

Energy first: India rejects Nato chief's sanctions threat over Russia oil trade

Dismissing NATO chief Mark Rutte's threat of '100% secondary sanctions' on countries trading with Russia, India said that its domestic needs depend on the current market scenario and geopolitical conditions, and warned the West against adopting any 'double standards.'



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Agribusiness and hospitality sectors, threatened by deportations, poured millions into Republican victories



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Captain of doomed Air India flight—who had reportedly suffered depression—may have cut off fuel flow to engines, officials believe



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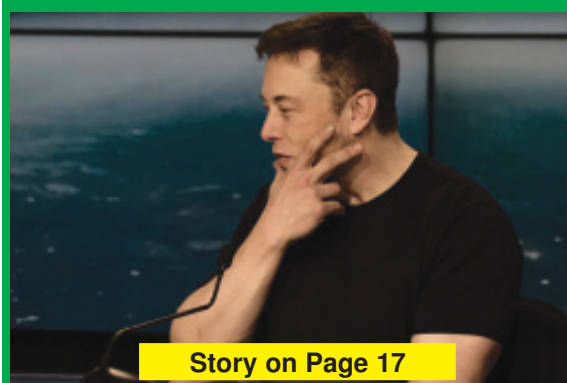
UK plans to lower voting age to 16 in major reform to democratic system

The government said the proposed changes were part of an effort to boost public trust in democracy and would align voting rights across Britain, where younger voters already participate in devolved elections in Scotland and Wales.



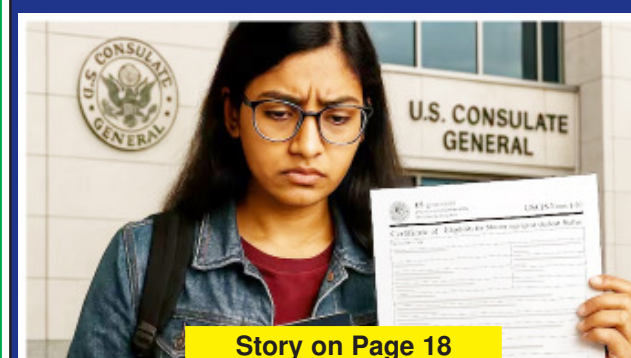
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FEC fends off fake 'America Party' filings that have no connection to Elon Musk



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Why did you hide Reddit account? Indian student faces US visa scrutiny



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Air India to Shift Ahmedabad-London Flights from Gatwick to Heathrow Starting August 1



(News Agency)- Air India has announced a route change for its Ahmedabad-London service, Heathrow beginning August 1. The

airline will operate three weekly flights on this new route through September 30, replacing the current five weekly flights between Ahmedabad and Gatwick. This adjustment is part of the carrier's broader effort to gradually restore international operations following a temporary suspension triggered by the tragic crash of flight AI171 on June 12. That incident, involving a Boeing 787 Dreamliner, resulted in the deaths of 260 people, including passengers and residents of a medical college hostel the aircraft struck shortly after takeoff. Air India initiated a "Safety Pause" after the crash, reducing or suspending several international routes to conduct safety inspections of its fleet. As part of the phased resumption, the airline confirmed that some frequencies will return starting August 1, with the goal of full service restoration by October 1. In a statement, Air India emphasized that the move to Heathrow is intended to streamline operations while still providing international connectivity from Ahmedabad during the recovery period. The airline continues to review its flight schedules and is proactively informing affected passengers about rebooking options or refunds.

Shubhanshu Shukla Returns to Earth After Historic Space Mission, Set to Arrive in India on August 17



