists on Canadian soil. "Pro-Khalistan Sikhs—torchbearers of Shaheed Nijjar—will lay a historic siege of the Consulate to demand accountability," the statement said, referring to Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canada-based Khalistan terrorist who was killed in June 2023 outside a gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia. The

shooting is most likely the result of rivalry among the Sikh gangs in Canada. In September 2023, then Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said there were "credible allegations" linking Indian agents to Nijjar's assassination, sparking a diplomatic row between Ottawa and New Delhi. India rejected the allegations as "absurd

and "politically motivated", accusing Canada of turning a blind eye to extremist activity within its borders.

The controversy led to the expulsion of diplomats from both countries and the temporary suspension of visa services.

Later on, Trudeau admitted that he didn't have evidence to back his claim, and that it was just an intel tip off.

With both India and Canada recently appointing high commissioners after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met his Canadian counterpart, Mark Carney, at the G7 summit in June 2025, the ties are seeing a thaw.

The latest Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) threat to siege the Indian consulate in Vancouver could come as a spanner in the diplomatic works to reset relations.

Adding to the tensions, SFJ claimed that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) had to offer witness protection to one of its leaders, Inderjeet Gosal, under pressure from alleged Indian intelligence activity. Such assertions, while unverified, feed into the group's broader narrative of Indian interference in Canada.

The announced protest will yet again challenge Canada in balancing its democratic freedoms—including the right to protest—with its responsibility to prevent extremist threats against foreign diplomats.

From Israel to Australia, leaders line up with rare video wishes for PM Modi

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi celebrated his 75th birthday, a string of video messages from several world leaders flooded social media in a rare move.

It is not always that world leaders make a special video to wish their counterparts on their birthday. On Wednesday, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi celebrated his 75th birthday, a string of such video messages from several top world leaders flooded social media. The messages reflect PM Modi's influence in reshaping India's global image, with leaders like Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu and Australia's Anthony Albanese lauding his leadership in strengthening international partnerships.

NETANYAHU'S POST FOR 'FRIEND' MODI

The warmth and camaraderie he shares with PM Modi was evident in Netanyahu's 25-second video message. Addressing him directly by his first name, Narendra, the Israeli Prime Minister called Modi his "good friend". "Prime Minister Modi, my good friend Narendra, I



want to wish you a happy birthday. You have accomplished so much for India in your life, and we have together accomplished a great deal in the friendship between India and Israel. I look forward to seeing you soon because we can bring our partnership and our friendship to even

greater heights. Happy birthday, my friend," Netanyahu said.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, in his 21-second video message, also hailed Modi as a "friend" and praised the Indian community's role in Australia. Australia is one of India's closest allies and both

are part of the Quad grouping. "I look forward to many more years of friendship and progress... Happy Birthday to my friend Prime Minister Modi. Australia is proud to share such a strong friendship with India, and we are grateful every day for the incredible contribution of the Indian

community," Albanese said.

NEW ZEALAND PM'S LONG VIDEO MESSAGE

Perhaps, the longest birthday wish came from New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, whose video lasted nearly 40 seconds. Luxon, who visited India in March this year, began his message by greeting Modi in Hindi and lauding his "wisdom of leadership".

"Kia ora, namaskar, my good friend Prime Minister Modi... A milestone like this is a moment to reflect on the wisdom of your leadership as you seek to guide India towards becoming a developed country by 2047," the PM said. Luxon further emphasised that New Zealand was eager to partner with India on security. He recalled his previous visit to India, and invited PM Modi to visit New Zealand soon. Similar video messages were also posted by former UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay.

India says trade talks with US positive, forward-looking; ground set for 6th round

The Commerce Ministry said the discussions with the US trade officials were "positive and forward-looking" and covered various aspects of the proposed trade deal.

India and the United States resumed trade negotiations on Tuesday in New Delhi, marking the first in-person engagement since Washington imposed steep tariffs on Indian exports last month. The talks, which lasted nearly seven hours, focused on advancing a long-pending bilateral trade agreement. A team of officials from the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), led by Chief Negotiator for the India-US Bilateral Trade Agreement Brendan Lynch, held a day-long meeting with their Indian counterparts from the Department of Commerce, headed by Special Secretary Rajesh Agarwal.

In a statement, the Commerce Ministry said the discussions were "positive and forward-looking" and covered various aspects of the



proposed trade deal. Both sides agreed to intensify efforts for an early conclusion of a "mutually beneficial" agreement.

Tuesday's meeting was not the sixth round of negotiations,

which had stalled in August, but a preparatory dialogue to set the stage for the next round.

The talks come amid a thaw in ties after President Donald Trump imposed a 50 per cent

tariff on Indian exports over New Delhi's continued oil trade with Russia. Washington's move triggered weeks of strained exchanges, but Trump has since softened his tone, saying he remained

"optimistic" about concluding a deal with India. For New Delhi, agricultural and dairy market access remains a red line, though Washington has signalled flexibility. According to US officials, the current focus is on premium cheese and corn exports rather than mass dairy products — a shift seen as a conciliatory gesture after months of deadlock. Analysts say both sides are under pressure to reach an agreement. For Trump, easing the farm sector's woes at home is a political priority, while India is keen to avoid prolonged tariff disputes that could impact its export sectors. The sixth round of negotiations is expected to be scheduled soon, with both governments aiming to close at least an interim agreement by the end of this year.

Masood Azhar behind Parliament attack, 26/11: Jaish leader's 2nd admission nails Pak

Masood Ilyas Kashmiri, a top Jaish commander, admitted in a video that Masood Azhar orchestrated deadly terror attacks in India from his base in Pakistan's Balakot, knocking Islamabad's denials of harbouring terror groups on its soil.

A senior Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist has directly implicated his boss Masood Azhar in planning and executing attacks in Delhi and Mumbai, shredding Pakistan's repeated denials of sheltering terror groups on its soil.

Masood Ilyas Kashmiri, a top commander of the UN-designated terror group, admitted in a video that Azhar, one of India's most wanted terrorists, orchestrated terror attacks from Pakistan after being released by India after five years of imprisonment. Kashmiri said Azhar's base was in Balakot, which was targeted in airstrikes by India in 2019. "After escaping the prison of Tihar Jail in Delhi, Amir-ul-Mujahideen Maulana Masood Azhar comes to Pakistan. The soil of Balakot provides him a base to carry forward his vision, mission, and programme Delhi and Bombay [Mumbai]—this is how

Maulana Masood Azhar, the Amir-ul-Mujahideen who terrorised the country, appears," Kashmiri is heard saying. Kashmiri's remarks leave Islamabad with little room to deny the presence of terror sanctuaries.



BALAKOT TO BAHAWALPUR: TERROR TRAIL UNMASKED

The Jaish commander openly credited Pakistan's Balakot as a staging ground for Azhar's campaign to wield terror against India, even invoking Osama bin Laden as a "martyr" who shaped the ideology. His

admission corroborates India's long-standing claim that Jaish camps operated freely under the watch of Pakistan's military-security establishment, despite Islamabad telling the world there were "no terrorist hideouts" within its borders. In another bombshell, first reported by India Today on Tuesday, Kashmiri said that the May 7 strike on Jaish's Bahawalpur headquarters, Jamia Masjid Subhan Allah, inflicted devastating losses, including the deaths of Azhar's family members, who were "torn apart" in the bombing.

Under Operation Sindoor, Indian forces destroyed multiple terror launchpads across the border and in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir in retaliation for the April 22 Pahalgam attack that killed 26 civilians. The Jaish commander's expose blows the lid off Pakistan's decades of duplicity: running with the West on counterterrorism while protecting jihadist assets at home.

PAK GENERALS AT TERRORIST FUNERALS

Another damning revelation had Kashmiri recount how the Pakistan Army's brass ordered generals to attend funerals of slain Jaish terrorists in Bahawalpur. Videos had surfaced on social media in May of high-ranking Pakistani military officials leading the funerals of terrorists. India had lambasted Islamabad for giving state funerals to proscribed terrorists. Kashmiri claimed the directive came from Army Chief Gen Asim Munir to "honour" the terrorists killed in Indian airstrikes, lending further credence to what New Delhi has long maintained — that Pakistan's military-intelligence nexus sponsors terrorism.

"If It's A Woman, You Can Give Bail," BMW Crash Accused Tells Court

The woman who was arrested on Monday for driving the BMW that killed a senior finance ministry official last week will remain in judicial custody at least till Saturday.

The death of a senior finance ministry official in a BMW crash with a two-wheeler in Delhi last week is unfortunate but one cannot overlook that at least 5,000 accidents are also reported across the country every year, the woman accused in the accident told a Delhi court on Wednesday.

The accused, Gaganpreet Kaur who was arrested on Monday, said a DTC bus that collided with the two-wheeler and an ambulance that reportedly passed by should also be made an accused in the case that has garnered attention and sparked nationwide outrage.

Kaur's counsel and senior advocate Ramesh Gupta made the remarks while seeking bail in the case, even as the Patiala House Court adjourned the hearing for Saturday.

Kaur was arrested on Monday and remanded in judicial custody after her BMW hit a motorcycle that was being driven by Navjot Singh, a deputy secretary in the Department of Economic Affairs, near Dhaula Kuan in Delhi on Sunday. Singh died while his wife, who was riding pillion, sustained injuries in the



accident. Seeking bail for his client, Mr Gupta said: "It is an unfortunate incident. Five thousand accidents happen every year, that's also unfortunate."

The lawyer, however, sought to know why no action was taken against a DTC bus as the police claimed that the two-wheeler rammed into the four-wheeler after getting knocked down by the BMW. Similarly, she alleged that an ambulance passed the area but refused to help the victims.

"An ambulance had stopped

but refused to take them. Even he is guilty then. Police said that after the crash, the bike hit the DTC bus. Why did the police not seize the bus? Why did it file the case after 10 hours? The police are under immense pressure, so they can do anything. We pray that the Deputy Commissioner of Police be made witness in the case," he said.

The accused also questioned the police's decision to invoke section 105 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) against his client.



According to the concerned section, whoever commits culpable homicide not amounting to murder, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or imprisonment of either description for a term which shall not be less than five years but which may extend to 10 years.

"How was section 304 (of the Indian Penal Code which translates to 105 of the BNS) invoked? The investigation officer is well aware of whether sub-section A or B needs to be involved. My exposure is to 304

(2), which gives the power to the court to grant me bail. They are saying that the act of taking the victims to a hospital far away attracts section 304," he said.

He was referring to initial doubts over the accused's decision to rush the two bike riders to a hospital that was 19km away from the accident spot. It later emerged that Kaur's father co-owns the hospital in question, leading police to wonder if there was an attempt to cover-up the case or alter or destroy biological evidence.

The accused's lawyer said that "if it's a lady, you can give bail in cases of death sentence and life also".

Besides section 105, the accused has been charged under sections 281 (rash driving) and 125B (endangering life or personal safety of others) of the BNS. The prosecution, however, sought to know why the accused informed the police only five hours after the accident. "If she knew that the victim suffered such serious injuries, why did she not take them to the nearest hospital," he said.

Man Kills Stray Dog Near Mumbai, Gouges Out Eyeball And Plays With It

According to police, the incident occurred on Tuesday evening when the stray dog was attacked on a public road.

Man Kills Stray Dog Near Mumbai, Gouges Out Eyeball And Plays With It According to police, the incident occurred on Tuesday evening when the stray dog was attacked on a public road. A man in Maharashtra killed a stray dog and was later found on the road playing with one of its eyeballs. The shocking incident took place in Mumbra, on the outskirts of Mumbai.

According to police, the incident occurred on Tuesday evening when the stray dog was attacked on a public road. Witnesses said the accused removed the dog's eye and was seen playing with them in full view of passers-by. Disturbed onlookers quickly alerted the Mumbra police. Multiple videos, that are viral on social media, show the man casually sitting on the road right next to the dog's body and playing with an eyeball. Animal welfare groups soon reached a police station and demanded strict action against the man.

A case has been registered under section 325 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which covers offences causing grievous hurt, as well as under provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

"No Food, Toilet": 56 Indians In Georgia Treated "Like Cattle", Alleges Tourist

A woman has alleged that a group of 56 Indian travellers were subjected to "most inhuman behaviour" by Georgian authorities while attempting to enter the country from Armenia.

Sharing her experience in an Instagram post, Dhruvee Patel claimed the group, despite carrying valid e-visas and documents, faced humiliation and prolonged detention at the Sadakhlo border.

According to her post, the group was "made to wait 5+ hrs in the freezing cold – no food, no toilet." She alleged that officials "confiscated passports for 2+ hrs with no communication" and forced them to sit on the footpath "like cattle." The woman said the officials even took videos of them "like criminals", but stopped them from filming the incident. She added that the authorities didn't even check documents and simply claimed visas were "wrong," calling the treatment "shameful & unacceptable." In the post, Ms Patel also tagged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, and wrote, "India must take a strong stand." The alleged incident took place at the Sadakhlo border, the primary land crossing between Armenia and Georgia.

Ms Patel ended her post with a sharp rebuke. "This is how Georgia treats Indians. Shameful & unacceptable!" The post drew many responses, with people sharing similar experiences.

One user expressed sympathy but highlighted that the issue appears longstanding. "Sorry to hear that. Also this isn't the first post I've seen of Georgia. It's been bad and happening for a long time now."

Another questioned why Indians still visit despite such reports, asking, "When this behaviour has been consistent from Georgia then why do Indians keep going there." Some of the comments pointed to a deeper problem of discrimination. "There have been consistent reports of racial profiling by the Georgian government," wrote one user, sharing a link to another news article detailing Indians' ordeals. A traveller who visited Georgia in 2019 shared a more nuanced perspective. The person recalled that before entering from Russia they "had heard similar stories about immigration". While they were eventually granted entry and went on to enjoy a "dream visit," but noted that "from the last many years they are creating problems for Indians, that's a sad story."

US officers tied us up and pointed guns at us, South Korean engineers tell BBC

When Youngjin looked out of his office window and saw armoured trucks and immigration enforcement officers running around with guns, he was surprised, but not worried.

The young South Korean was certain it had nothing to do with him. He was in the US only for a few weeks on a short-term visa, he thought to himself.

Then the armed agents burst into his room and ordered him outside. They handcuffed him, before attaching chains to his waist and ankles, and loaded him onto a bus bound for a detention centre.

"I panicked and my mind went blank. I felt sick," he told the BBC, now back home in South Korea. "I couldn't understand why I was being treated like this."

Youngjin is one of more than 300 Korean workers who were detained in the US state of Georgia earlier this month, in one of the largest immigration raids of Donald Trump's presidency to date. He and others interviewed for this article didn't want to reveal their real names in order to protect their identity.

'Helicopters and drones... people with guns'

US officials initially claimed the workers had been in the country illegally on incorrect visas, but eventually the two sides struck a deal allowing them to leave voluntarily without any penalties, so they could return to work there in the future.

Most of the workers were in the US temporarily, helping to build an electric car battery plant run by two South Korean companies, Hyundai and LG – part of a US push to get foreign companies to invest and manufacture more in the states. LG said that many of its employees who were arrested had various types of visas or were under a visa waiver programme. And so they were especially shocked by the raid.

"We just came out for a brief break and I could see a lot of people, officials with guns. As Koreans, we just thought they were here to arrest criminals, but then, they suddenly started arresting us," said Chul-yong, who was also detained that day.

He said they tried to explain who



they were, but they were terrified: "There were helicopters and drones, armoured vehicles... people with guns."

There were some officers pointing guns at workers, he claimed. "You know those red lasers that come out of those guns? It was so shocking that some people were shivering in fear."

Even those who managed to share their visa details said they were arrested. "I thought everything would be cleared up but instead, they suddenly shackled us," said Mr Kim, another worker detained, who only wanted to reveal his last

name.

Chul-yong said there was a shackle around his ankles and another around his waist, connected to handcuffs. "It was so tight, I couldn't touch my face with my hands."

They all said they had no idea why this was happening, or where they were being taken. "I later learned that I was detained at the Folkston ICE Processing Center," added Chul-yong, a software engineer. He had been planning to stay for about a month but was arrested on his sixth day there. "It was freezing... the water smelt like sewage"

Youngjin, an engineer and sub-contractor for LG, was scheduled to be there for five weeks to train staff to operate some of the specialist high-tech equipment. The 30-year-old was shaking, still visibly upset, as he described to the BBC being taken to the detention centre and locked in a room with 60-70 other people. "I had a panic attack. I just stood there trembling," he said. The room was freezing, and the new detainees were not given blankets for the first two days, he added.

"I was wearing short sleeves, so I put my arms inside my clothes

and wrapped myself in a towel to try to stay warm at night," he said. "The worst part was the water. It smelt like sewage. We drank as little as possible."

The bunk beds were all taken, Chul-yong said, by the time he arrived, leaving him and others to find any empty spot to rest, even an empty desk where they could put their head down.

"We tried to sleep anywhere, really. It was really cold. There were people who found packaged bread, heated it up in the microwave, hugging it throughout the night."

For the first few days, Youngjin had no idea how long he would be held for. He feared it might be months. Only after some of the workers were able to meet lawyers and consular staff, did they realise their government was working with the US authorities to get them released.

"Even the US side feels it may have gone a bit too far," South Korea's chief trade negotiator told reporters after returning from the US. Seoul says it is now investigating potential human rights violations during the raid by US authorities.

Suspect in custody after man rams car into FBI Pittsburgh headquarters gate

A man has been taken into custody in connection with a case where a person rammed a vehicle into a security gate at the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Pittsburgh office early on Wednesday, the Associated Press reported. Before leaving the scene, he removed an American flag from his car's back seat and threw it over the gate. FBI spokesperson Bradford Arick said the arrest occurred after 10 am, though no further details were provided about how the authorities tracked him down or the location where he was caught. The crash happened around 2:40 am on Wednesday, prompting investigators and a bomb squad to respond. No explosives were discovered. "We look at this as an act of terror against the FBI," said Christopher Giordano, assistant special agent in charge of the FBI in Pittsburgh. The suspect is a former member of the military who has previously struggled with mental health problems, as per a New York Post report. In an earlier statement, FBI Pittsburgh said that the accused had left the scene of the crime on foot. "This was a



targeted attack on this building. Thankfully no one was hurt, but we are going to exhaust every ability we have under the federal law to find, apprehend and prosecute this subject to the fullest extent." Giordano

noted the suspect, a former military member, had recently visited the office with an incoherent complaint. He also mentioned a message was scrawled on one of the car's windows but gave no details.