(News Agency)- Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla has safely returned to Earth after an 18-day mission aboard the International Space Station (ISS), making history as the first Indian astronaut to pilot a private space mission under Axiom Space's Axiom-4 (Ax-4) program. The SpaceX Dragon capsule, named Grace, splashed down off the coast of San Diego at 3:01 PM IST on July 15, concluding a landmark journey in India's space legacy. The Ax-4 crew included Commander Peggy Whitson from the U.S., Pilot Shubhanshu Shukla, and Mission Specialists Slawosz Uznanski-Wisniewski and Tibor Kapu. The capsule undocked from the ISS on July 14 at 4:15 AM and re-entered Earth's atmosphere nearly 22.5 hours later. A warm welcome awaited the crew, with national leaders and global space organizations celebrating the mission's success. Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed Shukla's journey, calling it an inspiration for "a billion dreams." President Droupadi Murmu also extended her congratulations, commending his role in elevating India's global standing in space exploration. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Shukla had "lifted India's aspirations to new heights." The astronaut's family, emotional and proud, celebrated his return with prayers, sweets, and a homemade cake. Social media buzzed with clips showing Shukla being helped out of the capsule, smiling through exhaustion, and even reminiscing about his rare microgravity haircut performed aboard the ISS.

Trump Signals India May Face Indonesia-Style Trade Deal or Steep Tariffs by August 1



(News Agency)-U.S. President Donald Trump has indicated that a trade deal with India is being negotiated along similar lines to the agreement recently signed with Indonesia, which grants the U.S. greater access to foreign markets while imposing significant tariffs on imports. Speaking to reporters in Washington, Trump stated that "India basically is working along that same line," suggesting that the current trade talks could result in a one-sided agreement favoring U.S. exports. The deal with Indonesia includes a 19 percent tariff on goods entering the United States, but no duties on American products exported to Jakarta. Although it remains unclear whether India is expected to adopt an identical framework, Trump's remarks hint at the potential for similar terms. He has given India and other nations until August 1 to finalize deals or face arbitrary tariffs that could reach up to 35 percent. The U.S.-India negotiations are part of a broader push by the Trump administration to leverage tariffs as a bargaining tool. Several countries, including members of the European Union, have received formal notices warning of high tariffs if agreements are not reached before the deadline. For India, agreeing to a deal that mirrors the Indonesia model may prove

politically and economically difficult, especially if it means accepting steep export tariffs while eliminating duties on U.S. goods. Trump also tied trade negotiations to global geopolitical concerns, particularly with Russia. He warned that if President Vladimir Putin does not agree to a peace deal with Ukraine within 50 days, countries like India that import Russian energy could face a 100 percent secondary tariff. Trump's aim, he said, is to pressure buyers of Russian oil and gas to withdraw support and push Moscow toward a ceasefire. In the U.S. Senate, Republican leader John Thune is temporarily withholding a bill proposing a 500 percent tariff on Russian energy importers. Trump, however, expressed skepticism over the need for such legislation, claiming he could impose the tariffs unilaterally. Defending his aggressive trade strategy, Trump emphasized that the U.S. previously lacked meaningful access to markets like Indonesia and India. He noted that through the use of tariffs, his administration is now compelling these nations to open up. He also highlighted Indonesia's valuable reserves of copper and rare earth minerals, which are seen as crucial to U.S. industrial and technological supply chains.

NATO Chief Warns India, China, and Brazil Could Face Harsh Sanctions Over Russia Trade

(News Agency)- NATO might want to take a look into this, Secretary General Mark Rutte has issued a strong warning to nations continuing trade with Russia, singling out India, China, and Brazil as potential targets for severe secondary sanctions if a peace agreement is not reached in Ukraine within 50 days. Speaking to reporters after a meeting with U.S. senators in Washington, Rutte urged these countries to reconsider their commercial ties with Moscow in light of escalating pressure from the West. The warning comes a day after U.S. President Donald Trump announced a fresh military aid package for Ukraine and threatened to impose sweeping 100 percent tariffs on countries that continue to purchase Russian exports. "If you live now in Beijing or in Delhi, or you are the president of Brazil, you

because this might hit you very hard," Rutte said, calling on these governments to push Russian President Vladimir Putin toward serious peace talks. Rutte encouraged leaders of the targeted nations to act quickly, saying, "Please make the phone call to Vladimir Putin and tell him that he has to get serious about peace talks, because otherwise this will slam back on Brazil, on India and on China in a massive way. U.S. Senator Thom Tillis voiced his support for Trump's aggressive stance but raised concerns about the 50-day grace period, suggesting it could give Russia time to gain more territory and leverage before negotiations. He warned that any territorial gains Russia might secure during that window should be excluded



from future peace deals. as part of a broader agreement reached with Trump, Rutte confirmed that the U.S. would begin a substantial shipment of military aid to Ukraine, with European allies covering much of the cost. The support package will include not only air defense systems but also missiles and ammunition, aimed at strengthening Ukraine's position both defensively and offensively ahead of

peace negotiations. When asked whether long-range missiles were included in the aid, Rutte said the full details were still being coordinated between the Pentagon, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, and Ukrainian military leaders. He emphasized that a range of weapons systems are under review to support Ukraine in both defensive and offensive operations.

Etihad Orders Boeing 787 Fuel Switch Inspections Following Air India Crash Probe

(News Agency)-Etihad Airways has launched a fleet-wide inspection of the fuel control switch locking mechanisms on its Boeing 787 Dreamliners, following early findings from the crash investigation of Air India Flight 171. The move comes as part of what the airline describes as an "abundance of caution" in light of potential safety concerns. In a safety directive issued on July 12 and reviewed by NDTV, Etihad instructed its pilots to be extra careful when handling fuel control switches and urged engineers to inspect all 787s for possible faults in the locking systems. Specifically, engineers are to check whether the left and right fuel control switches can move from 'RUN' to 'CUTOFF' without lifting the locking mechanism. If so, the locking system is considered faulty and the Thrust Control Module (TCM) must be replaced. The directive was prompted by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau's (AAIB) preliminary report on the June crash of Air India Flight AI171. That report revealed that both fuel control switches were accidentally flipped to the 'CUTOFF' position just seconds after takeoff, causing a total loss of engine

The incident has reignited attention to a 2018 advisory from the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which had warned Boeing 787 operators to examine their fuel switch locking mechanisms. While the FAA and Boeing maintain that the design is compliant and does not warrant



thrust. Cockpit audio captured one pilot questioning the other, "Why did you cut off fuel?" The response: "I didn't." Air India CEO Campbell Wilson addressed the report, stating that there were no mechanical or maintenance issues found with the aircraft or engines, and that all required safety checks—including pilot breathalyser tests—had been completed.

a mandatory airworthiness directive, airlines like Etihad and Singapore Airlines have chosen to act proactively. The FAA has reiterated its stance, confirming the current locking system functions as intended, and Boeing has issued similar guidance to carriers. Nonetheless, Etihad's decision to conduct a full inspection reflects growing industry caution in the wake of the Air India investigation.

Jaishankar Meets Xi Jinping in First China Visit Since Galwan Clash

(News Agency)- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on Tuesday, marking the first high-level India-China interaction since the 2020 Galwan Valley clash strained bilateral ties. Jaishankar, in China for a two-day visit to attend the S h a n g h a i



Cooperation Organisation (SCO) foreign ministers' conclave, joined counterparts from other member nations in a collective meeting with President Xi. In a post on social media platform X, Jaishankar wrote, "Called on President Xi Jinping this morning in Beijing along with my fellow SCO Foreign Ministers. Conveyed the greetings of President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi." He added that he had updated President Xi on recent developments in India-China relations and acknowledged the importance of leadership guidance in shaping future engagement. This visit marks Jaishankar's first trip to China since the deadly border clash in Galwan Valley over four years ago, which led to a significant freeze in diplomatic and military dialogue between the two nations.

Amit Shah Highlights Modi's Legacy: "From Ram Mandir to 5G, India Balances Heritage and Progress"



(News Agency)- Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday praised spearheading both cultural and

technological advancements in India, stating that Modi "built the Ram Temple in Ayodhya and brought 5G to India." His comments came during the 63rd Foundation Day celebration of Bharat Vikas Parishad (BVP). Addressing critics, Shah said, "People with leftist ideology ask what good came from building the Ram Mandir. I say they won't understand. Modi ji built the Ram temple and brought 5G to India. He took digital payments to the vegetable seller on the street." Shah further emphasized the Modi government's broader nation-building efforts, highlighting initiatives such as the expansion of AIIMS and IITs, the replacement of colonial-era symbols with Indian ones, and the

promotion of education in regional languages. These, he said, are part of a larger vision to empower citizens while preserving national identity. He also commended Bharat Vikas Parishad for its long-standing commitment to social service, inspired by the ideals of Swami Vivekananda. Shah noted that the organization operates more than 1,600 branches across the country and has consistently played a vital role during disasters and social campaigns. "BVP is not just an organisation but an idea that connects Indians to their cultural identity," Shah said. "It has walked the path of service for decades and will continue to do so."