Charlie Kirk suspect confessed in hidden note to roommate, prosecutors allege

The man accused of fatally shooting Charlie Kirk confessed to killing the right-wing activist in a message to his roommate, prosecutors have alleged, as they announced seven charges against him.

Tyler Robinson, 22, left a note under a keyboard for his roommate to discover, said Utah County Attorney Jeffrey Gray. He added that the roommate was the defendant's romantic partner. According to Mr Gray, the note said: "I had the opportunity to take out Charlie Kirk, and I'm going to take it."

The prosecutor also shared text messages between the roommates, including one in which the defendant allegedly said he shot Kirk because he had "had enough of his hatred". The suspect is being held without bail in a special housing unit at the Utah County Jail. He made his first court appearance on Tuesday, appearing remotely as prosecutors read the seven charges against him.

The charges are aggravated murder, felony discharge of a firearm, two counts of obstruction of justice, two counts of witness tampering, and committing a violent crime when children are



present. They also said they would seek the death penalty over the shooting of Kirk, who was killed by a single gunshot fired from a rooftop as he was speaking at Utah Valley University on Wednesday. Arrested last week after a 33-hour manhunt, the defendant has not entered a plea or confessed to police. The prosecutor also stressed that the accused is innocent until proven guilty and will face trial by jury.

He unveiled a trove of evidence

at a news conference on Tuesday, including the defendant's alleged confession and DNA found on the trigger of the rifle suspected to have been used in the crime.

Suspect's parents confronted him

Mr Gray also gave more detail about how the defendant's parents became suspicious that their son may have been involved in Charlie Kirk's killing. He said the mother had seen a video of the suspect released a day after

the shooting and told her husband it looked like their son. She confronted the son over the phone about the resemblance, Mr Gray said, but he told her he had been home sick on the day of the shooting. The father later confronted the defendant, who responded by implying he might take his own life, the prosecutor said. The suspect was eventually persuaded to come to his parents' house and while there, allegedly hinted he was the attacker. He then said he wanted

to "end it" rather than go to jail, Mr Gray said. With the help of a family friend, who is a retired deputy sheriff, his parents convinced him to surrender to police and he was arrested late on Thursday - 33 hours after the shooting. The suspect also allegedly told his parents that "there is too much evil and the guy spreads too much hate", in a reference to Kirk, according to the indictment. The mother told investigators her son had become more political in recent years, Mr Gray said, becoming more supportive of gay and transgender rights and entering a relationship with a transgender person. But the prosecutor declined to answer when asked if Kirk had been targeted for his transgender views. "That is for a jury to decide," he said. Mr Gray said the conservative influencer was answering a question about mass shootings carried out by transgender individuals when the gunshot rang out. The bullet struck Kirk in the neck and he immediately slumped to the ground. The shot passed close to other people, including children and the person who asked Kirk the question, said the prosecutor.

Democratic New York governor endorses Zohran Mamdani for NYC mayor

New York Governor Kathy Hochul has thrown her support behind New York City mayor candidate Zohran Mamdani, handing the Democratic state assemblyman one of his biggest endorsements yet.

In a New York Times opinion piece, Hochul called Mamdani a "a leader who is focused on making New York City affordable" despite previous "disagreements".

The Democratic party has been deeply split on the 33-year-old's candidacy, with Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries - both New Yorkers - holding back their support.

President Donald Trump has repeatedly described Mamdani as a "communist" and said on Monday that Hochul's endorsement was a "shocking development".

Hochul had withheld support for Mamdani - a self-proclaimed democratic socialist - for two months, and declined to endorse him after he stunned New York by defeating his main rival, former governor Andrew Cuomo, in the Democratic primary in June. At the time, she noted misgivings about Mamdani's proposal to tax wealthy New Yorkers, arguing that it could lead to an exodus from the state.

"In the past few months, I've had frank conversations with him. We've had our disagreements," Hochul wrote in her opinion piece. "But in our conversations, I heard a leader who shares my commitment to a New York where children can grow up safe in their neighborhoods and where opportunity is within reach for every family." "I heard a leader who is focused on making New York City affordable - a goal I enthusiastically support," she added. While Mamdani already counts on the support of left-wing progressive politicians including New York Democratic representative Alexandria Ocasio Cortez and independent Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, he has been at odds with the wider Democratic establishment - partly as a result of his strong support of Palestinians and harsh criticism of Israel. "I've been glad to see him meet with Jewish leaders across the city, listening and addressing their concerns directly," Hochul added. "I look forward to working together to make sure New Yorkers of all faiths feel safe and welcome in New York City." Polls showing Mamdani with a commanding lead over the other candidates - including Cuomo and incumbent Mayor Eric Adams - ahead of the city's election on 4



November. In the editorial, Hochul took a thinly veiled swipe both at Cuomo - her former boss - and Adams, both of whom have been seen as becoming increasingly close to Trump. The US president has, in recent weeks, called on other candidates to rally behind Cuomo to defeat Mamdani. "In light of the abhorrent and destructive policies coming out of Washington every day, I needed to know the next mayor will not be someone who would surrender one inch to President

Trump," she said. Despite Trump's public opposition to Mamdani's candidacy, late last week he said he believed that "it would look like he's going to win". "And that's a rebellion," he told Fox. "It's also a rebellion against bad candidates." Trump added that he is already thinking of ways in which he could impose some influence over Mamdani, whom he again referred to as "my little communist". "He has to come to Washington for money," he said.

Is India Under A Geo-Engineered Climate Attack?

India for the past few years has been experiencing unprecedented blows from the weather. The vagaries of the weather seem to be quite rebellious, breaking all conventional patterns and predictions. From repeated extreme floods, cloud bursts to facing usual cyclones like Biparjoy (2023), India has been thrown off-track weather-wise. So, what's the cause? Is it all Nature or perhaps something man-made?

Let's review the eerie weather again. Himachal Pradesh reported 45 cloudbursts and 95 flash floods this year. Punjab got 75 per cent more rainfall than it does annually, while the floods are being compared to the great flood of 1988 in the state. India had the rainiest June and the second wettest monsoon in the past 50 years, with rainfall surpluses at 37 per cent. There were floods in Rajasthan killing hundreds and displacing thousands more, and even Gujarat received the highest rain in past 10 years. Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir have the worst track record when it comes to erratic monsoon, cloudbursts and flash floods. Kedarnath in 2013 was only a disastrous beginning yet a good example to elucidate this. The monsoon has been acting in a queer way. India endured its driest August for over 120 years in 2023. Himachal Pradesh saw the driest October in 2024 and the Southern Peninsular its sixth driest October in 123 years in 2023, with rainfall over 60 per cent below normal, attributed to factors like a weak northeast monsoon onset and the Cyclone Hamoon. Meghalaya's Sohra, considered the wettest place on earth, received about 1/3rd of the rainfall it recorded in June 2025 vs June last year. One hopes it's clear with all these examples that there is something strange happening around us.

Next come the usually warm winters in the Himalayan regions and shifting of heat and cold seasons in India. Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, UP, etc reported over 50 degrees Celsius for the past couple of years. The winters have been getting shorter and warmer, which is not only confusing humans but plant life too. As a result, we experienced major crops losses in Punjab in the last few years. The wheat crop was damaged due to excessive heat, meanwhile erratic rains all across the country are bringing their share of diseases and pests to the farmers' fields, heavily impacting our food security. Should the climate be changing so fast and so strangely? Man-made or made in heaven? Natural or anthropogenic climate change has also been a topic of huge discussion. Fossil fuels emissions, industrial agriculture,

deforestation, etc add significantly to the warming of the planet, but when one looks at specialised weather events like the El Niño effect and mass increases in temperatures, one questions if they too are natural reactions to human activity. Fortunately, the Modi government has answered the question for us.

Former environment and climate change minister late Anil Madhav Dave in 2016 clearly stated in a written reply to a parliamentary question that "the USA has developed a type of weapon called the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program (HAARP). HAARP strikes the upper atmosphere with a focused and steerable electromagnetic beam. HAARP is an advanced model of a super-powerful ionospheric heater which may cause the globe to warm and have global warming effect". The US Air Force and Navy project HAARP was developed by Defence Advanced Research Agency (DARPA). Surprisingly, the treaty convention on the prohibition of military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques has existed since 1978, with India and the USA as signatories. The conventions clearly prove that nations have the technology to modify the weather and potentially also weaponise it. Here we must look at the case of China, which is also a partial signatory. It says that the convention shall only apply to Hong Kong and Macao and not the rest of China.

And therefore, it spends billions in creating a cutting-edge weather modification technology and control centre that could change the weather of 5.5 million square kilometres (2.1 million square miles)—about 1.5 times the total landmass of India. China spent US\$ 1.34 billion in the period 2012-2017 to support weather modification programme, launching the largest weather-control machine to be installed in the Tibetan Plateau in 2018, and others. It also claimed to have a fully functional weather modification system by 2025. Now, if one is thinking weather modification only means cloud seeding, today's technology is far more advanced. Even nations like Dubai are cloud seeding, whereas nations like China are already allegedly using weather modification as weapons. Dubai also showed us when cloud seeding goes wrong, it can result in cloudburst and flash floods.

The India-China clashes in Galwan Valley also had an alleged weather modification component. It was believed that China attempted to artificially create flash floods in the Galwan river to disrupt Indian infrastructure projects and military operations. It's not the first time a



nation has used weather weaponisation. The USA, during the Vietnam War, started Operation Popeye, which increased rainfall during the monsoon season to make the terrain muddy and difficult to traverse for enemy fighters.

China is already very capable as it has a functional Tianhe (Sky River) project, which is diverting water vapour and creating an air corridor making massive weather modification possible. It is estimated that this project alone can increase rainfall by 10 billion cubic meters annually. Furthermore, it plans to expand her weather modification and cloud seeding program.

There are rumours of cloud stealing, whereby diverting water vapour and making artificial rain, China could potentially take more than its share of rain and snow from neighbouring countries like India. The weather-modification machine in Tibet region is also a bigger security threat for India's agriculture, rivers and water security as it could silently bring devastation in India.

Hence, in tactful words, India's defence minister Rajnath Singh in 2024 said, "Climate change in the country [India] is not just a weather-

related phenomenon, but the matter is related to national security". He hinted at China without naming it in the next statement, "Certain [Indian] border states like Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and Union Territories (UT) like Ladakh have noticed an increase in the number of natural disasters in recent years. The Himalayas extend to other states as well, but such incidents are confined to certain states only, and we cannot ignore that."

top videos

Geo-engineering and weather modification are a real thing, and unfortunately, our neighbour China has a huge edge over us. We have no defence against this technology currently nor first-attack capabilities. The USA and China are far advanced in the weaponisation process too. Whether this current disaster is geo-engineered climate or not, it is hard to verify because India has no metric to measure it. But one does hope that in the future, Indian defence establishments invest time and effort so we are better prepared with early warning systems, ground preparations and attack capabilities to defend our nation from geo-engineered climate events.

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The Rise And Rise Of The BJP Under Modi

One of the more intriguing challenges that confronted Atal Behari Vajpayee was that his political credentials were constantly being questioned by those who claimed to be his well-wishers. Vajpayee had become accustomed to laughing away the charge of being the right man in the wrong party, but the taunt was, nevertheless, unsettling for a man who often found himself not entirely in agreement with either the party or the RSS. There was, of course, a deep sense of corporate loyalty that tied Vajpayee to the BJP and its members across the country, but the mere fact that many outsiders perceived him to be different was revealing. It suggested that there was a stereotype of the BJP that prevailed in Lutyens' Delhi and which was at odds with Vajpayee the man.

A Party Man, Out And Out

It is extremely unlikely that the political identity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be the subject of similar ambivalence. Beginning from his detractors, such as Ashis Nandy, who once described him as a dyed-in-the-wool fascist, to the adoring multitudes who project him as the 'Hindu Hridayasamrat', today's version of Chhatrapati Shivaji, there is zero confusion over the political affiliation of Modi. Even when he was briefly banished from Gujarat in the mid-1990s, having been caught in the factional crossfire of the BJP, there was absolutely no ambiguity over Modi's BJP's credentials. He was and has been out and out a party man.

This is also understood and appreciated by the entire saffron flock. For any Prime Minister handling the complexities of both administration and national politics, there is ample scope to develop strains in the relationship with the party and the wider Parivar. The misunderstandings between Vajpayee and the then RSS Sarsanghachalak KS Sudarshan were not hidden behind closed doors. There were times when the issue of appointments of key administrative personnel or even ministers threatened the



very stability of a fragile coalition.

The Relationship With RSS For Modi, this has not been a problem since he assumed charge in 2014. To a very large extent, this owes to the relationship of trust that exists between the PM and Mohan Bhagwat, the present Sarsanghachalak, whereby important (or potentially discordant) issues are quietly settled through mutual consultation. Secondly, Modi has been extremely generous in accommodating both BJP old-timers and erstwhile pracharaks of the RSS in different posts, including those of Governor. In return, neither the RSS nor party stalwarts have been inclined to make gratuitous comments on how Modi is running his government.

A feature of the Modi regime

is its ability to use the party as a backup force, complementing government initiatives with popular mobilisation. This approach has been successful for an obvious reason: the party is fully aware that the incremental vote that determines the difference between victory and defeat in any election comes on account of Modi's enormous personal standing. Be it a state assembly election or a parliamentary poll, there is a sizable vote for the BJP that comes on account of the leadership of Modi. The BJP's electoral machinery is useful to harvest this goodwill.

The Rise And Rise Of The BJP

For the BJP, PM Modi has been a blessing. During the 2014 campaign, the BJP's detractors believed that the party could never transcend its

limited social and geographical base. Geography was indeed a problem in 2014. But this was overcome by the BJP maximising its victories in its core areas of strength.

By 2019, Modi was a national figure, known throughout the land. Riding on the back of the Prime Minister's growing cult status, the BJP was able to undertake a geographical expression, particularly in eastern and southern India. The North-east used to fetch nominal returns for the BJP. Today the BJP has command of state governments in Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, and is playing a waiting game in Manipur. In the rest of eastern India, it now has its own government in Odisha and is the principal opposition in West Bengal.

Southern India, apart from Karnataka and Telangana, may be patchier for the BJP. However, it has established enough of a foothold in all states to be regarded as a truly national party.

Much of this expansion since 2014 owes to the efforts and orientation of Amit Shah during his stint as national president of BJP. However, the growth was possible because of the appeal of Modi.

Modi has always complemented the party, providing it a strategic push on occasions.

The celebrations of his landmark 75th birth anniversary will naturally be spearheaded by a party that is aware that its transformation into the largest political party in the democratic world is the result of a very happy blend: Modi plus Hindutva.

Narendra Modi @75: How The Prime Minister Is Redefining Leadership

Amidst international, regional, and bilateral tensions, the development story of Bharat under the extraordinary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has left global strategists not only astonished but also hopeful that in the future, the solutions to global crises may very well emerge from the land of Bharat. The way PM Modi has consistently maintained equanimity and presented precise and targeted solutions during times of peace, war, or disaster, it has strengthened trust and confidence at the global level.

The story of Narendra Modi's life is an inspiring tale of struggle and dedication. He is a leader who, through his unique leadership and towering personality, has given Bharat a new direction. His leadership abilities, foresight, and humongous public support have made him a highly influential leader. He is a strong and resolute figure who stands firm on his decisions and works tirelessly to achieve his goals. His leadership has placed him among the most influential leaders of both Bharat and the world.

The prime minister is a visionary leader who is optimistic about Bharat's future. He has launched several ambitious initiatives such as Make in India, which aim to transform Bharat into a developed nation. The widespread support he enjoys from the public, his immense popularity, and the extraordinary impact of his personality have made him a decisive leader capable of implementing even the toughest decisions with ease.

Narendra Modi's towering personality is a result of his leadership acumen, vision, and public backing. He has faced and overcome many challenges in his life, which reflect his strong willpower and determination.

Narendra Modi spent his early life in the small town of Vadnagar in Gujarat. He was born on September 17, 1950, into the family of Damodardas Mulchand Modi and Heeraben. His family had modest means, and his father ran a tea stall. He completed his schooling in Vadnagar and later earned a degree in Political Science from Gujarat University. From his student days, he was associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and it was with the



RSS that he began his political journey. Narendra Modi's entire life has been dedicated to selfless service, and even today, despite holding the highest office in the world's largest democracy, this spirit remains alive in him. PM Modi's impact on the Bhartiya psyche is both profound and far-reaching. His popularity and political acumen are, in many ways, unparalleled. He is a powerful orator who moves people with his words, and a skilled political strategist. With massive public support, the prime minister has taken several bold steps toward economic reform in Bharat, among which the implementation of GST and demonetisation stand out. These economic reforms have played a significant role in strengthening the country's economy.

The public's support for him and the sense of following his vision can be clearly seen in nationwide campaigns like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao and Wed in India (to celebrate wedding ceremonies across different locations of Bharat) and all these initiatives received widespread public support across the country. Through Mann Ki Baat, by sharing the story of an ordinary worker from a village or by honouring frontline workers during Covid-19, he demonstrated that every contribution matters. One of Narendra Modi's most remarkable qualities during the difficult time of the Covid-19 pandemic was his ability not just to act at an administrative level, but to understand the emotional depth of the Bhartiya mind and sustain

public morale. In an atmosphere filled with fear and uncertainty, he invoked collective energy through simple symbols and cultural connections. His call to beat thalis (plates) and clap hands was an example of how he identified the deep-rooted cultural instinct in Bhartiya society where sound and symbolic rituals are used to convey unity and resolve in times of challenge or celebration.

It was akin to how Mahatma Gandhi made the spinning wheel a symbol of the Swadeshi movement—a simple act with a profound message. Initiatives like Vocal for Local, promoting Bhartiya handicrafts on global platforms, and linking state-level initiatives with central schemes are all reflections of this same vision.

He has emerged as a strong leader on the global stage. By prioritising national interests above all, the strategy he adopted on issues such as US tariffs has shown the entire world that Bharat is not willing to bow down when it comes to protecting its national interests. PM Modi possesses a unique ability to build consensus among nations. Former US President Barack Obama also praised his work ethic, stating that he believes Modi works for the country 24 hours a day. This statement reflects his extraordinary efficiency and dedication. His foreign policy and diplomatic efforts have earned Bharat a significant role on the global stage. He has focused on strengthening ties with the countries of the Global South. He has amplified Bharat's voice on international platforms such as the

United Nations and the G20. He has placed a strong emphasis on economic diplomacy, which has led to increased trade and investment in the country.

Moreover, he has leveraged cultural diplomacy to strengthen Bharat's relations with various countries, promoting practices like Yoga and Ayurveda at a global level as part of this effort.

When it comes to technology, he keeps pace with today's youth. He believes in innovation and actively encourages it. This is one of the key reasons why, during his decade-long tenure, Bharat has become the country with the highest number of start-ups in the world.

He is perhaps the only global leader who believes in direct communication with the public. His monthly radio programme 'Mann Ki Baat' and the interactive session 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' with students are successful examples of this approach. Both programmes have had a widespread impact on the public psyche.

Initiatives like 'Khelo India' to promote sports and 'Drone Didi' to empower women reflect his commitment to bringing real change at the grassroots level. Additionally, through the NaMo App, he has established a direct connection with the people, and by involving the Bharat's diaspora in the country's development, he has significantly strengthened Bharat's soft power on the global stage. In the Ramcharitmanas, Goswami Tulsidas describes the character of King Janak by saying, "Atulit

dhanya Siya Ram ke jaai, Rajsabha binu savad suhaai," meaning that King Janak, despite being a king, lived like a sage, valuing knowledge and detachment over worldly pleasures and luxuries.

In a podcast with Lex Fridman, when asked about hard work, PM Modi said, "Contentment is always born from the spirit of giving." The prime minister is a living embodiment of this spirit of Karmayoga.

Since his time as chief minister of Gujarat, he has been known for living a disciplined and simple life. Even after becoming the prime minister, PM Modi has maintained a lifestyle of discipline and simplicity. He regularly practices yoga and meditation and follows a healthy way of living. He believes deeply in spirituality and draws inspiration from spiritual leaders like Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. His ascetic disposition is clearly reflected in both his personal life and his public service.

PM Modi is a devoted patron of Bhartiya culture. He works actively to promote the richness and diversity of Bhartiya traditions. He frequently highlights the greatness of Bhartiya culture in his speeches. He also encourages the arts and supports artists and cultural practitioners.

From time to time, he demonstrates his appreciation for music by playing traditional instruments such as the Sarinda from Assam, the Naghara, a drum associated with the Banjara culture of Maharashtra, and other folk instruments alongside tribal and local artists from regions like Uttarakhand. These moments reflect his deep interest in music.

Narendra Modi's sensitivity is also reflected in his identity as a writer and poet. He has written several books and poems that convey his thoughts and experiences. In 2007, he launched his poetry collection "Aankh Aa Dhanya Chhe" in Mumbai. On this occasion, he invited Bhairon Singh Shekhawat as the chief guest. At the event, Shekhawat said: "When Modi invited me to the book launch, I thought he was joking. I couldn't believe he wrote poetry. I'm sorry, Modi ji—I had never imagined that such tenderness resided within you. Today, I see that your personality is a remarkable blend of strength and softness."

Cross-border infiltration: The next big challenge to India's internal security

Cross-border infiltration has emerged as India's most pressing internal security threat, with demographic shifts, political exploitation and economic strains turning a regional concern into a national crisis demanding urgent action.



Cross-border infiltration has become one of India's most serious internal security concerns. Though long a matter of regional unease, it now demands national attention. On August 15, 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted this growing threat from the ramparts of Red Fort, warning that "illegal infiltrators are snatching the bread and butter of our youth, targeting our daughters and sisters, and capturing forest land belonging to innocent tribals."

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He characterised these demographic shifts in border areas as more than just local disruptions; they are grave threats to national security. To address this, the government announced the formation of a high-powered Demographic

Security Mission, signalling a determined push to counter this challenge.

In the early 2000s, India's primary internal security threats were terrorism and separatism in Kashmir, Left-Wing Extremism (LWE), and North-East insurgency. Though these issues persist, their intensity has declined considerably.

Naxalism, once active in 182 districts in 2009, has now shrunk to just 18 in 2025. Former PM Manmohan Singh had called it the "single biggest internal security threat" in 2006. According to the Home Ministry, it could be eliminated by March 2026.

In the North-East, insurgency has declined by nearly 90%. This progress is largely due to improved infrastructure, integration of alienated communities, and peace accords with insurgent groups.

Kashmir has experienced a relative calm following the 2019 abrogation of Article 370. However, a complete resolution remains elusive, as Pakistan and its intelligence agency ISI continue to fuel unrest in the region. Keeping the Kashmir issue alive is essential to their strategic interests and political survival.

With these longstanding challenges somewhat under control, illegal infiltration has now surfaced as the most pressing internal security threat.

Socio-Political and Economic Consequences

Infiltration is no longer a border-specific problem. Its effects are now deeply felt across the Indian heartland, creating far-reaching social, political, and economic consequences. What was once framed as a humanitarian issue has transformed into a national crisis.

Socially, the influx from Bangladesh and Myanmar has altered the demographic makeup of states like Assam, West Bengal, Tripura, and other North-Eastern areas. Ethnic balances have been disrupted, causing friction over land, language, and identity. The Assam Movement's legacy looms large, while debates on the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) remain active and politically sensitive.

There is a growing perception among locals that infiltrators benefit from welfare schemes and political appeasement. This belief has sparked ethnic nationalism and communal

tensions. Radical groups are quick to exploit such sentiments, posing further threats to social cohesion.

This issue is no longer limited to border regions. Migrants have reached deep into the mainland from Bihar to Punjab and Uttarakhand to Karnataka. Major cities like Delhi, Hyderabad, Gurugram, and Pune are witnessing increasing numbers, putting pressure on urban services and housing. What was once a regional problem is now a national one.

Politically, illegal infiltration presents dangerous incentives. Most political parties have embraced vote-bank strategies, facilitating fake documents, helping infiltrators settle on government lands, especially along river beds and forest areas, and turning a blind eye to the consequences. Such actions compromise national security for short-term electoral gains and alienate local populations.

This deepens mistrust between citizens and the state. If unaddressed, it could lead to unrest, especially in vulnerable regions where demographic pressures are mounting.

Economically, illegal infiltration strains both employment and public services.

Most undocumented migrants work in agriculture, construction, and domestic labour, flooding the market with cheap labour. This depresses wages and displaces local workers.

Moreover, many infiltrators are involved in the informal or grey economy, engaging in cattle smuggling, narcotics trafficking, fake currency, and illicit trade. These activities not only weaken the formal economy but also empower organised crime syndicates, some with terrorist links.

Public resources such as healthcare, education, and welfare are stretched further by the undocumented population. These burdens threaten to derail India's vision of becoming a developed nation, "Vikshit Bharat" by 2047.

Growing Threat to National Security

India's borders are increasingly vulnerable due to evolving tactics by hostile actors. In Punjab, narco-terrorism has gained ground, with drugs and arms being dropped by drones. Along the India-Myanmar border, difficult terrain enables insurgent movement and illegal entry. Cyber radicalisation and sleeper agents disguised as labourers further complicate detection.

Nepal Gen Z Revolt: What Should India Do?

The recent political turmoil in Nepal, which saw the resignation of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and widespread protests led by the youth, may appear to be an internal affair. But for India, it's a matter of critical strategic concern. The events are a blaring siren for New Delhi, a reminder of the fragility in our immediate neighbourhood.

The protest movement, largely driven by Generation Z, wasn't just about the government's controversial social media ban, though it was portrayed as such. It was a culmination of deep-seated frustrations with corruption, nepotism, and chronic political instability. For decades, Nepal's political landscape has been dominated by a handful of leaders who have "played musical chairs" with power, failing to address core issues like unemployment and economic inequality.

The Big Picture

In other words, the protests - while sparked by the ban on social media apps, and triggered by a hit-and-run incident when a Minister's car ran over a 11-year-old schoolgirl, are rooted in weak political institutions, widespread misgovernance - and a profound sense of disillusionment among the youth. High youth unemployment and low GDP per capita have led to a mass exodus of young people seeking work abroad, further fuelling frustration. But it seems the protests were infiltrated by interlopers who were responsible for the subsequent violence and destruction. The Army stepped in to impose a curfew and lead negotiations, raising questions about the role of the country's President, who was largely seen as "missing in action".

This kind of chaos has become a familiar story in India's neighbourhood, echoing the recent upheavals in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. For India, it's clear that the old political establishment, which New Delhi has traditionally engaged with, has lost its hold and legitimacy. The youth are seeking a new kind of leadership, one that is not burdened by the baggage of the past. The younger generation is calling for the dissolution of the current parliament, viewing its members as discredited leaders. India must recognise that

a new political generational shift has emerged in Nepal, and New Delhi's traditional levers of influence may be eroding.

Why India Must Be Cautious

What can we not avoid worrying about? Instability in Nepal poses several direct and indirect threats to India's interests. Security is foremost among them. An open border with Nepal is both a boon and a bane. Political chaos and a breakdown of law and order can lead to a surge in cross-border smuggling, human trafficking, and an increase in the activities of anti-India elements. The potential for a security vacuum in Nepal could be exploited by hostile actors, particularly Pakistan's ISI, to foment trouble in India. Our government understandably briefly closed the 1,700-kilometre border, though it has since been reopened and trade and traffic is now back to normal. Security remains tight, though, with identity verification and drone surveillance continuing along sensitive stretches of the border.

China's growing influence is also a concern. As India's clout has been waning in a politically unstable Nepal, China's footprint has been enlarging. Beijing has been actively engaged in Nepal through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and various infrastructure projects, including roads and railways. At the same time, it's apparent that the young rebels in Nepal are wary of any perceived "India hand" or "China hand" in their internal politics.

Don't Buy Conspiracy Theories

Some in India, especially on social media, have given voice to the "Same Toolkit" theory, expressing concerns that the youth-led protests, while seemingly organic, bear an "uncanny resemblance" to the regime changes that have occurred in other South Asian countries. This, they say, raises suspicions of a larger, coordinated effort to destabilise the region - by implication orchestrated by the West. I tend to be sceptical of most conspiracy theories - the world is often more susceptible to random events than the paranoiacs believe - India must of course bear such concerns in mind and monitor these developments closely. The Appointment Of Karki Still, the appointment of Sushila Karki as



the new Prime Minister undermines the theory that this was a "colour revolution" orchestrated by the West. Karki is a 73-year-old grandmother with a history of indigenous Nepali resistance, including participating in the overthrow of the monarchy and fighting government corruption. Her own education at Benares Hindu University, her fond references to India, her lack of foreign education or connections, should reassure us. Her staunch fight against corruption from within the judiciary, along with her husband's own anti-monarchy activism (including a famous 1973 hijacking), point to why she was picked. The protesters' use of a gaming chat app, Discord, to choose her, demonstrates the organic and chaotic nature of the movement, which contradicts the idea of a carefully managed coup. Yet, India's specific involvement in Nepal in the short term might be affected. The unrest could stall or derail critical bilateral projects, particularly in the hydropower sector. Projects like the Arun-3 and Phukot Karnali are vital for India's energy security and its goal of becoming a regional energy hub. Delays in these projects would be a significant setback. During the protests, around 33,000 prisoners, including convicts for serious crimes like murder and rape, were released from jail. This poses a significant threat to society as many of them are now at large, some with looted arms.

India's Options

What can India do? New Delhi has limited but crucial options. A policy of non-interference - essential to show arms-length respect for the internal affairs of a sovereign neighbour - must be balanced with a proactive, yet subtle, strategy to safeguard our interests. Of course we must avoid direct intervention: India must resist the temptation to micromanage Nepal's internal politics. Past attempts at heavy-handed diplomacy, such as the 2015 unofficial border blockade, have been counterproductive, fostering anti-India sentiment and pushing Nepal closer to China. A hands-off approach, for now, is the wisest course. We should, at the same time, focus on Nepal's development and India's own "soft power". Instead of political meddling, we should double down on our development assistance and cultural ties. Completing existing projects on time, investing in new ones that benefit the Nepali public directly, and promoting educational and cultural exchanges will build goodwill and strengthen the bilateral relationship from the ground up, will all help enhance India's standing in the eyes of the Nepali public. And we must engage with the new generation. New Delhi should open new channels of communication with the emerging political leaders and youth activists in Nepal. Understanding their aspirations and grievances is crucial for formulating a forward-looking foreign policy. Ignoring this new demographic would be

a grave mistake.

Secure The Border

Nonetheless, we cannot avoid strengthening our border management. With the political situation volatile, India must heighten vigilance along the porous border to prevent any spillover of violence or the infiltration of undesirable elements. Nepal is at a crossroads. For India, the stakes are too high to treat this as just another "there they go again" moment. New Delhi must understand the deep-seated anger that led to this uprising and respond with a nuanced, long-term strategy that prioritises mutual respect, economic cooperation, and security, while leaving the political heavy-lifting to the Nepali people themselves. The new government's agenda will need to focus on preparing for elections, restoring law and order, and addressing youth unemployment and corruption. What follows later will be of vital interest to us, but is not for us to help determine.

Nepal matters to us as a neighbour, a fraternal nation and a country bound intimately to our own by ties of culture, religion, geography and history. We have to find the right balance between not interfering and not remaining indifferent, while supporting peace and stability in Nepal by offering financial and institutional assistance to the new government.

Granted, striking the right balance is not an easy task for our diplomats. But that's what we taxpayers pay them to do.

When the machine says no: The unseen risks of AI in finance



There was a time—not long ago—when decisions in finance were made by people. A loan officer would pick up the phone. A portfolio manager would pause on a gut instinct. A compliance analyst would catch something in a tone of voice, not a data field. It wasn't perfect. But it was human. It allowed space for questions, for doubt, for second chances.

Artificial intelligence is changing the infrastructure of finance. Not with grand announcements, but with quiet authority—sifting through transactions, scoring applicants, surfacing insights, and making calls that used to belong to people. And while the benefits are real—speed, consistency, efficiency—so are the trade-offs. The problem is, we're not talking enough about those.

I've spent years working at the crossroads of financial services and emerging technology. I've seen AI streamline messy processes, reduce false positives in fraud detection, and make sense of sprawling, fragmented data sets. I don't doubt its power. But

power, unexamined, becomes assumption. And that's where the danger lies.

We're moving faster than we're thinking.

Because the shift to AI isn't just a technical upgrade—it's a philosophical one. We're handing decision-making authority to systems that don't understand the weight of their outcomes. And while they're capable of impressive feats, they do not reason, reflect, or regret. They calculate. And when they calculate wrong, there's often no one left to notice.

Take lending. A machine learning model trained on past approvals will learn to mimic patterns that worked before. But if those patterns excluded certain groups, favored certain jobs, or penalized certain life choices—well, the model will just keep going. Not out of malice, but inertia. The algorithm doesn't ask why. It just optimizes.

That's what makes these systems risky. Not because they fail loudly. But because they work quietly—and their mistakes look like logic.

A single mother rejected for a mortgage. A small business flagged as high-risk. A client routed away from a better investment product because their profile didn't match the "ideal" cluster. Each outcome defensible. None interrogated. And over time, the edge cases add up—not to scandal, but to systemic exclusion.

What's worse is that these decisions are hard to challenge. The opacity of AI creates a kind of institutional absolution. When the computer says no, who do you argue with? We've built systems that can process a million transactions per second. But have we built institutions willing to pause for one?

Of course, financial services has always leaned on models—risk models, pricing models, scenario plans. What's changed is the speed and scale at which those models now operate. AI doesn't just assist decisions. Increasingly, it makes them. And not at the margins. At the core.

What concerns me isn't just the outcomes—it's the culture this creates. When decisions come prepackaged from a model, the instinct to question

erodes. When outcomes are labeled "data-driven," dissent starts to sound like resistance. Over time, institutions can become fluent in the language of explainability—without actually understanding what the system is doing. That's not innovation. That's automation without accountability.

It's not that the humans are out of the loop. It's that the loop is shrinking.

This isn't a call to stop using AI. We've already crossed that threshold. And truthfully, there's too much good that can come from this technology to walk away from it. AI can expand access to credit, detect financial abuse, reduce operational friction, and deliver insight at a scale human teams could never reach. But progress without principles creates systems that work beautifully—until they don't. And when they don't, they tend to break the people who are already vulnerable.

So how do we build differently?

For one, we need to design for doubt. We need systems that invite challenge, not suppress it. That flag when confidence is too

high, not just when it's too low. That allow frontline staff—not just developers—to raise red flags when an outcome doesn't pass the human smell test.

Second, we need to invest in judgment—not just automation. The banker of the future isn't someone who codes. It's someone who knows how to read a model output and say, "That can't be right," and more importantly, be empowered to act on that doubt.

And finally, we need to shift what we optimize for. Not just throughput or model performance, but trust. Trust is slow. It's relational. And it's easily broken by a system that doesn't see the difference between a person and a probability. The future of finance will be intelligent. There's no stopping that. But whether it will be humane—that's still up to us. Because the systems we build today will become the defaults of tomorrow. If we don't ask harder questions now—about ethics, explainability, and human oversight—we'll wake up in five years with a financial system that looks efficient on paper but feels alienating in practice.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Looking Beyond India-China Dynamics

The Tianjin Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), will go down in history as a watershed moment in global politics. It heralded a moment which expressly demonstrated that the western world no longer held imminence and power was shifting to the east. Though the SCO is a bloc that is still evolving, has the potential to reshape the global balance of power and this was most soundly manifested at Tianjin. And that is why, though at the core of this summit's historicity and significance lies Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Tianjin, after seven long years, and participation in the summit amidst the backdrop of worsening Indo-US ties, the organization is more than that.