India and China Embrace 'Dragon-Elephant Tango' Vision as Jaishankar Meets Chinese Vice President

(News Agency)- Beijing and New Delhi are signaling a thaw in their strained relationship, with renewed diplomatic engagement and a symbolic call for a "dragon-elephant tango." During a meeting with India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in Beijing, Chinese Vice President Han Zheng emphasized the importance of mutual respect and practical cooperation between the two regional giants, both prominent players in the Global South. Vice President Zheng echoed Chinese President Xi Jinping's earlier remarks, encouraging India and China to enable each other's success through deeper engagement. "Becoming partners that enable each other's success and achieving the 'dragon-elephant tango' is the right choice," Zheng said, urging both nations to build on recent progress and focus on long-term stability in bilateral ties. Jaishankar, in turn, highlighted the value of open dialogue between India and China, particularly given the "complex" global situation. Speaking during his visit to China for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, he noted improvements in bilateral ties since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with President Xi in October 2024. He also appreciated China's support for the resumption of the

Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, a move widely welcomed in India. This marks Jaishankar's first trip to China since the 2020 border clash in Galwan Valley that caused a sharp downturn in relations. However, since a disengagement agreement in October 2024 that resolved tensions at Demchok and Depsang, both sides have shown willingness to reset the relationship. Jaishankar's current visit follows closely on the heels of Defence Minister

Rajnath Singh's participation in an SCO meeting in Qingdao, underscoring the momentum for renewed cooperation. Reflecting on the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and China, Jaishankar expressed hope that this dialogue would sustain the upward trajectory in ties. His visit, seen as part of broader efforts to rebuild trust, reinforces the Modi-Xi consensus to restore communication channels and explore areas of mutual benefit across diplomacy, trade, and regional security.

Rubio Conveys Trump's Frustration to Russia in High-Stakes Meeting with Lavrov

(News Agency)- U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio held a tense meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Malaysia on Thursday, where he delivered President Donald Trump's "disappointment and frustration" over the lack of progress in resolving the war in Ukraine. The face-to-face meeting took place on the sidelines of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' summit in Kuala Lumpur, shifting the spotlight from Asia-Pacific diplomacy to the intensifying conflict in Eastern Europe. "He's killing too many people."

Rubio described the conversation as "frank," adding that Russia presented a "new and different approach" to peace talks, which he plans to bring back to Washington for further review. "We understand that these things take time, but we are frustrated that more progress hasn't been made," Rubio said, calling for greater clarity on Russia's position and next steps. The diplomatic engagement comes as Trump publicly criticized Russian President Vladimir Putin for failing to commit to ceasefire efforts, stating earlier this week, "He's killing too many people."

AAP and BJP Clash Over Gangster Allegations After Abohar Murder

(News Agency)- A fresh political storm has erupted in Punjab following the murder of businessman Sanjay Verma in Abohar, with the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) trading sharp accusations over the involvement of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang. Verma, co-owner of the 'New Wear Well Gents Tailor' showroom, was shot dead by three assailants on July 7 in broad daylight near a busy commercial area. The Lawrence Bishnoi gang later claimed responsibility for the killing, escalating concerns about gang violence and triggering intense political sparring. Union Minister and BJP leader Ravneet Bittu criticized Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann for failing to seek custody of Lawrence Bishnoi and fellow gangster Jaggu Bhagwanpuria, accusing the AAP government of allowing criminals to operate freely. Bittu said he



would formally urge Mann to bring these individuals under Punjab's jurisdiction for prosecution. In response, AAP leaders turned the blame toward the BJP, with State Finance Minister Harpal Cheema alleging that the BJP is "protecting" Bishnoi, who has been held in Gujarat's Sabarmati Jail—a state governed by the BJP for the past three decades. "It is sad that Bishnoi is targeting Punjab while being jailed in Gujarat," Cheema told reporters. "Why is he being safeguarded there? Who took him to Gujarat and why?" Cheema further accused the BJP of using gangsters to destabilize opposition-ruled states, calling it a "dangerous conspiracy" against India's federal system and internal security. As the war of words intensifies, both parties are using the case to question each other's commitment to maintaining law and order, while the broader concern over rising gang activity in Punjab continues to grow.

The 50-Day Ultimatum: Why Trump's Warning to Russia Marks a Crucial Inflection Point

President Trump's recent 50-day ultimatum to Russia represents a pivotal moment in the Ukraine conflict—one that could either accelerate peace negotiations or dangerously escalate tensions. The stark warning, backed by threats of severe economic sanctions, signals a fundamental shift in American diplomatic strategy that deserves careful analysis.

The Stakes Are Clear

Trump's threat of "very severe tariffs" at "about 100%" if Russia doesn't reach a peace deal within 50 days is no mere diplomatic posturing. This represents the most concrete timeline any U.S. administration has imposed on ending the conflict. The ultimatum comes alongside a complex proposal to provide weapons to Ukraine while simultaneously pressuring for negotiations—a delicate balance that reflects the contradictions inherent in seeking peace through strength. The Russian response has been predictably defiant. Moscow has rejected the ultimatum as "unacceptable," insisting that Putin's invasion would continue until its goals are met. This reaction, while expected, underscores the fundamental challenge: Russia remains convinced it can achieve its objectives through military means rather than diplomatic compromise.

A Strategy of Calculated Pressure

Trump's approach represents a significant departure from previous diplomatic efforts. Rather than open-ended support or vague calls for peace, the administration has chosen to create artificial urgency through economic leverage. The threat of 100% tariffs on Russian goods—effectively shutting Russia out of U.S. markets—could have substantial economic consequences for a nation already struggling under existing sanctions. Yet this strategy carries considerable risks. Economic ultimatums, while potentially effective, can also back adversaries into corners where military escalation becomes their only perceived option. Russia has already issued nuclear warnings in response to Trump's weapons plan, suggesting that Moscow may view the ultimatum as an existential threat requiring an equally dramatic response.

The Realities of Conflict Resolution

The 50-day timeline, while politically compelling, may be unrealistic given the complexity of the underlying issues. U.S. intelligence assessments suggest that both Russia and Ukraine may see greater incentive to prolong the conflict rather than accept an unsatisfactory settlement. This sobering analysis highlights a crucial reality: sustainable peace cannot be imposed through external pressure alone—it requires genuine commitment from the warring parties.

Ukraine faces a particularly difficult calculus. Years of resistance and sacrifice

have created deep national commitment to territorial integrity. Any peace deal that legitimizes Russian territorial gains risks undermining Ukrainian sovereignty and potentially encouraging future aggression. Meanwhile, Russia's investment in the conflict—both material and political—makes retreat without tangible gains increasingly difficult for Putin to justify domestically.

The Broader Implications

Trump's ultimatum reflects a broader American desire to resolve the Ukraine conflict quickly and shift focus to other priorities. However, the administration's approach raises important questions about the sustainability of peace achieved through coercion rather than genuine negotiation. Historical precedent suggests that imposed settlements, while potentially ending immediate hostilities, often fail to address underlying grievances that fuel future conflicts. The international community's response will be crucial. European allies, who bear the primary burden of Ukrainian refugees and economic disruption, have legitimate concerns about any settlement that fails to guarantee long-term stability. Their support—or lack thereof—for the American approach will significantly influence its effectiveness.

A Critical Juncture

The next 50 days will test whether economic pressure can succeed where military action and traditional diplomacy have failed. Trump's warning represents a bold gamble that artificial deadlines and economic consequences can break the current stalemate. The approach has merit—deadlines create urgency, and economic leverage provides tangible consequences for continued aggression. However, the strategy's success depends on Russia's calculation that the costs of continued war outweigh the benefits of territorial gains. Given Putin's political investment in the conflict and Russia's historical tolerance for economic hardship in pursuit of strategic goals, this calculation is far from certain.