Beginning as what was billed as Eurasia's response to the NATO, the SCO is no longer a symbolic regional alliance. Currently it represents nearly 40% of the world's population and close to 30% of global GDP. Its ten full members — China, India, Russia, Pakistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Belarus. There are 16 more partner states. The SCO, as the name suggests, was formed in Shanghai in 2001, on the initiative of China and the Russian Federation, along with the Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan. It was meant to be a regional security bloc, for countries in the region coordinating and pooling resources to jointly battle terrorism, and transnational crimes like narcotics smuggling, human trafficking, and religious radicalism. The immediate reason was instability in Afghanistan which affected all these countries. The main reason, however, was to check Chinese expansion in Central Asia where five sovereign states appeared in the post-Soviet space, in Russia's traditional sphere of influence. The SCO was a means to delineate the spheres of influence in Central Asia — while China could economically, Russia would retain control over defense and

security in the region which it continues through the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). Hence,



Central Asia was central to the initiative, no pun intended. You May Like When India joined the SCO in 2017, it was Russia that facilitated its entry into the organization in order to balance China's heft there. Simultaneously, China facilitated Pakistan's entry into the SCO the very same year. Though known as a Eurasian security bloc, the SCO, however, has no military alliance, and the only institution is the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) headquartered in Tashkent. Hence, one of the primary reasons that India joined the SCO was to engage more closely with the Central Asian Republics (CARs) that were part of the SCO — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, actively encouraged by Russia. The SCO thus serves as a platform for annual meetings with these countries, with whom India has been trying to forge close ties. These countries represent an economic power bloc, with an abundance of natural resources, untapped manufacturing potential, and a united market. Strategically located, between Russia and China, and where China's footprint is increasingly expanding, their importance has not been lost on India which for this reason initiated the India-Central Asia

Dialogue. The first India-Central Asia Dialogue in 2022 was held virtually because of covid disruptions. The second

summit has yet to take place though this year a Ministerial meet at the Foreign Ministers level did take place. However, India's distraction with its G20 Presidency and Modi's non-appearance at the summit last year in Astana was perceived by some of the countries as India's non-interest in cultivating further ties with them. The SCO summit thus provided a valuable platform for India and Prime Minister Modi to interact with his counterparts from these countries, allaying fears and rejuvenating ties. The bloc, geographically compact as it is, is also important to combat the many threats that face the region — radicalism, jihadism, terrorism, drug and human trafficking. All the countries of the SCO have suffered from these threats and continue to wage sometimes overt and often covert battle against them. Hence, counter-terror coordination and cooperation becomes an important part of SCO activity. This is particularly relevant now as the region is faced with the new spectre of the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKAP). Most of the SCO members have been impacted in some degree or the other by this terror group — Russia, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and India. For India in particular, a new threat

is rising in the subcontinent in the form of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir in neighbouring Bangladesh. This is a terror threat that the

CARs and Russia have already dealt with. (The organization is banned in all these countries). Hence, the SCO becomes imperative for a united approach to the threat of terror. This approach was well reflected in the grouping's declaration which condemned the Pahalgam massacre as well as the Jaffar Express attack in Pakistan. A unified regional approach is equally true and needed in the case of Afghanistan too. As mentioned earlier, the chaos and instability in Afghanistan and the rise of the Taliban was the immediate raison d'être for the establishment of the SCO. Every founding member of the SCO had been detrimentally impacted by the Afghan jihad and ensuing instability in the country. Afghanistan under Taliban 2.0 still remains an issue for the region. All the SCO countries are on the same page regarding their approach to Taliban ruled Afghanistan. In direct contrast, the western world that was instrumental in bringing the Taliban to power in Kabul in 2021 has taken a rather contrarian position towards the country. Here again the SCO is a bridge to Afghanistan, as it was member Uzbekistan who in 2018 hosted an international conference on Afghanistan in Samarkand where the

willingness of the US to have the then Ashraf Ghani-led government, together with the US announced officially that it would negotiate a peace deal with the Taliban. It was at this conference, that the Taliban officially became a legitimate political stakeholder in Afghanistan. The SCO offers a platform for joint coordination and action of all regional states to find pathways for peace and stability in Afghanistan. India will find it wiser and more beneficial to work together with the SCO to engage with the Taliban and stabilize Afghanistan. Russia and Uzbekistan have taken the lead, enabling others like India to engage with Afghanistan again. The SCO represents 30 percent of global GDP and with the inclusion of more states, this will grow. It is also an energy powerhouse with members like Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan. There are tremendous trade opportunities within the organization for India which India will find useful especially now as it seeks to diversify its trade and export destinations. Finally the Tianjin Summit, possibly the most consequential in the history of the SCO till now, proved that India occupies important strategic space, where it can prevent any anti-India regional subgroups as agreements are taken by consensus. Finally, the SCO shows potential to offer an alternative to the western power bloc. It even has as one of its partner members a NATO member — Türkiye. It may never actually be the alternative, but its geopolitical signalling was potent. This was most illustrated in the angst exhibited in western capitals as the iconic photo of the leaders of the three eastern powerhouses — President Vladimir Putin, President Xi Jinping, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi — went viral. And the quick turnaround that occurred in the White House. The SCO, thus is important in its own rights, with its own merits. India needs to stay put in it, and not use it simply for reactive responses.

Why you can easily buy a gun in the US and why you can't in India



US political activist and key Trump ally Charlie Kirk was shot and killed, allegedly by a 22-year-old youth, as he spoke at a public gathering at Utah Valley University on September 11.

Authorities recovered a high-powered Winchester .30 caliber hunting rifle with a telescopic mount, which Tyler Johnson, 22, allegedly used to fire a single round at the throat of the 31-year-old founder of the right-wing group Turning Point.

A sharpening political rhetoric in the US and increasing gun sales —16.7 million firearms were sold in 2023— increase the likelihood of them being used in high-profile political killings. The Kirk killing was reminiscent of the July 15 attempted assassination of President Donald Trump. A rooftop shooter, Thomas Matthew Crooks, shot at Trump, who ducked and saved himself, even before his Secret Service protection detail could respond. In September, another potential assassin armed with an AK-47-type rifle stalked Trump in Florida. Neither of them had any trouble sourcing military-grade assault rifles because the US

is awash in weapons. Most Americans can buy a gun in under an hour. The US has 120 guns for every 100 people. India has just 5 civilian guns per 100 people. How the world's two largest democracies came to have such drastically different gun laws has its origins in their freedom struggle from a common coloniser— Great Britain. George Washington cobbled together an army out of militias armed with their own weapons and ammunition. They threw the British out after an eight-year armed struggle in 1783 and, in 1791, enshrined the right to bear arms in the Second Amendment to

its constitution, where it gave Americans the right to create militias— later interpreted as the right to bear arms. This Second Amendment is the cornerstone of all gun debates in the US and deeply woven into its political fabric.

Anti-gun activists have failed to convince gun owners that the Second Amendment dated back to an era of single-shot muskets, not sophisticated military-grade assault rifles like the ones used in countless mass killings in the US where over 100 people die from gun violence every single day— some of them in mass shootings where so-called deranged shooters run amok. Ironically, even Kirk was an ardent pro-gun owner.

"It's worth it to have a cost of, unfortunately, some gun deaths every single year, so that we can have the Second Amendment to protect our other God-given rights...that is a prudent deal," he said at a 2023 event. Even Trump, who survived twin assassination attempts, issued an executive order in February ending federal gun control measures and pushed a pro-Second Amendment line.

In sharp contrast, gun ownership is a non-issue in

India, which ranks 120th in civilian gun ownership in the world. Strict gun control laws make it difficult for civilians to own guns. This has to do with a single colonial-era law— the Indian Arms Act, 1878, which regulated gun ownership in India. The Act was enacted by the British nearly two decades after the Great War of Independence of 1857, an armed insurrection which was the most serious threat to British rule in India. The British were not going to stand by and watch armed native populations push them out of a second colony, and hence, they introduced the Act.

Even Mahatma Gandhi opposed the act. In a 1918 recruitment leaflet for the First World War, he called it a 'black act' because it 'deprived a whole nation of arms'. More than a century later, the spirit of the Act lives on. The Arms Rules of 2016 require licencing authorities 'to be satisfied that an applicant has a genuine need, such as for property protection or sports', rather than just a desire to own a firearm. The flip side? In India, there is little danger of political differences spilling over into violent gun battles.



Cloudflare CEO warns AI could turn internet into a Black Mirror world run by big tech

Cloudflare CEO Matthew Prince has warned that artificial intelligence could push the internet into a Black Mirror-like future, where a few tech giants control the flow of information.

The internet that billions rely on today may not look the same tomorrow. Cloudflare CEO Matthew Prince believes that artificial intelligence is changing the way people access information in ways that could be worrying for creators, publishers, and ordinary users alike. Speaking on WIRED's Big Interview Podcast, Prince compared one possible outcome to something straight out of Black Mirror, where a handful of powerful tech companies end up controlling what the world reads, learns, and believes.

Search engines losing ground
According to Prince, the days of search engines like Google acting as the front door to the internet are already slipping away. Instead of showing people a collection of links, search results increasingly display AI-generated summaries. "Now, if you run a search, it gives you back an answer at the top of the page. It doesn't give you a

treasure map," Prince said, pointing to Google's AI Overviews that compile and repackage information from across the web. While this may feel convenient for users, he warned that such a model strips away the clicks and traffic that websites need to survive. Journalists, researchers, and independent creators, the very people who produce the content AI depends on, stand to lose the most.

Three futures for the internet
Prince painted three possible futures for how this change could play out. The first is an extreme "dead internet" scenario, where AI-generated material floods the web and drowns out human voices entirely. Prince doubts this will happen, since AI itself depends on human-created work to function. The second outcome is what he fears the most: a "Black Mirror" version of the internet. In this world, journalists, researchers, and writers don't disappear but they work directly

for a few powerful AI companies. He compared it to 15th-century Florence, where wealthy families like the Medicis funded artists and thinkers while quietly changing their output to suit political interests.

"If that happens today," Prince suggested, "companies like OpenAI, Anthropic, or Perplexity could end up running their own content bureaus. What the world gets is knowledge tuned to the beliefs of a few firms, rather than the messy, diverse voices of the open web."

He added that this could split along ideological lines, with conservative, liberal, Chinese, or Indian versions of information dominating instead of one common internet that works for everyone.

The third, and more hopeful, possibility is that AI companies move towards a licensing model. Much like how Netflix pays for the rights to films and shows, AI firms could pay content creators

for their work. Prince said this is what Cloudflare itself is pushing for, because without a healthy ecosystem of creators, the internet risks losing its vitality.

Publishers already fighting back

Prince's comments come at a time when media companies are increasingly taking legal action against AI firms. Earlier this month, Penske Media Corporation, which owns Rolling Stone and The Hollywood Reporter, sued Google over its AI Overview feature, accusing the tech giant of using their content without proper compensation. Cloudflare has also stepped into the fight. The company recently launched a tool that allows its customers to block AI crawlers from scraping their websites unless the bots' operators agree to pay. Big publishers including the Associated Press and Cond Nast have already signed on to such measures.

Prince admitted that this debate

is not just academic for Cloudflare. If the open internet declines and gets replaced by walled-off AI systems, it could threaten his company's entire business model.

"This is an existential threat to us," he said. "If the internet stops existing, what's left for Cloudflare to do? One of the things that is really important to us is a thriving and vibrant internet ecosystem." For now, the internet sits at a crossroads. On one hand, AI promises convenience and speed, giving users direct answers. On the other, it risks hollowing out the very industries that produce reliable information. Prince is basically suggesting that the web's original promise of openness and equal access is under strain, and how the world responds could decide whether the internet remains a free-flowing space of ideas or turns into something resembling a scripted Black Mirror episode.

Trump will cut you loose: Dems grill Kash Patel over Epstein files, FBI firings

Senators pressed Patel on bungled Epstein files, politically charged firings of agents, and warnings that President Donald Trump might eventually turn on him and "cut him loose" despite his loyalty.

Patel, who has drawn scrutiny for social media posts in the early days of the investigation into Charlie Kirk's murder, maintained composure for much of the hearing, employing methods used by directors before him to avoid giving specific answers and denying accusations that he had politicised the agency. But in one heated exchange, Patel called Sen. Adam Schiff "a disgrace to this institution" and a "political buffoon at best" after being pressed on who decided to move Jeffrey Epstein's associate, Ghislaine Maxwell, to a minimum-security prison following a multi-day interview with a top Justice Department official. "You are the biggest fraud to ever sit in the United States Senate," Patel said as Schiff attempted to speak over him.

Republicans rallied around Patel, praising law enforcement for capturing Kirk's alleged killer and highlighting other agency successes. "I've actually admired the way you've tried to keep your

composure over the course of this," Republican Sen. Thom Tillis said before offering advice. "The last one I'd just coach you on don't take the bait just sit down in the quiet confidence that you're doing a good job."

Much of the hourslong hearing focused on the assassination of Kirk and the administration's handling of political violence in the United States. Patel defended his social media posts following the incident, explaining that he had reported a "subject" in custody hours after the shooting, which was later released. "What we had at the time was a subject in custody in relation to this investigation," Patel told Sen. Peter Welch. "I put that information out, and then when we interviewed him, I put out the results of that."

While admitting he could have "been more careful in my verbiage", Patel insisted he was transparent and providing timely updates. When Welch called the posts a "mistake", Patel countered that he did not "see it as a mistake". Democrats also pressed Patel over his handling of the Epstein case. He deflected blame onto Alex Acosta, who as US attorney in Florida during the George W Bush administration, oversaw Epstein's non-

prosecution agreement.

Patel described the deal as the "original sin in the Epstein case", noting that Epstein avoided federal charges in exchange for 13 months in prison on Florida state prostitution charges and registration as a sex offender. Patel said, "If I were the FBI director then, it wouldn't have happened." He argued that the structure of the agreement largely explained why the Trump administration did not release extensive evidence in the case, as protective court orders legally prohibited access without court permission. Patel faced repeated questioning over the firing of FBI agents, some of whom held senior positions and have since sued. Democrats sought to tie the firings to alleged political pressure from the White House on Trump-related investigations.

Patel repeatedly denied firing any agent at the White House's behest, insisting that no termination was due to case assignment or how an agent voted in the last presidential election.

"Any termination at the FBI was a decision that I made based on the evidence that I have as a director of the FBI, and it's my job, and I'm not going to shy away from it," he said.

The first major confrontation came when Sen. Cory Booker warned Patel that Trump would not remain loyal. "Mr. Patel, I think you're not going to be around long," Booker said. "I think this might be your last oversight hearing." Booker criticised Patel for prioritising Trump's will over the Constitution, saying, "As much as you supplicate yourself to the will of Donald Trump and not the Constitution of the United States of America, Donald Trump has shown he is not loyal to people like you. He will cut you loose." Booker also faulted Patel for shifting agents to focus on immigration and allegedly firing agents for political reasons, stating, "I believe you have made our country weaker and less safe." Patel fired back, telling Booker, "That rant of false information does not bring this country together." The two began shouting over each other, with Patel calling Booker "an embarrassment" and Booker accusing Patel of "making a mockery of this committee." Patel concluded firmly, "I'm not going anywhere." Patel also clashed again with Schiff during the hearing, calling him "the biggest fraud to ever sit in the United States Senate," a "disgrace to this institution," and "an utter coward."

Emerging US China Pakistan Triangle

A new buzz in much of Asia is what appears to be a growing competition between the United States and China in gaining influence in Pakistan. In other words, a new Cold War may be right on our doorstep. That was recently apparent in some rather extraordinary events. One was the signing of an Action Plan between China and Pakistan, marking the start - after a delay of five years - of the second phase of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). It has a lot more besides that is clearly a reaction to increased US presence in Pakistan. The latter, for its part, has suddenly upped the ante, what with the arrival of several military aircraft at Nur Khan airbase and relief for Pakistan's worst floods seen in recent years. This was presaged by a series of events, all of which would have been noted by Beijing.

CPEC 2.0 Comes Into Play

The Action plan is not just to do with the China-Pakistan corridor. The first part, apart from the expected language on 'iron brothers' and the usual flowery praise, includes references to 'global transformations not seen in a century' and warning that any 'attempt to disrupt or undermine' the partnership is 'bound to fail'. Unsurprisingly, it calls for even closer interaction, with Pakistan fervently declaring Beijing's partnership as a 'cornerstone' of its foreign policy. China doesn't reciprocate that, but acknowledged Pakistan's 'clam approach' during the recent conflict with India, and then chose to bookmark its various 'global' Initiatives - including the most recent 'Global Civilizational Initiative' - rather unusually, also including Resolution 2758 (which affirms a one-China policy) in the statement, as Beijing stresses the centrality of the UN.

The CPEC section emphasises five "corridors" - growth, livelihoods, innovation, green energy, and the ambitious URAAN project, which aims to turn the country into a trillion-dollar economy by 2035 through the usual areas like energy and infra, and, rather mysteriously, "ethics" and "equity". Backing all this are China's '8 Major steps' from 2023, aimed at furthering the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), including "small and beautiful" projects. In other words, Beijing

is preparing to spend a little less on massive projects. The Mainline-1, the most expensive of projects at \$7 billion, has been sent to a consortium headed by the Asian Development Bank, and others. The core of CPEC-2 is interesting in the background of the ongoing tariff war and Beijing's historical dependency on food imports. Agriculture has again become the focus, with scientists already at major Pakistan universities and new projects aimed at Gilgit Baltistan. There is also a strong interest in mining projects. Notably, there is a new clause to 'deepen understanding' of oil and gas geology in Pakistan. In other words, China wants to examine Trump's claim of 'massive oil reserves' in Pakistan, which Washington is apparently set to explore.

The US Knits Into The Army

The US interest in Pakistan has grown leaps and bounds, as is apparent from Field Marshal and Chief of Army Staff Asim Munir not just having that unprecedented lunch with President Trump but also going on to party with the former Commander, Central command, at his retirement bash.

What is interesting is that US initiatives are solely engaging the Pakistan army. It's almost as if the Prime Minister's Office doesn't exist. The MoU on

strategic minerals has been signed with the Army-run Frontier Works Organisation, the country's largest entity involved in critical minerals mining. The relief provided by several US military aircraft was at the request of the Pakistan army. And the six C-17 Globemaster III landed at Nur Khan rather than Islamabad, which would have been the obvious choice for the movement of relief aid through the civilian machinery. Nur Khan is the centre of Pakistan's Air Mobility and plays a key role in logistics. It also operates the C-130s. The base is now under the process of renovation after the punishing strikes by the Indian Air Force during Operation Sindoor. It is possible that the landing of US aircraft here is a signal to India to stay away from the base, since both American aircraft and personnel would be present there.

Then there is the much-touted deal on cryptocurrency under the aegis of Trump's family-owned World Liberty Financial, which signed an agreement with Pakistan's newly minted Crypto Council. Notably, the body started its operations even before the State Bank of Pakistan formally cleared it. Munir personally welcomed the WLF delegation, led by Zachary Witkoff, the son of Steve Witkoff, during the signing ceremony,

prompting speculation about potential national security implications. Remember that the larger Strategic Facilitation Council, which is supposed to steer Pakistan's investment futures and big business ventures, is entirely army-run.

The Sum Of It All

There is much more in the CPEC-2 two to unnerve India. For instance, Chinese companies are involved in the development of fibre optic networks (already in place, linking Chinese satellite data to Rawalpindi), satellite internet, land and sea cables and transit internet through Pakistan, the Karakorum Highway bypass that will enter close to the Line of Control at Muzzafarabad, and, most significantly, a "China Pakistan Land border Joint Committee" for border management and cooperation. All this is expected from the 'iron brothers'.