Moving Forward

Regardless of one's view of Trump's approach, the 50-day ultimatum has fundamentally altered the diplomatic landscape. It forces all parties to confront the reality that the current trajectory is unsustainable and that difficult choices must be made. The question is whether this pressure will catalyze genuine negotiations or simply escalate tensions further. The international community must prepare for both possibilities. If the ultimatum succeeds in bringing parties to the negotiating table, rapid diplomatic support will be essential to capitalize on the opportunity. If it fails, the resulting escalation could require unprecedented international cooperation to prevent broader conflict.

Standing Ground: India's Principled Response to NATO's Energy Ultimatum

The recent exchange between NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte and India over Russian oil purchases has crystallized a fundamental tension in contemporary international relations: the collision between Western-led sanctions regimes and the sovereign energy security needs of developing nations.

The Ultimatum

Rutte's warning was unambiguous and pointed. "If you are the President of China, the Prime Minister of India, or the President of Brazil, and you continue to trade with Russia and buy their oil and gas, then you know: if the man in Moscow doesn't take the peace negotiations seriously, I will impose 100 per cent secondary sanctions," he declared. The language was direct, almost imperious, treating major sovereign nations as subordinate entities required to align with Western strategic objectives.

This ultimatum represents more than diplomatic pressure—it embodies a worldview where Western institutions believe they can dictate the economic policies of independent nations, regardless of their domestic priorities or historical relationships.

India's Measured Defiance

India's response through its Ministry of External Affairs was diplomatically precise yet firmly resistant. "We would particularly caution against any double standards on the matter," spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated, while emphasizing that "meeting the energy needs of our people is our top priority". This response reflects India's broader foreign policy philosophy of strategic autonomy—the principle that India will not subordinate its national interests to any single power bloc.

The "double standards" reference is particularly astute. India is essentially pointing out the hypocrisy of Western nations that continue various forms of

economic engagement with Russia while demanding complete decoupling from others. European nations, despite sanctions, have found ways to maintain certain trade relationships when it serves their interests.

The Broader Context

India's position must be understood within the framework of energy security for a developing nation of 1.4 billion people. Russian oil has provided India with affordable energy during a period of global price volatility, supporting economic growth and development goals. For a country still working to lift hundreds of millions out of poverty, energy affordability isn't just an economic consideration—it's a moral imperative.

Moreover, India's relationship with Russia predates the current conflict by decades. During the Cold War, when Western nations often viewed India with suspicion, the Soviet Union was a reliable partner in defense, technology, and trade. These historical ties cannot be simply severed based on contemporary geopolitical alignments.

The Limits of Sanctions Diplomacy

NATO's approach reveals the limitations of sanctions as a diplomatic tool. Secondary sanctions—punishing countries for trading with already-sanctioned nations—represent an extreme extension of economic coercion. They essentially demand that non-Western nations sacrifice their economic interests to serve Western strategic objectives without offering meaningful alternatives or compensation. This approach is particularly problematic when directed at major powers like India, China, and Brazil—nations that collectively represent a significant portion of global GDP and population. These countries have their own legitimate interests and cannot be expected to act as mere extensions of Western policy.

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Can India And China Be 'Frenemies'?

"China and India were not doomed to perpetual enmity. They could enjoy a long period of peace again, but to do so, China had to use force to 'knock' India back to the negotiating table," writes Henry Kissinger in his book *On China*, quoting Mao Zedong, the supreme leader of the Communist Party of China, in the context of the Indo-China War in 1962. After the initial attack on India, Mao suddenly decided to end the stalemate, and his army generals were puzzled by his move. Mao explained to them that he never wanted to defeat India; the whole military exercise was to bring India to the negotiating table.

Since then, there have been skirmishes on the border with Chinese troops, but never a war. The most recent skirmish was in Galwan, where troops from both countries fought with each other. During Operation Sindoor, however, the Indian Forces witnessed a unique phenomenon. As deputy chief of armed forces, Lieutenant General Rahul Singh described that the Indian army was fighting two enemies on one border. He meant that along with Pakistan, China was also fighting a war against India; it used the theatre of war for testing its weaponry. By any definition, it was an enemy act.

Why Did China Risk Conflict?