India's Many Problems

For India, however, the problem is this: American interest in Pakistan seems to have strongly revived Chinese efforts to enter Pakistan, whether through CPEC or without it. In fact, much of what is envisioned is extensive ingress by Chinese businesses and industry. This is exactly what Pakistan wanted all along, and precisely what it has done for decades. It will now reap the largesse from both powers - or,

so it expects to do. But Trump, who in 2018, in his very first tweet as President, had called Pakistan "deceitful", is unlikely to follow that path. His administration has already stopped USAID, one of the major sources for Pakistan funding. Thus, exploitation of Pakistan's resources is highly likely, as also inconspicuous US basing of drones and intelligence. All this works out well for the Pakistani army, which will then have a little more space to push back against excessive Chinese demands - for instance, greater Chinese intelligence access and security personnel for the protection of its citizens.

For India, this is a worst-case scenario. That in itself might give Rawalpindi much satisfaction. In the longer run, however, all this might not be that great for the Field Marshal and his coterie. History has never been kind to dictators, hybrid or otherwise. And, Chinese annoyance will only add another layer of intrigue in what is already a state that fuels and is fuelled by multiple and overlapping layers of covert operations. All this has a price, and someone has to pay it. Hopefully, it won't be Delhi. But in a disordered world, there's no telling. Time to up that defence budget.

(Tara Kartha was with the National Security Council Secretariat)

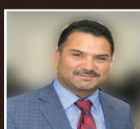
The Beginning

MAD MEN

OF

NU WAY ADVERTISING

About the Author



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

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

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



The Beginning

MAD MEN OF NU WAY ADVERTISING

Sharanjit Thind Singh

The Beginning

A True Story of the iconic rise of an
Indian American Advertising Agency in
Manhattan, New York in early 2000

Sharanjit Thind Singh



MAD MEN
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Degrees For Dollars? Inside The Foreign University Gold Rush In India

India's higher education scene is on the cusp of a seismic shift. For decades, bright young Indian boys and girls packed their bags for London, Boston or Sydney, while their parents nervously calculated the exchange rate and prayed for scholarships. All that may change. Instead of hundreds of thousands of students flying west, the universities are flying east.

A few months ago, the Indian government announced that 15 foreign universities are setting up campuses in the country. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi went to London in July to sign the India-UK free trade agreement, he specifically talked about six UK universities heading to India to set up shop. While Southampton University has already opened up one in Gurugram, Liverpool is on its way to Bengaluru, and York is landing in Mumbai. That's not all: Australia's Deakin and Wollongong are in Gujarat's GIFT City, and even the Illinois Institute of Technology is set to become the first US university with a physical Indian address. 'Illinois Tech Mumbai' will welcome students from 2026. Even Italy's prestigious Istituto Europeo di Design is bringing its Milanese flair to Indian soil.

A Policy Shift With Teeth

The driver of this change is the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, arguably the boldest reset of India's education in decades. At its core lies a simple argument. If Indian students are going abroad in droves, then why not bring quality education to them on their doorsteps? According to estimates, nearly 1.3 million Indians are currently enrolled in universities overseas, draining billions of dollars every year and creating a massive brain drain problem. The NEP's logic is that India should stop exporting so much talent and foreign exchange and instead invite world-class universities on its own terms.

To make that possible, the University Grants Commission (UGC) issued fresh regulations in 2022 and 2023. For the first time, foreign higher education institutions were given a clear green light to set up shop in India. They can decide their own curricula, set their own fees and hire faculty without being strangled by layers of red tape. India really is saying, the market is open, game on.

The Early Movers

The results have been immediate. Southampton University, backed by the Oxford International Education Group, became the first British university to open a fully fledged campus in India. In Gurugram, students can now get a Southampton degree at less than half the UK cost, and the first batch has already drawn applicants not just from across India but also from Nepal, Myanmar and the UAE.

Liverpool is next, opening a Bengaluru campus in 2026. And it's not just dipping a toe in the water: it will offer programmes in business, computer science, biomedical sciences and even game design. It's the first UK university to launch such a course in India. With

Bengaluru already buzzing with Infosys, Wipro, Google and Microsoft, the city could become a natural hub for research partnerships and talent pipelines.

Australia's Deakin and Wollongong were technically the first movers under a different scheme, planting campuses in Gujarat's GIFT City. Now, Western Sydney University and Victoria University are on the way too. The spread is broad: science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), business, design and hospitality. For students, it's an expanded menu. For India, it's a validation of its pitch as a global education destination.

Why India Is An Obvious Choice

The attraction is obvious. India has the world's largest youth population, hungry for opportunity and global exposure. The country also offers a cost advantage: tuition and living costs are a fraction of what students would pay in London or New York. For foreign universities, the numbers are dazzling. Even a small slice of India's higher-education market can mean tens of thousands of students and sustainable revenues. For India, too, the benefit is clear. More students will get access to international-standard education without draining family savings or having to leave the country for good. This is where soft power also sneaks in. A Liverpool in Bengaluru or a Southampton in Gurugram is not just a degree factory. It is a symbol that signals that India has arrived as a place worth investing in, not just extracting from. For Britain and Australia, it is a chance to grow influence while tapping into one of the largest education markets on earth.

A Historical Pivot
And yet, it is hard not to think about how it was two centuries ago. Nearly 200 years ago, Lord Macaulay wrote his infamous "Minute on Indian Education" and persuaded the British Empire to impose English as the medium of instruction here. Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic were sidelined. Western curricula became the new normal. To our hearts' content, the system designed to cement colonial rule ended up creating the lawyers, scientists and leaders who dismantled it.

Fast forward to today, and the script looks reversed. Britain and the West are not imposing their institutions. They are being invited in, under India's rules, to compete for students on Indian soil. This time it is not conquest but competition.

The Sceptics' Case
Of course, not everyone is clapping. Nationalist critics warn that a Southampton Gurugram may be seen as more prestigious than a Delhi University, creating a hierarchy that favours foreign brands over local ones. Others worry that elite foreign campuses will cater mainly to wealthy students, leaving the majority behind in underfunded state institutions. There is also the authenticity question: will Southampton India really be Southampton, or a diluted copy without the full research ecosystem and global

networks?

These anxieties echo old battles. The Foreign Educational Institutions Bill of 2010 collapsed under similar criticisms. Even today, some argue that with autonomy over fees and faculty, foreign universities could end up turning higher education into just another commodity. The risk is real: global campuses must not deepen inequality or hollow out India's own institutions.

The Global Picture

The thing is, India is not acting in isolation. Universities have been going global for decades. Georgetown, Carnegie Mellon and NYU operate in Qatar. The UK has spread into Malaysia, China and Singapore. Australia has built campuses across Southeast Asia. Education is now traded like goods and services, recognised as such under the World Trade Organization's (WTO) General Agreement on Trade in Services back in 1995. India, in some ways, is simply catching up.

India Exports, Too

Crucially, India is not just importing universities. It is beginning to export them too. IIT Delhi opened its first offshore campus in Abu Dhabi last year, while IIT Madras set up a campus in Zanzibar in 2023. These are small steps, but they signal ambition. India wants to project its academic influence in Africa and the

Middle East, not just consume Western expertise.

What's At Stake For Students

For students, the stakes are high. On paper, the benefits are obvious: lower tuition, no foreign living costs and access to global-standard education at home. But will employers see a Southampton India degree as equal to a Southampton UK one? Will foreign campuses poach the best Indian faculty, hollowing out domestic universities? Or will competition push everyone to raise their game?

In the end, the risk and the opportunity are two sides of the same coin. The danger is that foreign campuses could reproduce old hierarchies, recolonising minds in the name of global standards. The opportunity is that they could spark a renaissance, pushing Indian universities to upgrade, creating research collaborations and positioning India as an academic hub for South Asia and the Global South. So, has India's education come full circle? In one sense, yes. British and Western institutions are back on Indian soil. But this is not 1835. The West is no longer dictating - it is negotiating. India is not subservient. It is self-assured. The difference is power. This time, India firmly holds the pen.

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Thank you, Narendra: Trump's olive branch after weeks of India-bashing on oil

For months, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been giving Donald Trump the cold shoulder—turning down a dinner invitation after the G7 Summit in Canada and cancelling his visit to New York later this month, where he was scheduled to address the UN General Assembly. He also reportedly ignored several of Trump's calls since a contentious phone call in June. What exchanges there were, happened mostly on social media and could be described as lukewarm at best. Worried that the United States was losing India, a strategic partner and counterweight to China, Trump has been trying to sweet-talk PM Modi after weeks of hammering New Delhi over its purchases of Russian oil. So when PM Modi's birthday rolled around, Trump wasted no time in picking up the phone and turning up the charm.

he US President also quickly trumpeted the long-awaited chat on social media.

"Just had a wonderful phone call with my friend, Prime Minister Narendra Modi. I wished him a very Happy Birthday! He is doing a tremendous job," Trump posted on Truth Social on Tuesday.

He also praised Modi's peace push to end the war in Ukraine, a surprising U-turn from his recent rhetoric. "Narendra: Thank you for your support on ending the War between Russia and Ukraine," Trump wrote.

PM Modi acknowledged the call on X, writing, "Thank you, my friend, President Trump, for your phone call and warm greetings on my 75th birthday. Like you, I am also fully committed to taking the India-US Comprehensive and Global Partnership to new heights. We support your initiatives towards a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict."

THE 'TESTY' PHONE CALL IN JUNE The birthday wishes marked their first phone call since June, when

the two leaders spoke after Operation Sindoor and India's brief four-day war with Pakistan.

That conversation wasn't exactly pleasant. In the preceding weeks, Trump had tested New Delhi's patience by repeatedly claiming credit for brokering the ceasefire, something India has staunchly denied, maintaining that no third party was involved.

According to the New York Times, the 35-minute call was "testy". Trump again pressed his mediation claim, saying how proud he was of ending the military escalation. PM Modi told him in no uncertain terms that the decision to pause hostilities was taken by India and Pakistan through direct talks and at Islamabad's insistence.

The Prime Minister drew a clear line against Trump's offers of intervention, stressing that India will not accept outside mediation in its dealings with Pakistan. Modi also didn't acknowledge the not-so-subtle hints Trump dropped angling for a Nobel Peace Prize nomination.

TARIFFS, OIL AND SOURING TIES

Since that phone call, relations between the two countries have only soured—first, due to Trump's hefty punitive tariffs, and second, because of the relentless public vilification meted out by White House officials over India's imports of Russian oil.

Trump himself led the charge. He called India's economy "dead", slapped 50 per cent tariffs, and accused New Delhi of fuelling the "Russian war machine". He even threatened more duties for allegedly reselling Russian oil. His minions piled on. Treasury secretary Scott Bessent termed India a "bad actor", while adviser-cum-attack dog Peter Navarro branded it the Kremlin's "laundromat".

The dispute happened even as trade talks of immense importance to both sides hit a wall. The fallout from

the tariff tantrum also pushed New Delhi closer to Washington's adversaries, Beijing and Moscow.

Stunned by PM Modi's camaraderie with Russian premier Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping at the SCO summit in Tianjin, Trump mellowed his tone almost overnight—dropping the opprobrium against India and redirecting his wrath at "darkest" China.

Speaking to reporters a few days after the summit, Trump said India and the US have a "special relationship", and that he will "always be friends" with Modi. Playing down the rift with New Delhi, he remarked, "There's nothing to worry about. We just have moments on occasion."

THAW INCOMING?

Trump signalled a thaw in ties in another Truth Social post last week.

"I am pleased to announce that India, and the United States of America, are continuing negotiations to address the Trade Barriers between our two Nations," he wrote. "I look forward to speaking with my very good friend, Prime Minister Modi, in the upcoming weeks. I feel certain that there will be no difficulty in coming to a successful conclusion for both of our Great Countries!" Days later, a US trade team visited New Delhi for the first in-person talks since Trump imposed a 25 per cent penalty on top of existing 25 per cent tariffs last month. The day-long discussions on Tuesday were described by both sides as "positive", raising hopes that stalled negotiations on a bilateral agreement may soon be back on track.

Washington has already blinked on trade. But does Trump's latest conciliatory post also signal a retreat on the Russian oil sticking point? The coming weeks will tell.

'Brain-Eating Amoeba' Kills 19 In Kerala. How It Spreads, How To Stay Safe

New Delhi: Kerala health authorities are on alert after a spike in cases of Primary Amoebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM), a brain infection with a high fatality rate. This infection is caused by *Naegleria fowleri*, commonly known as the 'brain-eating amoeba'. This year, Kerala has recorded 61 confirmed cases of PAM and 19 deaths, with many of these deaths being reported in the past few weeks.

State Health Minister Veena George has said Kerala is grappling with a serious public health challenge. The infections, previously linked to clusters in districts like Kozhikode and Malappuram, are now appearing sporadically across the state. Patients range from a three-month-old infant to a 91-year-old. "Unlike last year, we are not seeing clusters linked to a single water source. These are single, isolated cases, and this has complicated our epidemiological investigations," she said.

What Is PAM? How Infection Happens?

According to a Kerala government document, PAM affects the central nervous system. "This infection destroys brain tissue, causing severe brain swelling and death in most cases. PAM is rare and usually occurs in otherwise healthy children, teens and young adults," it says.

The document flags "warm, especially stagnant, fresh water" as a carrier of the "brain-eating amoeba". "The portal of entry by the amoebae is through the olfactory mucosa and the cribriform plate," it says, adding that oral consumption of contaminated water is not "associated with

symptomatic disease".

This puts those swimming, diving, or bathing in water bodies contaminated with this amoeba at a high risk of infection.

The document also flags how global warming is adding to the risk. "Climate change raising the water temperature and the heat driving more people to recreational water use is likely to increase the encounters with this pathogen," it says.

The infection does not spread from person to person.

That Are Symptoms Of PAM Infection?

PAM has a very high mortality rate, primarily because it is difficult to diagnose. Its symptoms are similar to bacterial meningitis -- headache, fever, nausea, and vomiting. "By the time other more common causes of meningitis are ruled out and the diagnosis of PAM is considered, it is often too late to save the patient from the cerebral edema that quickly develops and causes death," the document says, adding, "Most patients present to medical care with signs or symptoms indicative of central nervous system involvement".

PAM is more common during warmer months and among people with a history of swimming, diving, and bathing in warm, generally stagnant, freshwater. The symptoms may appear between one and nine days, and their acute onset may occur over hours to 1-2 days. "The neuro-olfactory route provides *N.fowleri* quick access to the brain and results in impaired adaptive immune response, causing a very rapid disease course," it says.

How Is PAM Treated?

Almost all survivors of PAM in the past six decades were diagnosed at a pre-cerebral stage. "This shows that early diagnosis of PAM and timely initiation of an antimicrobial cocktail might be lifesaving," the document says. Ms George has stressed that "early detection is key".

"The rarity of the disease, delay in diagnosis, fulminant clinical course, and the difficulties in making a rapid diagnosis have hampered the evaluation of drug regimens," the document says. "In theory, the best drug regimen should include an amebicidal drug (or a combination of drugs) with good in vitro activity that is capable of crossing the blood-brain barrier," it adds.

The Kerala government has asked people to seek immediate medical attention if they experience symptoms similar to a PAM infection after exposure to stagnant water. PAM In Kerala Kerala reported its first PAM case in 2016, and till 2023, the state had reported just eight confirmed cases. But last year saw a big spike - 36 cases and nine deaths. And this year, 69 cases and 19 deaths have already been reported -- almost a 100 per cent spike.

As the state goes all-out to prevent fresh infections, people have been advised to take preventive measures. They have been advised to avoid swimming or bathing in untreated or stagnant freshwater sources such as ponds and lakes. Swimmers have been advised to use nose clips when entering freshwater, and proper cleaning and chlorination have been suggested for wells and water tanks.

Why Georgia Is Fast Becoming A Sour Trip For Indians Despite 40% Increase In Visitors In 2025

Georgia has become one of the most sought-after destinations for Indians in recent years. Nestled between Europe and Asia, this small country has all the makings of a dream trip: stunning mountain ranges, picture-perfect monasteries, European-style towns with cobbled streets, a vibrant nightlife in its capital Tbilisi, and a food and wine culture that rivals Italy and France - and all of it, at a fraction of the cost.

With direct flights from India and a simple e-visa process, many Indians see Georgia as their easy gateway to Europe without spending Rs 2-3 lakh on a Schengen trip.

But behind the postcard views lies an uncomfortable reality.

A growing number of Indian travellers have spoken out on social media about being racially profiled by Georgian authorities. Stories of young Indian men being pulled aside for "random checks", being grilled at Tbilisi airport, or even being denied entry despite valid documents have become common. Tourists have shared accounts of being held back for hours, asked invasive questions, and in some cases, sent back on the same flight they arrived on.

"Most Inhumane Behaviour"

Georgia is making headlines once again, after a woman alleged that Georgian officials subjected a group of 56 Indian tourists to extremely inhumane treatment while they tried to enter the country from the neighbouring Armenia.

What Happened

In an Instagram post, Dhruvee

Patel said that the group, despite holding valid e-visas and paperwork, was humiliated and held for hours at the Sadakhlo crossing.

She claimed they were left in the freezing cold for over five hours without access to food or toilets, and that officers took their passports for more than two hours without any explanation. According to her, the group was made to sit on the pavement "like cattle", filmed "like criminals", and prevented from recording the incident themselves.

She further alleged that officials didn't review their documents and simply dismissed their visas as "wrong", and called the incident "shameful and unacceptable". But this is not the first time such an incident has occurred. Let's look at some similar cases.

Similar Cases

A similar incident occurred in January 2025. A solo traveller shared his "harrowing experience" in Tbilisi. The incident was amplified on X by travel influencer Jimeet Ved, who goes by @outofofficedaku on X and Instagram.

The solo traveller flew to Tbilisi expecting a brief holiday among the city's historic sites and scenic views, but the experience unravelled on arrival, leaving him shaken and humiliated.

According to him, the immigration officer handling his case was allegedly "almost abusive" despite his complete documentation, including hotel confirmations, a detailed printed itinerary, proof of funds in cash, a return

ticket, and a company ID.

The questioning grew intrusive and accusatory, alleged the traveller, with the officer demanding precise lists of churches, forts, and other attractions, then disregarding the written plan as if it did not exist.

He was then accused of "hiding something", and was ultimately refused entry, subjected to demeaning treatment and racist overtones, shouted at, and ordered to stand aside while even basic queries about his baggage were met with a curt command to "shut up," said the traveller.

He was deported to Baku but, because his Azerbaijan visa allowed only single entry, could not re-enter and was stranded at the airport despite "polite but unhelpful local officials".

With little information about his passport or luggage and mounting stress, he eventually secured a flight back to India, and lost more than Rs 2.6 lakh in hotel bookings, flight insurance, and other costs.