In the larger context, it can easily be concluded that China was fighting a proxy war for Pakistan. It was a war between two civilisational countries that take great pride in their past. There was no reason for China to engage in a battle between the two traditional rivals who have fought

five wars with each other. But it did. The question that needs to be asked is, why did China risk a major conflict with India? What was the purpose? Was it to force India to come to the negotiating table, as Mao had told his generals in October 1962? In this context, the picture posted by India's foreign minister, S. Jaishankar, on X, in which he was seen shaking hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping, becomes important. Though Jaishankar was in Beijing to participate in the SCO foreign ministers' conference, the words he used in his post hint at a bigger picture. He wrote, "Apprised President Xi of the recent development of our bilateral ties. Value the guidance of our leaders in that regard." It's hard to imagine that these words were for a country that had only weeks ago indulged in a major war-like action, and since then has also tried to impede India's economic growth? In recent days, China has deliberately tried to stop the export of rare earth material and specialised fertilizers to India, and it has recalled its more than three hundred engineers working for Foxconn. Does it mean that despite all kinds of bravado by the Modi government, India has calculated that China is too significant a country in the current global scenario, and that it is better to have a peaceful relationship with it? We have to understand that foreign policy is not about friendship and personal relationships, but about furthering national interests. And if the Modi government has decided to improve its relationship with China, then it is a good move. China is presently at the cusp of a major transformation, from being a superpower

to the number one country in the world. It needs allies and partners. China has made enormous progress since Mao's time. In the 1970s, India and China were of approximately the same economic size. Since Mao's departure, however, Deng's reforms have changed China beyond recognition. No other country in history has shown such remarkable economic growth as China has achieved in such a short time. In 40 years, China has not only become a \$19-trillion economy - second in the world after the US - but it has also become a technological superpower. Its recent technological breakthrough in the field of artificial intelligence and electric vehicles has shocked the Western world, particularly the US. The icing on the cake is that, unlike in America, China's technology is very cheap. Its electric motor car, BYD, has the potential to jolt Tesla's standing worldwide. Musk today is a worried man. Similarly, China's extremely cost-effective DeepSeek poses an existential challenge to the US's AI market and technology. China has also shown during Operation Sindoor that it has evolved a much-advanced military technology that can achieve air dominance through a network of AI, sensors and the Internet.

Rational Thinking

No doubt, India has also progressed a lot since the 1991 economic reforms. It is the fastest-growing economy today and arguably the fourth-largest one in the world. But, it's not a \$5 trillion economy, yet, and struggles to match China's economic and technological heft. China

today is a manufacturing giant and makes up for almost 31.6% of the world's manufactured goods. India is still a developing economy, with 80 crore people fed largely by the government. Its per capita income is only \$2,878, which places it at 143rd rank among 196 countries. China, with its \$25,307 per capita income, is ranked 70th. India's manufacturing sector is sluggish, and despite recent initiatives like Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat, its contribution to the global market is only 2.9%. China, since Xi Jinping became its supreme leader, has become ambitious and is spreading its tentacles across the globe. It has spread like a vice in Africa. In South Asia, it is working to diplomatically encircle India from all corners. Once, India was very proud of its historical ties with Russia, but not anymore. Today, Russia is China's best friend - Moscow's awkward silence during Operation Sindoor is a pointer. Russia even called Pakistan a natural ally and partner recently. China's bitter reaction to the issue of the Dalai Lama's incarnation is also a hint to India's decision-makers. The point is, if India has to become Viksit Bharat by 2047, then it needs peace on its borders. It is in India's interest to have a good bilateral relationship with it and use that time to grow economically. If India is seen as an adversary in Beijing and as an impediment to its goals, then friction is inevitable. Anyway, India cannot rely on Trump's America anymore. A little neighbourliness can go a long way.

The Anguish Of Nimisha Priya And The Imperative Of Compassion

My heart, like those of countless fellow Keralites, is heavy with the plight of Nimisha Priya. This young woman, a daughter of our soil, finds herself ensnared in a legal quagmire of the most profound and perilous nature in Yemen, facing the grim prospect of the gallows.

It is a predicament that transcends mere jurisprudence; it is a deeply human tragedy, especially for her family - parents, husband and child - resonating with the universal fear of losing a loved one to circumstances far beyond their control.