Let's look at another incident. In 2017, Khushbu Kaushal, a working professional from Mumbai, had planned her annual vacation to Georgia, drawn by its history, landscapes, and reputation as a safe destination for solo women travellers. On June 29, she flew from Mumbai to Tbilisi, carrying all required documents including an approved e-visa, employer letter, financial statements, hotel bookings, and travel insurance.

Despite this, she was diverted at immigration, questioned, and then left waiting without explanation.

What began as a seemingly routine process turned into hours of uncertainty, where she was repeatedly dismissed, denied basic necessities like water and food, and eventually deported without being given a clear reason.

"This was the beginning of the most humiliating night of my life. Every time, after being told I was being sent back, when I tried approaching one of your immigration officers to get any answer, I was shouted at, told rudely to sit in a corner and that I will not be given any reason for inadmissibility to your country," the post read.

The Racial Profiling

Such viral posts, media stories, and community reports describe racially tinged profiling and harsh treatment of Indians at Georgian borders.

A Reddit user shared a similar incident, claiming that "mostly middle eastern/ East Asians are denied entry in Georgia. I wonder if Georgians also deny entry to Germans or Spaniards for example. Because many Georgians actually suffer racism in those countries. Ironical."

The profiling is often explained away as Georgia trying to curb illegal immigration, since some Indians have overstayed visas or used the country as an entry point into Europe. However, this blanket suspicion ends up unfairly targeting genuine travellers who arrive only to enjoy their holiday. Women, families,

and solo travellers usually face fewer issues, but young men travelling in groups often report the harshest treatment.

For a country that thrives on tourism, Georgia has actively marketed itself to Indian travellers - Bollywood films have been shot there, influencers have showcased its landscapes, and packages are aggressively sold by Indian travel agencies.

Yet, on the ground, the experience often feels contradictory. While Georgian locals are known to be warm and hospitable once you're inside the country, the border experience has left many Indians feeling unwelcome.

Has The Allure Faded?

Despite these challenges, Georgia's allure hasn't faded.

Data from 2024 showed that Georgia welcomed 1,24,000 visitors from India. In the first six months of 2025 alone, arrivals from India grew by 40% compared to the same period last year.

Instagram is flooded with pictures of Indians in Tbilisi's Old Town, sipping wine in Kakheti, skiing in Gudauri, or posing at the Gergeti Trinity Church with the Caucasus mountains as the backdrop. For many, the beauty of Georgia outweighs the initial hassle, but there's no denying that the racial profiling at entry points has left a sour taste.

For Indians looking for their slice of Europe closer home, Georgia does deliver, but it also serves as a reminder that even dream destinations can be difficult to reach, thanks to immigration officers.

Windows 10 is ending soon and Microsoft is putting millions of users at risk, consumer watchdog says

Millions of Windows 10 users are facing an uncertain future as Microsoft prepares to end free security updates on October 14, 2025. Consumer Reports has addressed a letter to Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, urging the company to reverse its decision and continue providing free support for Windows 10 machines. The organisation argues that ending support will risk the security of countless users with devices unable to upgrade to Windows 11, drawing criticism over both the timing and the cost of extended coverage options now being offered by Microsoft.

According to Consumer Reports, the end of support could leave a significant proportion of global PC users exposed to cyber threats. The organisation's appeal follows data indicating that roughly 46.2 per cent of people worldwide were still using Windows 10 as of August 2025. Many of these devices

cannot be upgraded to Windows 11, largely due to missing hardware requirements. This widespread incompatibility is at the centre of Consumer Reports' concerns, as it questions how Microsoft caters to its existing customer base.

Consumer Reports has described Microsoft's approach as "hypocritical" in urging customers to upgrade for cybersecurity, yet leaving Windows 10 devices vulnerable. The letter also draws attention to the \$30 fee Microsoft is charging for "a mere one-year extension to preserve their machine's security." The organisation has further criticised the company's free support options, contending that these require users to utilise Microsoft products, allowing the company to "eke out a bit of market share over competitors."

A key point in the letter highlights the potential for millions to be adversely affected. Consumer Reports warns that end-



ing free support will "strand millions of consumers" who have computers incompatible with Windows 11. This sentiment is echoed by public advocacy groups, who argue that the move could have broad environmental and social implications. In support of Consumer Reports, the Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) has petitioned for an extended support deadline. PIRG estimates that "as many as 400 million perfectly good computers

that can't upgrade to Windows 11 will be thrown out." This raises concerns about unnecessary electronic waste and the practical impact on users reliant on older hardware that remains functional.

Hurdles in switching to Windows 11

At the centre of the debate is the balance between cybersecurity and accessibility. While Microsoft maintains that moving to Windows 11 is the safest option, the hardware barriers

for upgrading remain substantial for many. Consumer Reports contends that Microsoft's current strategy fails to adequately address the needs of those without the means or ability to replace their devices.

Consumer Reports' letter draws particular attention to the cost of maintaining security, with the \$30 annual support fee seen as a barrier for some. The organisation is asking Microsoft to provide security support for Windows 10 computers at no additional cost until a larger proportion of users have upgraded. As the October 14, 2025, deadline approaches, Microsoft has yet to respond publicly to the requests laid out by Consumer Reports and PIRG. The ongoing debate underscores the challenges faced by both industry and consumers as software lifecycles shorten and hardware upgrade requirements become more stringent.

Google lays off 200 AI contractors who feared they were training bots to take their jobs



More than 200 contract workers helping Google improve its artificial intelligence systems have lost their jobs in recent weeks, according to a report by Wired. The cuts were carried out by outsourcing firm GlobalLogic, which handles much of Google's AI rating work. For many of these workers, the layoffs have added to concerns that their efforts were being used to train AI models that could one day make their own roles redundant. The contractors worked on tasks such as reviewing and editing responses from Google's Gemini chatbot and

polishing AI-generated summaries for Google Search. This work, often described as "AI rating," required them to check whether the system's answers were accurate, natural-sounding, and grounded in reliable sources. Many of the so-called "super raters" had advanced degrees and came from professional backgrounds such as teaching, writing, and research. Despite the specialised nature of their jobs, workers say they faced low pay, tight deadlines, and very little job security. Some allege that GlobalLogic has been using their

expertise to train systems designed to automate the very work they were doing. Internal documents reviewed by Wired reportedly show that the company was developing AI tools that could automatically rate chatbot responses. "I was just cut off," said Andrew Lauzon, who was told by email on August 15 that his contract was ending. "I asked for a reason, and they said ramp-down on the project, whatever that means." The cuts also come against a backdrop of worker unrest. Over the past year, some contractors have attempted to

organise and push for better pay and transparency. Others voiced concerns about workload pressure, including strict time limits for tasks that left them focusing on speed rather than quality. A group even explored forming a union under the Alphabet Workers Union, but workers claim those efforts were discouraged. At least two have now filed complaints with the US labour board, alleging they were dismissed for speaking up about conditions. There are also reports of growing disparities within the workforce. Workers directly hired by GlobalLogic earned about \$28 to \$32 an hour, while contractors brought in through third-party agencies were paid \$18 to \$22 for the same assignments. Generalist raters, who did not need advanced degrees, were paid even less despite sometimes being pulled into more complex projects. Some remaining workers say they feel trapped. A few who joined GlobalLogic as full-time employees received better stability, but the majority continue

to be on short-term contracts without benefits or paid leave. Many say they now hesitate to raise concerns, fearing they could be next in line for dismissal. "It's just been an oppressive atmosphere," one rater said. Google, meanwhile, has tried to distance itself from the dispute. "These individuals are employees of GlobalLogic or their subcontractors, not Alphabet," spokesperson Courtenay Mencini said. "As the employers, GlobalLogic and their subcontractors are responsible for the employment and working conditions of their employees." GlobalLogic has declined to comment. Labour researchers say the situation shows a wider pattern in the AI industry, where contract workers power the training of advanced systems but often lack recognition, fair wages, and protections. Similar battles are being fought elsewhere, with data labelers in Kenya and content moderators in countries such as Turkey and Colombia also organising for better treatment.

TikTok's future could come down to a US China deal and who gets to run its algorithm: Full story in 5 points

TikTok's future in the US now hinges on a US-China framework deal. President Trump wants Chinese parent company, ByteDance to shift TikTok's American operations to local ownership while licensing its powerful algorithm. While the US wants China to sell the Algorithms, China does not want to share its intellectual property. Only time will tell whether 170 million US users keep scrolling or face a nationwide ban.



long as ByteDance controls the algorithm, American data and content moderation could remain vulnerable to Chinese influence. Beijing, on the other hand, China insists the algorithm is restricted intellectual property and cannot simply be sold. According to reports, the compromise may involve licensing the algorithm to the US spin-off, while ByteDance retains ownership. In practice, this could mean the US version of TikTok would rely on a licensed copy of the algorithm, retrained on American user data.

The US government has been clear that any deal must comply with American law requiring TikTok to divest from Chinese ownership or face a nationwide ban. Members of the House Select Committee on China have repeatedly said that no shared algorithm with ByteDance would be acceptable. At the same time, China has drawn its own red lines, warning that any transfer of sensitive technology must comply with China's export and cybersecurity rules. These competing political pressures are making the final

deal far more complex than a simple buy-out.

Trump has said he will be speaking with Chinese President Xi Jinping later this week, where the two sides are expected to discuss the final contours of the deal. The extended deadline of December 16 now offers some breathing space for negotiators, but the political stakes are high. For now, TikTok's 170 million American users continue scrolling, waiting to see if the app's fate will be decided in boardrooms, courtrooms, or the White House.

The future of TikTok in the United States is once again hanging in the balance. At the heart of this uncertainty is that TikTok's algorithm is often described as the "secret sauce" behind its success. Now on one hand US President Donald Trump wants TikTok to transfer its American operations from its Chinese parent company, ByteDance, to a US-led ownership group. On the other hand, China does not want to sold the algorithm. The app's fate has been under question since the start of this year, when

Trump first announced plans to impose a ban on the short-video platform. That ban was later put on hold. In the latest round of developments, Trump has announced that his administration and Chinese officials have reached a framework that could keep the app alive in the US — although the details remain murky. At the same time, the deadline for a forced ban has been extended to 16 December 2025. Now, TikTok's future could come down to who ultimately controls its prized algorithm.

In the most recent development around TikTok's future in the US, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent confirmed after trade talks in Madrid that Washington and Beijing have agreed on a basic framework to restructure TikTok's American business, reports the Associated Press. While little has been revealed about the terms, the broad plan would involve shifting TikTok's

US operations into a spin-off company, which would be predominantly American-owned. China's international trade representative Li Chenggang also told reporters that both sides had reached consensus on reducing investment barriers and promoting economic cooperation, signalling that each government wants a political win. Meanwhile, Trump has extended the deadline to December 16, 2025, giving both the countries one final window to finalise the deal.

The exact ownership split is still being worked out, but reports suggest that a consortium of American investors will take the majority stake. Likely players include Oracle, private-equity firm Silver Lake, and venture capital giant Andreessen Horowitz. The Wall Street Journal has reported that US investors could hold around 80 per cent of the new TikTok US entity, with Chinese shareholders retaining the rest. Oracle, which already stores TikTok's US user data, is expected to play a central role, managing servers and potentially helping run operations. With this structure, the US government wants the board of TikTok's American business to be largely controlled by US interests, possibly with direct government oversight.

The main sticking point in the negotiations is TikTok's recommendation engine. Its the algorithm that decides what videos appear in users' feeds. US lawmakers argue that as

Want to get a loan this festive season? Here's what you can do

Navratri is a major festival in India, marked by nine days of devotion, cultural gatherings, and celebrations. As the festival draws near, many families begin to prepare for increased spending on shopping, home decoration, travel, and hosting events. Meeting these heightened financial demands can stretch regular monthly budgets.

To help customers manage these costs with ease, Bajaj Finance has introduced personal loans of up to Rs 55 lakh with instant approval and quick disbursal, reported PTI.

ADDRESSING FESTIVE FINANCIAL NEEDS

During this festive period, people often spend money on new clothes, jewellery, gifts, family outings, and home renovations. These expenses can put pressure on household



finances. The Bajaj Finserv Personal Loan is intended to help customers cover these costs without affecting their financial stability. According to the company, the loan amount can be used for any personal requirement, including shopping, travel, or family gatherings. This support ensures that individuals do not have to compromise on their celebrations or financial

health. One of the main advantages of this loan is the speed with which it is processed. Customers can check their pre-approved loan offer by entering their mobile number and verifying it through an OTP. Once the application is completed and approved, the loan amount is credited to the borrower's bank account within 24 hours, subject to terms and conditions.

iValue Infosolutions IPO opens: Should you consider subscribing?

iValue Infosolutions (IISL), a company that helps Indian businesses access global technology solutions, has opened its IPO for subscription. The company plans to Rs 560 crore through an offer-for-sale of 1.87 crore shares. The price band is set at Rs 284–299 per share, with a minimum investment of 50 shares. The IPO closes on September 22, and shares are expected to list on the NSE and BSE on September 26. Promoters Sunil Kumar Pillai, Krishna Raj Sharma, Srinivasan Sriram, and Hilda Sunil Pillai, along with investors like Sundara (Mauritius) Ltd, are selling their shares. Half of the issue is reserved for institutional investors, 35% for retail investors, and 15% for non-institutional buyers.

The IPO's grey market premium (GMP) is modest at around 7.69% or Rs 23, suggesting that the listing price may be around Rs 322. But analysts see strength in iValue's business. The company works with 109 global technology partners and over 800 system integrators to provide solutions in cybersecurity, cloud, data management, and AI. Big names like Google Cloud, Splunk, Nutanix, and Check Point are part of its ecosystem. iValue reported Rs 923 crore in revenue in FY25, up 18% from the previous year, with profit after tax of Rs 85.3 crore and a profit margin of 9.2%. Customer numbers have grown steadily to 2,877 in FY25, though staff attrition remains high at 34%.

Is popcorn the guilt-free snack you have been looking for?

Popcorn is emerging as the healthier snacking choice - but is it really better than chips? The answer isn't as black and white as it seems.



It's 4 pm on the clock (or late at night sometimes) when the stomach rumbles, just a little, maybe. It's Snack O' Clock! And those hunger pangs want you to reach out for something crunchy, something tasty for sure. Yes, we've all made that one trip to the pantry looking for something to munch on. Well, chips have long been people's favourites. But in the 'health-first world', something else is filling up snack shelves as a healthier snack alternative – popcorn! So here comes the big debate: can popcorn really claim to be the better alternative to chips? Turns out the answer is not as black-and-white as you might think. Popcorn is usually air-popped, while most other popular snacks like chips are fried. Big calorie alert right there! Anwesha Hajra, dietitian, Apollo Cradle and Children's Hospital, Brookfield, Bengaluru, says, "Plain popcorn (air-popped, without much oil, butter, or sugar) is low in calories, around 30–40 kcal per cup. Chips, on the other hand, are usually fried in oil and come in at 150–170 kcal for just a small handful." That makes popcorn an obvious lighter pick.

The nutrition angle

Unlike chips, which are made from refined starch, popcorn is a whole grain. This means it comes loaded with fibre and vitamins. "Popcorn contains fibre and antioxidants, while chips are often high in sodium, trans fat, and acrylamide, which can raise the risk of high blood pressure and heart disease," Hajra adds. And because of the fibre,

popcorn is more satiating and keeps the stomach full for longer compared to chips. "Air-popped popcorn contains fewer calories with minimal fat, negligible sugar, very little sodium, and a good amount of dietary fibre. An ounce of potato chips, by contrast, has over 150 calories, 10 grams of fat, higher sodium, and almost no fibre," says Aayrin Memon, Nutritionist at Bhailal Amin General Hospital, Vadodara. That high fibre content means you can munch more without overloading calories. "Studies suggest that when eaten in equal calorie portions, popcorn is more satisfying than potato chips," adds Memon.

On the weight-loss plate?

So, does this mean popcorn makes the cut as a weight-loss snack? The short answer: yes - but terms and conditions apply. If it's air-popped and without extra butter or oil, popcorn can definitely find a place in the weight management menu. Unsalted popcorn is a low-calorie, nutrient-rich, and high-fibre option that supports weight management and appetite control. But experts can't say the same for flavoured and gourmet popcorn. From butter and cheese to the ones coated in caramel, there are so many options available to choose from. These might be more delicious because of the added flavour, but the cheesy and chocolatey versions become equally unhealthy and calorie-rich as chips. Gourmet popcorn

can jump from 30 kcal per cup (plain) to 150–250 kcal when coated with sugar, salt, or butter, experts reveal. Heavily flavoured commercial popcorn can contribute to the same health concerns as chips. Hence, if you are in it for health, stick to plain or lightly seasoned ones.

What about 'healthy chips'?

Of course, in today's health-conscious snacking scene, chips have had their own glow-up with kale, ragi, and even baked banana versions. Do these beat popcorn? "Kale chips baked with little oil can be nutrient-dense. Ragi chips are calcium- and iron-rich but will have more

calories when fried. Again, banana chips give potassium but lose most vitamins when fried," explains Hajra. So yes, some alternatives bring their own superpowers - but in the low-calorie, high-fibre race, plain popcorn still has the edge. Before finally declaring popcorn the ultimate healthy snack, experts wave caution. Sugar-coated or not, popcorn is not for everyone. It can be a choking hazard, especially for kids. People with digestive issues like diverticulosis or Crohn's, those with dental problems, and post-surgery patients should avoid it. And if it's drenched in butter or cheese, anyone with

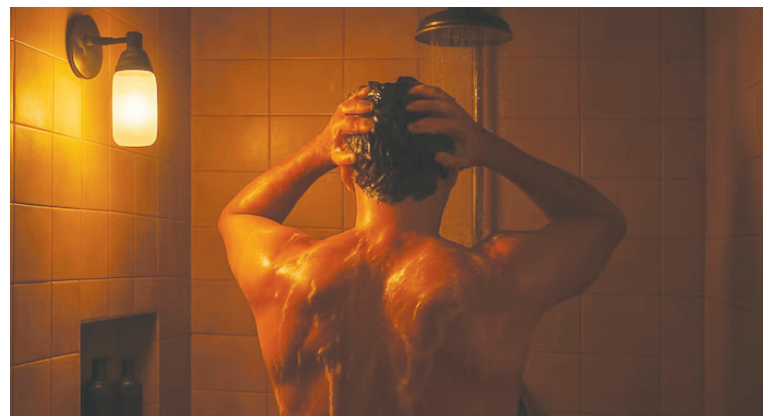
hypertension, obesity, or high cholesterol is better off steering clear.

Last bite

As a whole grain, popcorn delivers essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidant polyphenols that support heart health and may reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Chips or gourmet popcorn can still be enjoyed as indulgences - but in moderation. The verdict: popcorn does outshine chips as a healthy alternative, but only in its unseasoned, air-popped form, and consumed in moderation. Crunchy, filling, guilt-friendly, and easy to make at home, it's a snack that earns its place in the pantry.

Is dark showering the secret to better sleep and mental health?

There's no dearth of wellness rituals in 2025. Some are new, others are just old habits being rediscovered by internet algorithms. Dark showering falls into the latter. Simply put, it's the practice of showering in dim light - or even complete darkness - to help your body and mind unwind. But it's always been there. Plenty of people have been doing it for years as part of their bedtime routine. But who knew that this hygiene routine was secretly a wellness hack all along? So, why are we talking about it now? Thanks to social media (mostly TikTok), it's just being rediscovered, this time with a scientific POV. Little more about dark showering in today's always-on digital age, evening screen time feels almost impossible to avoid. Most of us are guilty of scrolling through reels or maybe



binging on something before falling asleep. That's where showering in the dark steps in. At its core, it's simply the practice of bathing in dim or ambient light or even complete darkness, if you are comfortable. Of course, you can make it more aesthetic by adding tea lights or scented candles. And now, if you ask a Gen Z, they will tell you it's already a "giving self-care ritual." But beyond the vibe

check, the health perks run deep, helping your mind and body truly unwind. Experts break this down.

When you dim or turn off the lights in the shower, it creates sensory deprivation from overhead lights and forces you to tuck the phone away. In a way, it helps you get rid of anything that distracts your mind and allows space to focus on nothing but yourself.

Why Does My Stomach Growl?

Stomach and bowel sounds, also known as borborygmi, refer to noises made within the small and large intestines, usually during digestion. Because the intestines are hollow chambers, sounds that emanate from them during digestion are often similar to the sounds of water moving through pipes. Keep reading to learn more about the causes and treatments for bowel sounds when they get out of hand. Abdominal noises like stomach "growling" are usually a sign of digestion. This refers to the movement of food, liquids, digestive juices, and air through your intestines. Enzyme-rich fluids in your gastrointestinal (GI) tract help break down the foods and beverages

you consume each day, according to the International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders. The intestinal walls contract and relax in a wave-like rhythm to mix and squeeze the food through the intestines so it can be digested. This process is known as peristalsis and could cause abdominal noises like stomach growling. It can occur several hours after eating and even at night when you're trying to sleep.

Hunger

Stomach growling is often an internal signal Trusted Source that the body is hungry or wants food. When you're hungry, hormone-like substances in the brain activate the desire to eat.

Is your partner a serial spender? Here's how to help (without starting World War III)

Just as money makes our life comfortable, if not handled well, it can also become the reason for disputes—whether in friendships, romantic relationships, or the bond you share with your siblings. Money fights are the ultimate stress trigger, and if they happen between a couple, it doesn't take long for things to turn ugly. One partner's spendthrift nature can quickly turn into a ticking time bomb, leading to constant arguments. Yes, we understand that it can be a major stressor, but before you storm into full-on "financial police" mode, take a breath. Chances are, your partner's spending habits aren't about irresponsibility; they could be a way of coping with stress (retail therapy) or maybe no one ever taught them better. So, how can you tell the difference between normal spending and a problematic habit that needs fixing? And more importantly, how do you help them understand without triggering a

full-blown war of words? Abhishek Kumar, SEBI RIA and founder of SahajMoney, breaks it down simply. "Spending beyond one's means, like using credit cards for basic groceries, hiding purchases from your partner, or feeling anxious about money regularly are clear warning signs," he says. On the flip side, healthy spending involves sticking to a budget, saving consistently, and making mindful decisions rather than succumbing to impulse buys. If you're constantly arguing about money, or if your partner's spending is preventing you from building an emergency fund or saving for retirement, it's time to sit up and take notice.

Talk without accusing

Once you understand their spending behaviour, it's time to talk. But how do you know if this habit comes naturally or is a result of stress or anxiety? Dr. Chandni Tugnait, psychotherapist and founder &

director of Gateway of Healing, stresses the importance of empathy. "Overspending is often linked to stress, anxiety, or unmet emotional needs. The first step is to talk and not to blame, but to understand." Abhishek agrees, adding, "Start with a non-judgmental conversation about how spending affects your shared financial goals. Don't use this as an opportunity to point fingers. Approach it as a team challenge." Remember, the goal isn't to shame but to collaborate. Practical tips to curb impulse spending together Both experts recommend easy yet effective strategies: The 24-hour rule: For non-essential purchases above a set amount, agree to wait a day before buying. That little pause helps avoid impulse buys.

Fun money budgets: Set up a small allowance each for guilt-free spending. This lets each partner indulge without guilt or excess. Pay yourself first: Make saving the first "expense" in your monthly budget. That way, the



money is gone before it can be spent. Track expenses together: Use joint budgeting apps to stay transparent and reduce mystery spending. Building accountability without micromanagement "Trust isn't built by constantly checking receipts," says Abhishek. "Set spending limits for individual purchases that don't need a discussion. For larger expenses, consult each other first." They also recommend monthly money

check-ins as a healthy habit to keep both partners on the same page.

When should you call in the pros?

If money arguments become frequent, or if debt is spiralling out of control, don't hesitate to seek help. A financial advisor offers neutral, expert guidance, while a therapist can help uncover underlying emotional triggers that drive spending habits.

When your partner and parent don't get along, just like in 'The Girlfriend'

How do you deal with a tricky situation when two of the most important people (your partner and parent) in your life just can't seem to see eye to eye?

Have you watched Amazon Prime's latest offering, 'The Girlfriend'? For those who haven't, it may seem like an absurd question to start with, but for those who have, you know where we are going with this. Your partner's relationship with your parent is very important, and it can get just as complicated if you don't set expectations right from the word go (you know what happened to Laura, don't you?). But in real life, how do you deal with the tricky situation when two of the most important people in your life just can't seem to see eye to eye?

Stop trying to pacify everyone

"I always say this is one of the trickiest balancing acts in relationships," says Chandni Tugnait, psychotherapist and founder-director of Gateway of Healing. "The key is not to



exhaust yourself trying to pacify both sides all the time, because that only leads to burnout and resentment." Instead of constantly playing mediator, set clear boundaries. Reassure your parent that you respect her perspective, while also affirming to your partner that your bond is independent of family tensions. Chandni suggests focusing conversations on shared values rather than differences. "Sometimes it helps

to reduce direct conflict points by keeping gatherings short and structured. Let your partner have moments to shine in settings where they feel comfortable." The goal is not forced harmony, but mutual respect and understanding.

Guilt: The invisible weight

It's natural to feel guilty for upsetting your parent when they don't approve of your relationship. But Chandni says the way

forward is to reframe that guilt into responsibility. "You are responsible for your choices, not for controlling your parents' emotions," she explains. "Acknowledge their feelings without making them the reason behind your decisions." Rather than letting guilt fester, have open, time-limited conversations with your parent. "This prevents guilt from becoming a constant background noise," Chandni adds. On the relationship front, don't let secrecy take over. Keep your partner in the loop. "Being transparent about the pressure you face strengthens teamwork and prevents guilt from spilling into your relationship."

Don't let your partner feel secondary

Disappointment often arises when a partner feels sidelined or hidden. Chandni stresses the importance of reassurance.

"Make it clear through words and actions that your relationship is a priority," she says. Protect a couple's time, celebrate milestones, and focus on shared growth rather than only family resistance. Consistency is key. Your partner doesn't need perfection, but they do need to know you're standing by them, even when the going gets tough. When is it time to seek help? Some tension is normal, but when does it turn toxic? Chandni points out the red flags: feeling constantly torn, guilty, or pressured to choose between your parent and partner; emotional manipulation ("If you loved me, you'd leave them"); or patterns of control where your autonomy starts eroding. "If your mental health, self-worth, or daily functioning is affected, it's time to get professional help," says Chandni.

Saiyaara becomes Netflix's top non-English film globally, surpassing Fall for Me

Mohit Suri's 'Saiyaara' tops Netflix's global non-English film chart in debut week. The romantic drama surpasses German film 'Fall For Me' and the Hindi original 'Inspector Zende'. Lead actors Ahaan Panday and Aneet Padda express gratitude for international audience support

The romantic drama 'Saiyaara', directed by Mohit Suri, has become the most-watched non-English film on Netflix globally within its debut week. Released on streaming on September 12, the film climbed to the top spot in just five days, surpassing several international titles, including 'Fall For Me'. According to Netflix's official data platform, Tudum, 'Saiyaara' currently holds the number one position in the list of non-English films worldwide. The film has garnered 3.7 million views and 9.3 million hours viewed. The German erotic thriller 'Fall For Me' occupies the second position with 6.5 million hours viewed, while Netflix's Hindi original 'Inspector Zende', starring Manoj Bajpayee, is in third with 6.2 million hours. Another Indian film, 'Kingdom' featuring Vijay Deverakonda,



ranks ninth with 2.5 million hours viewed. Lead actors Ahaan Panday and Aneet Padda responded to the film's global success in a video message shared by Netflix India. They stated, "For giving Saiyaara all the love in the world,

we love you forever and ever and ever. Saiyaara is trending globally on Netflix, only because of you. Thank you for watching and rewatching," the actors said in the message. 'Saiyaara' tells the story of a temperamental singer



and a songwriter navigating their relationship as they confront the challenges posed by early-onset Alzheimer's. The film marks director Mohit Suri's return to the romantic genre after over a decade. The success of 'Saiyaara' has been attributed to

its engaging narrative and strong performances by its leads, which have resonated with viewers worldwide. Prior to its streaming release, 'Saiyaara' demonstrated impressive results at the box office, grossing Rs 577 crore worldwide. It has become the second-highest-grossing Indian film of 2025 and the highest-grossing romantic film in the history of Indian cinema. The film's performance has set a new benchmark for Indian productions targeting global audiences. In the global race for viewership, 'Saiyaara' has outperformed not only regional competitors but also high-profile international releases. Its lead over 'Fall For Me' and 'Inspector Zende', both of which had substantial promotional campaigns, highlights the film's broad audience reach and sustained interest since release.

Mirai hits Rs 100 crore in six days, Teja Sajja-Manu Manoj celebrate milestone



'Mirai', the Telugu superhero film, has achieved a significant box office milestone by crossing the Rs 100 crore mark globally in just six days. Released on September 12, the film's performance has garnered notable attention across all markets. Lead actors Teja Sajja and Manoj Manchu have publicly expressed their gratitude following the announcement of this box office milestone on the global market. Teja Sajja, who played the lead role, shared his appreciation for the audience's support after the milestone was announced. He wrote, "Arrived here again, This is possible only because of all of you (sic)." This

is his second consecutive Rs 100-crore grosser after 'Hanu-Man'. Manoj Manchu, another prominent actor in 'Mirai', also expressed gratitude towards viewers and stakeholders who contributed to the film's success. He posted on X and wrote, "100 Crores. Big love and gratitude to Audience especially families for celebrating #Mirai with all your hear. This is the Victory of Good Cinema (sic)." Not just Rs 100 crore, 'Mirai' also grossed \$2 million in North America. The Karthik Gattamneni-directorial has been benefiting from the positive word-of-mouth and reviews. As 'Mirai' continues to draw audiences, fans are eagerly

waiting for its release on OTT platform. 'Mirai' features Teja Sajja, Manoj Manchu, Ritika Nayak, Shriya Saran, Jagapathi Babu and Jayaram in pivotal

roles. The film is produced by TG Vishwa Prasad and Krithi Prasad under People Media Factory. Apart from writing and directing the film, Karthik

Gattamneni also handled the cinematography of the film. Editor Sreekar Prasad and music composer Gowra Hari are part of the technical team.

Has The Bengal Files locked its OTT deal for twice its budget?

Director Vivek Agnihotri's 'The Bengal Files', has locked a deal with a streaming platform twice its budget, according to reports. The film, despite getting politically divided reactions due to its sensitive theme, is considered to be one of the boldest films in Indian cinema. Agnihotri has sold the rights to the political-thriller for over Rs 70 crore, an independent source exclusively told India Today. The source was quoted, "'The Bengal Files' is enjoying a successful run in theaters. Amidst this, it is being reported that its OTT rights have been sold to Zee5 in a deal worth over 70 Cr., which is twice the budget of the film. Considering the film's budget, the price achieved for OTT is significantly higher. However, the exact numbers are not

confirmed yet." The film's narrative moves seamlessly between the past and the present, uncovering the violence that took place in Direct Action Day on August 16, 1946 and the Noakhali riots. The film has created a stir across the nation and was also released in West Bengal after initially facing a ban. The epic political-thriller narrates the story of a CBI officer, Shiva Pandit, portrayed by Darshan Kumar investigating the abduction of a girl in West Bengal. His experience of communal politics and the history of Noakhali violence links India's past, present and future.



Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari trailer: Pyaar Toh Hona Hi Tha ft. Varun-Janhvi

'Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari' trailer: Varun Dhawan and Janhvi Kapoor shine in Shashank Khaitan's colourful rom-com, but it seems like a modern twist reminiscent of the 1998 'Pyaar Toh Hona Hi Tha'



The makers of 'Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari' released the film's trailer on Monday in Mumbai. The trailer features Varun Dhawan and Janhvi Kapoor as pretentious lovers who team up to break the marriage of their exes - played by Sanya Malhotra and Rohit Saraf. What follows is a whirlwind of confusion, laughter, and romance set against a wedding backdrop.

Directed by Shashank Khaitan, the film appears to be a colourful, funny, and glamorous ride, packed with cheesy dialogues and a hilarious mash-

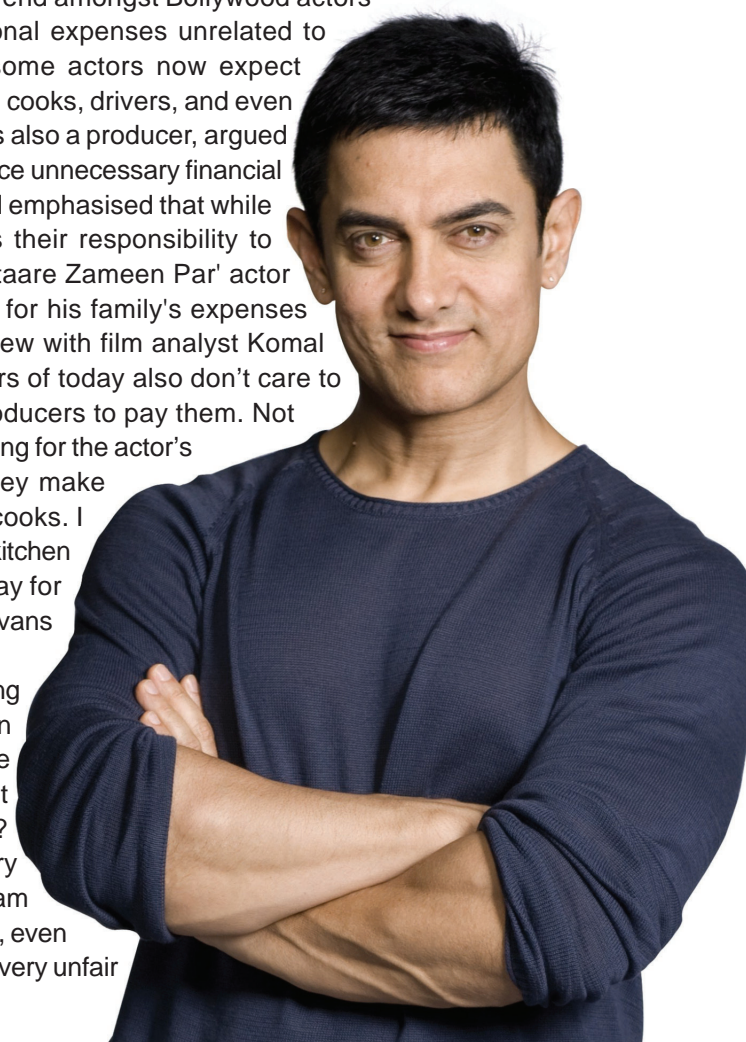
up of modern and classic elements. The characters pretending to be one of Govinda's famous lovers in order to win back her ex, only to end up finding love with each other. The trailer hit the screens as the big Dussehra release this year on October 2. It is produced by Karan Johar's Dharma Productions.

Aamir Khan slams actors for making producers pay for trainers and cooks

Actor Aamir Khan, who is also a producer, has opened up about a trend that he finds extremely strange and unfair. He called out actors who ask producers to pay for personal staff and luxuries in a recent interview. 'When will this stop?', he quipped.

Actor Aamir Khan criticised the trend amongst Bollywood actors of making producers pay for personal expenses unrelated to filmmaking. He pointed out that some actors now expect producers to cover costs for trainers, cooks, drivers, and even live kitchens on set. The actor, who is also a producer, argued that such demands are unfair and place unnecessary financial strain on producers. The 60-year-old emphasised that while stars may have needs on set, it is their responsibility to handle personal expenses. The 'Sitaare Zameen Par' actor further shared that he always pays for his family's expenses during outdoor shoots. In an interview with film analyst Komal Nahta, Aamir said, "I hear that actors of today also don't care to pay their drivers. They ask their producers to pay them. Not just that, but the producer is also paying for the actor's spot boy. They don't stop here. They make the producer pay for their trainers, cooks. I have heard that now they keep a live kitchen on set and expect the producer to pay for it. They even demand multiple vanity vans for kitchens and gyms."

He stressed that these growing demands place an undue burden on producers. The actor stated, "These actors are earning in crores and yet not capable of paying for their needs? I find this extremely strange. It is very sad and harmful for the industry. I am saying it strongly that it's a shame that, even today, there are actors who are being very unfair to their producers and their films."



Are Mirai, HanuMan and folklore films creating India's Harry Potter moment?



Actor Teja Sajja has delivered yet another superhero action-fantasy with 'Mirai' post his blockbuster 'HanuMan' (2025). The key element in both the films remains the inspiration from ancient texts and legends. Is storytelling based on mystics and folklore the emergence of a new cinematic wave among Indian filmmakers? With the blend of fantasy, faith, VFX and supernatural themes, has India's 'Harry Potter' moment finally arrived? Director Karthik Gattamneni's 'Mirai' narrates the story from the perspective of the bloodshed in the epic Kalinga war and the power of ancient

scriptures and divine faith. The linking of past, present and future through a majestic, yet human lens forms the soul of the film. The film not only honours spiritual beliefs but also justifies their relevance in the modern age. Films like 'HanuMan', 'Karthikeya 2' and 'Kantara' have been based on similar narratives over the years. Here's a glimpse into how regional cinema, especially the Telugu industry, has successfully executed stories that turned into Pan-Indian successes. The protagonists in 'Mirai', 'HanuMan' and 'Karthikeya 2' unravel the potential of divine powers in their quest for self-discovery.

Vidya Balan reminisces about her debut in 'Parineeta' as the film returns to cinemas

Actor Vidya Balan walked down memory lane as she recalled working on her debut film 'Parineeta', which is set to return to cinemas in a restored version on August 29. Directed by the late Pradeep Sarkar, 'Parineeta' was originally released on June 10, 2005. The film starred Saif Ali Khan and Sanjay Dutt alongside Balan and was produced by Vidhu Vinod Chopra. It was adapted from Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's iconic 1914 Bengali novel. Reflecting on the shoot, Balan shared a memorable encounter with veteran actor Sharmila Tagore, mother of co-star Saif Ali Khan.

"I remember during the shoot one day, Sharmila ji came to the set and I was so excited to see her. I absolutely love her. I was over the moon. We both greeted each other like we knew each other and Saif — I'll never forget his expression — he turned around and said, 'Oh, I didn't know you knew each other.' And I said, 'I know her, she doesn't know me.' That moment still makes me smile. Saif's just got a crazy sense of humour. He'd crack us up with his one-liners and I love that about him," she said. Speaking about Sarkar, Balan described him as "the foundation of everything" she learnt in her early years as an actor. "Dada was the foundation of everything I learned in my early years. His attention to detail was un-

matched — he could do a hundred takes, not just for performances, but even to get pigeons flying at the right moment or leaves falling outside the window at exactly the right time. He believed there was rhythm in everything," she recalled. Balan went on to share how Sarkar's quest for precision helped her understand the craft on a deeper level. "Once, I did 28 takes just to get a teardrop timed perfectly to a line in a song. That was the kind of precision he demanded. His guidance taught me to observe, to absorb and to respect every detail in the craft. Even my hair stylist, Shalaka, who's been with me for 20 years, learned from Dada the importance of balance and detailing. That was his gift to all of us."

Set in 1960s Kolkata, 'Parineeta' tells the story of childhood friends Lalita (Balan) and Shekhar (Khan), who gradually fall in love. Tension arises when Shekhar's father sets his sights on the home of Lalita's uncle, hoping to build a hotel on the land. When Lalita learns of the plan, family friend Girish (played by Dutt) steps in to help — sparking a major misunderstanding between the lovers. The film has been restored by Prasad Film Labs and is set for a special re-release, marking two decades since its original debut.

Raima Sen Reflects on Trolling Over The Vaccine War: "Publicity, Good or Bad, Still Counts"

Raima Sen has opened up about the intense trolling she faced during the release of Vivek Agnihotri's *The Vaccine War*. In a recent interview with NDTV, conducted during the re-release of her classic film *Parineeta*, the actress spoke candidly about the criticism that came her way long before audiences had even seen the film. Sen revealed that she was harshly judged for her involvement in the project, losing a significant number of social media followers as people speculated and criticized her performance. "I was judged so much," she recalled, adding that it was a new and unsettling experience in her career. Despite the negativity, she said she remained proud of her work in the film, which she believes made a meaningful impact.

Taking a pragmatic approach to the backlash, Sen shared advice inspired by her father and grandmother. She explained that in the world of cinema, "publicity is publicity," regardless of whether it's good or bad. For her, being the topic of conversation—even for the wrong reasons—was still a sign of relevance in the industry. The trolling, she noted, was particularly intense in her hometown of Kolkata. Sen speculated that some people may have misunderstood her involvement in the project as a sign that she was entering politics. "Maybe because I was a part of the project, they thought I was joining politics," she said, adding that she hopes critics will eventually watch the film and reconsider their opinions. *The Vaccine War*, directed by Vivek Agnihotri, featured a star-studded cast including Nana Patekar, Pallavi Joshi, Anupam Kher, Girija Oak, Nivedita Bhattacharya, Sapthami Gowda, and Mohan Kapur.



Khalistan Movement's Complex Journey

From India to Canada | The Lowdown

The Khalistan movement once again made headlines on Wednesday when Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), a US-based pro-Khalistan organisation, threatened to "siege" the Indian Consulate in Vancouver.

The group warned Indo-Canadians to avoid routine visits to the consulate on that day and released a poster targeting the new Indian High Commissioner, Dinish Patnaik. SFJ accused Indian consulates of spying on Khalistani activists and conducting surveillance against them in Canada. Context: These actions highlight enduring tensions between India and its Sikh diaspora in Canada. Although the Khalistan movement's prominence in India has waned, the issue continues to be a significant flashpoint in Indo-Canadian relations.

The Khalistan movement traces its origins to the 1940s during British colonial rule. Sikh leaders such as Master Tara Singh began advocating for a separate Sikh state amid uncertainty about India's future (Shameful Flight by Stanley Wolpert).

As early as 1940, pamphlets explicitly demanded "Khalistan," and in the 1940s some voices used the term "Sikhistan" to describe a Sikh homeland.

In 1942, British statesman Stafford Cripps met with Sikh representatives. Cripps noted that: "Master Tara Singh, the most extreme of his visitors, called for the creation of a separate 'Sikhistan,' a Sikh nation-state within Punjab, where the majority of Sikhs lived and where their founder, Guru Nanak, was born. I pointed out to them the stages at which they might exert pressure to remain part of the Indian Union or to gain provincial autonomy." (Wolpert)

Post-Partition Developments

In the 1960s, Sikh political activism focused on creating a Punjabi-speaking state, culminating in Punjab's establishment in 1966. Despite this, demands for greater autonomy and Sikh protections persisted.

By the 1970s, growing



economic challenges and perceptions of discrimination fuelled separatist sentiments. The rise of militant leaders like Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale escalated tensions, leading to armed conflict and eventually Operation Blue Star.

The Canadian Connection

Sikh migration to Canada began in the early 1900s, driven by economic opportunities during colonial times. Over decades, Canada became home to the world's largest Sikh community outside India, numbering around 7,80,000 today.

In 1971, the Khalistan movement gained a global dimension when Jagjit Singh Chohan declared the Republic of Khalistan in exile and began promoting separatism among diaspora communities, notably in Canada.

This international activism included fundraising, political lobbying, and media promotion, helping keep the Khalistan cause alive abroad.

1984 and Its Aftermath

A turning point came with India's 1984 Operation Blue

Star, where Prime Minister Indira Gandhi authorised a military offensive against militants in the Golden Temple, Sikhism's holiest site. The operation caused significant casualties and desecration, deeply offending Sikhs worldwide. Following this, Indira Gandhi's assassination by her Sikh bodyguards triggered horrific anti-Sikh riots across India, resulting in thousands of deaths and mass displacement.

Many Sikhs fled to Canada, bringing with them memories of trauma and solidifying support for Khalistan in the diaspora.

Rise of Canadian Militancy

During the 1980s, militant Sikh groups such as Babbar Khalsa, led by Talwinder Singh Parmar, rose to prominence in Canada. Babbar Khalsa was implicated in orchestrating violent attacks, including the bombing of Air India Flight 182 in 1985, which killed 329 people, many of whom were Canadian citizens of Indian origin. This tragedy

exposed the extent of Khalistani militancy operating from Canadian soil.

While militancy declined in India during the 1990s due to security crackdowns, Khalistan activism continued within Canadian Sikh diaspora communities.

Organisations like Sikhs for Justice remain active, conducting referendums, protests, and advocacy campaigns.

Why the Movement Survives in Canada?

Canada's strong free speech protections have allowed such activism, though these activities have strained bilateral relations, with India accusing Canada of providing a safe haven to extremists.

Journalist Terry Milewski, in *Blood for Blood: Fifty Years of the Global Khalistan Project*, observes: "Over the past fifty years, the dream of a separate Sikh homeland—Khalistan—spread worldwide. Although the violent conflict claimed thousands of lives, mostly Sikhs, and has largely faded in Punjab, the movement still finds strong support among

dedicated separatists living abroad."

He also highlights Canada's institutional challenges: "Canada's institutions, at times marked by oversight and accommodation, have inadvertently allowed extremist elements to flourish, undermining the very rule of law meant to safeguard every citizen." (Milewski, 2021)

Does Canada's Khalistan Movement Matter?

The noises are sporadic, discounted, and meant only for the consumption of the diaspora in Canada. Internal disagreements among pro-Khalistan groups have weakened their overall credibility, although they remain united in their pursuit of secession. Milewski sums up the current state of the movement: "Today, the Khalistan movement has almost disappeared in Punjab itself. While some extremists find support within the Canadian diaspora, their influence remains limited and does not resonate much beyond these communities."

'The Summer I Turned Pretty' watch parties take over Indian clubs

The Summer I Turned Pretty has brought the West's beloved web-series watch party culture to India. Fans are excited to bond over shared gasps, tears, and heated team debates at hep clubs.



All eyes (literally the whole internet's) are on Prime Video's Season 3 finale of *The Summer I Turned Pretty* to see which Fisher brother gets the forever after. Will Belly finally choose Conrad - the broody, therapy-going elder brother and her OG childhood crush who always gave her 'fireworks'? Or will she stick with Jeremiah - sunshine-in-human-form, the guy she almost walked down the aisle with?

The love triangle has the world in a chokehold. And yes, Millennials are just as invested as Gen Z in this teenage rom-com. Surprising? Not really! Sure, Millennials are busy chasing career dreams, raising kids, or even bracing themselves for their kids' own teenage romances - but the show works like a time machine. It pulls them out of

their busy, adulting lives and throws them back into the carefree chaos of teenage mistakes. Add in a dose of messy marriages, complicated friendships, and all-too-relatable growing pains, and it's no wonder the show resonates across generations.

All of India is dreaming of Cousins Beach. So much so, the show has sparked a new party trend in clubs: watch parties. With the finale finally here (and hopefully a conclusive end), fans are gearing up for TSITP screenings.

Sure, we've long had sports bars for match screenings, and more recently, even movies at spots like *The Piano Man*. But TSITP has officially brought the West's beloved web-series watch party culture to India. Expect fans to bond over

shared gasps, tears, and heated team debates at hep clubs. Secretly hoping Team Conrad gets those happy tears.

From Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru to Lucknow and Jaipur, TSITP-themed events are taking place across the country. In Delhi, hosts Aditi Matta, Sumit Kumar and Parth Srivastava are all set to serve pomegranate margaritas (IYKYK) at Helter Skelter Cafe & Bar, Hauz Khas for the one-of-a-kind watch party.

They are hosting the event in two slots this highly anticipated Wednesday (the day the finale drops): 4-6 pm and 7-9 pm. For Rs 699, a ticket gets you a cosy screening with fellow fans, a starter, and of course, a pomegranate margarita. Fans can also expect some games,

ice breakers and screening of fan-made edits.

"The venue team was pretty intrigued when we pitched the idea, since it's something new and niche for them too," Parth tells *India Today*.

In Lucknow, Social is urging fans to turn up in their best summer fits and swoon over the drama, romance, and suspense at a special screening. The cover charge is Rs 299. Bengaluru fans won't miss out either, with Social hosting its own screening at the Church Street branch.

Team Broadway in Hyderabad, meanwhile, is inviting people to cry about choices Belly makes in the final episode and a Taylor Swift songs session post the screening.

"I've always watched the episodes at home and

dissected the nitty-gritties with my best friend at work. I'm also super active on Reddit threads and Instagram Reels about the show and its fan theories. So, I'm really excited for this event - it'll be amazing to finally watch it with fellow fans. The more, the merrier! Honestly, it'll feel like stepping right into a Reddit thread," says Dhara, who is excited to attend a special screening in Delhi.

The Summer I Turned Pretty crashing into Indian party culture is a surely a plot twist. But it also says something bigger: Gen Z is over the plain old dinner-and-drinks routine. They want experiences. Paint-and-sip nights, DIY cocktail or sushi workshops, curated art pop-ups - and now, crying and cheering over Belly's love life at watch parties.

Status, opulence, Diana - Trump's 70-year affection for UK royals

As Queen Elizabeth's coronation was beamed into living rooms around the world, a six-year-old boy watched intently on a black and white television at home in New York City.

His Scottish mother sat enthralled in front of the screen, not budging for the entire day, which was 2 June, 1953.

That boy was Donald Trump.

Years later, as a real estate developer, he recounted the impact his mother's love of the British royals had on him, in his book, *The Art of the Deal*. He got "his sense of showmanship" from her, he wrote, describing her as "enthralled by the pomp and circumstance, the whole idea. That deep appreciation for pomp and ceremony - and his own sense of showmanship - will be on full display when Trump returns to Windsor again during his second state visit to the UK.

The invitation from King Charles was hand delivered by Prime Minister Keir Starmer in the Oval Office, in what was seen as a direct appeal to Trump's love of pageantry at a time when the British government sought crucial trade concessions. Trump's visit to the UK will be history-making in its own right - he is the only president to be invited for two state visits, the first being in 2019.

The year before that, he met the late Queen Elizabeth II at Windsor Castle during a working visit and his mother, Mary Anne MacLeod Trump, was top of his mind.

Trump's former national security aide, Fiona Hill, observed in her book that he often spoke of his mother's admiration of the royal family. Meeting the late Queen Elizabeth II in his first term, she writes, was an obsession of his because it was the "ultimate sign that he, Trump, had made it in life".

Shortly after the historic encounter, he told Piers Morgan in a newspaper interview: "I was walking up and I was saying [to First Lady Melania Trump] 'Can you imagine my mother seeing this scene?' Windsor. Windsor

Castle." His fascination for the royals was clear early in his career too, say those who were around him then.

Wes Blackman, an urban planner who worked with Trump for 10 years in the 1990s and helped him turn Mar a Lago into a private club, remembers the real estate developer trying to "gin up" interest in the club by rolling out Princess Diana's name as a possible member.

Trump's state visit is mired with potential pitfalls

What Donald Trump was regarded at the time as an outsider, and *The Palm Beach Daily News* quoted socialites who were more than a little sceptical of the supposed royal interest in Trump's project.

"It sounds like a Trump ploy to gain membership" the paper quoted one woman, Countess Helene Praschma, as saying. Others told the paper that Trump may have offered the royal couple honorary memberships in order to procure their reflected glamour.

A source familiar with the marketing efforts told the BBC that Trump offered Prince Charles a free one-year membership to Mar a Lago. But he received a letter back politely declining the offer, suggesting he could instead make a charitable donation to the Prince's environmental causes. Trump thought it was a "great letter", according to the source.

Mr Blackman also remembers the letter, and how Trump became fixated on it.

"It has always been a big deal to Donald Trump to be seen as successful and a part of history," he said. "He lives off of it."

During the 1980s, when Trump was trying to make it as a new developer in New York City, the tabloids reported that Prince Charles and Princess Diana were interested in purchasing a \$5m (£3.7m) condo in Trump Tower. The rumour, many have said, was probably started by Trump himself.

The Associated Press would later put out a denial from Buckingham Palace that said "there was no truth," to the original report. Dickie Arbiter,



a press spokesman for the late Queen Elizabeth II, said Trump wasn't on the royals' radar at all at that time.

The many lives of Trump Tower

"People have been doing it since the year dot, getting publicity through the royals. They will make outrageous comments and unless it's libellous, the royals won't do anything about it. Never explain, never complain is their mantra," he said.

The incident was addressed by Trump himself in *The Art of the Deal* but with a slightly different telling. Trump wrote that he got a call from a reporter asking whether or not it was true that Prince Charles had purchased an apartment in Trump Tower.

He noted it was the week when the royal couple had married and were, he wrote, "the most celebrated couple in the world". He claimed he refused to confirm or deny the rumour, but said the press story helped promote Trump Tower.

More than two decades later, he reportedly invited Prince Charles to his wedding to Melania Knauss, which was held in his new 20,000 square foot ballroom in Mar a Lago, a room inspired by a different royal family. When choosing how to model his own club, Trump based it on Louis XIV's Hall of Mirrors at Versailles.

Royal watcher Kristen Meinzer says Trump has spent decades trying to style himself in the same mould as the royals and to create an aura around himself as if he was

nobility.

"When he bought Mar a Lago, he essentially adopted the coat of arms of the previous owners," she said. "He is styling himself as if he is aristocracy, as if he's royalty, and he has done that his whole career."

In Trump's eyes, the British throne has a global status that he craves, say some observers.

"They're [British royal family] kind of this apex of high society that he's always wanted to be a part of, so to be with them is to get acceptance and legitimacy," says political scientist Peter Harris, who has written about transatlantic relations.

"The other half of it is he just wants tabloid media... it's both of these worlds in one family," says Mr Harris, an associate professor at Colorado State University.

He can go there and he knows that he's going to get adulation, great photo opportunities, shake hands with the King, and no one will say anything bad to him in their presence, he adds.

Trump, Mar a Lago and the 'stolen' coat of arms The Beast and other vehicles coming to UK with Trump The unofficial London party house where US presidents stay One royal especially captured Trump's interest. In his second book, *The Art of the Comeback*, he wrote that his only "regret in the women department" was that he never had an opportunity to court Lady Diana Spencer. He said she "lit up the room" and was "a dream lady".

However, according to the

former BBC presenter Selina Scott, Trump did try to date Princess Diana after her divorce from Prince Charles in 1996, viewing her as "the ultimate trophy wife". Scott wrote in the paper *The Sunday Times* that Diana told her Trump gave her "the creeps" and became increasingly concerned as roses and orchids kept arriving at her apartment.

Shortly after her death, in a 1997 interview with the provocative radio jockey Howard Stern, Trump claimed that he could have slept with the late Princess Diana. But in 2016 he denied there was any romantic interest and he just thought her to be "lovely".

His comments on the other women in the royal family have been more critical.

In 2012, he blamed Kate, the now-Princess of Wales, for topless paparazzi shots of her sunbathing on holiday in France.

Trump has also labelled Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, "terrible" and "nasty," while she described him as "divisive" and "misogynistic" during the 2016 campaign. None of that will colour the state visit, says Mr Arbiter - the royals are used to entertaining all sorts of leaders, and past comments will not faze them. "The King will make Trump feel welcome and Trump will be like putty in his hands because he likes the whole idea of a state visit and the ceremonial part of it." As for Trump, he once watched his mother revering the royals - and now 70 years later he's the one sharing the spotlight with them.

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