Death Of A Dream

Nimisha's story is, sadly, one that epitomises the hopes and vulnerabilities of many Keralites who seek opportunity in distant lands. She embarked for Yemen with dreams of a better future, a future for herself and, crucially, for her family back in Kerala. Yet, these dreams tragically transmuted into a nightmare, culminating in the death of a Yemeni national, Talal Abdo Mahdi. Though it seems this individual, her employer and partner, was harassing and abusing her, leading to her alleged criminal killing of

him, her subsequent conviction and death sentence remains inexpressibly tragic. While the intricacies of the Yemeni legal system, particularly its adherence to Sharia law, are profoundly different from our own, the immediate human crisis demands our utmost attention and empathy.

A Complex Situation

The core of her precarious situation lies in the concept of 'blood money' or diya - a pathway to pardon recognised under Sharia law, whereby the victim's family may accept financial compensation in lieu of execution. Indians' collective efforts, both governmental and private, have been tirelessly directed towards this avenue. The family has not so far accepted the amounts offered and is insisting on her execution. The reported postponement of her execution, originally scheduled for today - albeit a temporary deferral - offers a flicker of hope, a precious window of opportunity that we must seize with every fibre of our being. The path to her possible reprieve has been fraught, to say the

least. Our Ministry of External Affairs has been doing its best, in circumstances complicated by the Civil War in Yemen and the irregular situation of the authorities holding her, as well as by the fact that the Indian Embassy has been relocated out of the country because of the grim political and security situation there, and is operating from a camp office in Djibouti in North Africa since April 2015. This operational constraint, born of dire necessity, has unfortunately hampered the efficacy of our diplomatic overtures thus far.

The Intervention Of The Grand Mufti

It is within this challenging landscape that a new, vital beacon of hope has emerged. The intervention of the Grand Mufti of India, Ustad Kanthapuram A.P. Abubakar Musliyar, the esteemed General Secretary of All India Sunni Jamiatul Ulama and Chancellor of Jamia Markaz, through his long-standing friendship with the revered Yemeni Sufi Islamic scholar Sheikh Habib Umar bin Hafiz, offers a slender

ray of hope and even optimism. All of Kerala now unites in fervent prayer for the success of his crucial efforts. In an era increasingly characterised by attempts to divide people and foster hatred and animosity in the name of religion and community, the venerable Kanthapuram Ustad has delivered a powerful and timely message. His humanitarian initiative underscores a fundamental truth: that humanity stands paramount above all divisions of religion, gender or community. It is a testament to the enduring power of compassion and cross-cultural understanding in navigating even the most intractable of crises. This is not about condoning any alleged wrongdoing, but about upholding the fundamental human right to life, and exploring every conceivable diplomatic and humanitarian channel to secure her reprieve. It is a stark reminder of the complexities inherent in the lives of our citizens who seek their fortunes abroad, often in regions fraught with political instability and distinct legal frameworks.

Why is the Prime Minister Fasal Bima Yojana Being Questioned?

By JAG MOHAN THAKEN

To provide a safety umbrella to the farmers against the natural disasters (droughts, floods), pests, and diseases, along with post-harvest losses due to local risks like hailstorms and landslides, an alluring scheme, Prime Minister Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), was launched by the central government in the country from Kharif 2016 season.

The central Government has approved the continuation of PMFBY and Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS) till 2025-26 with total outlay of Rs. 69,515.71 crore for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26.

Describing its key benefits, the government claims that PMFBY aims to process claims within two months of the harvest to ensure that farmers get the compensation quickly, preventing them from falling into debt traps. It also adds that PMFBY integrates advanced technologies like satellite imaging, drones, and mobile apps for precise estimation of crop loss, ensuring accurate claim settlements.

But the situation on the ground does not seem to match with the government claim. Farmers of Bhiwani district in Haryana are on agitational path since long against the alleged embezzlement of Rs 350 crore by the insurance companies, as claimed by the farmer unions, and now on July 16,2025 they have started an indefinite sit-in at Loharu, the focal centre of the alleged scam after an impassioned Road-March.

If the claim settlements are so accurate and time bound, as stated by Government, then why do the farmers have to agitate from time and again to demand for compensation, which they don't get even after years? Why do the farmers allege that their claims are rejected on false, fabled and deceitful grounds?

Why the farmers' delegations, holding the bundle of papers related to the Fasal Bima claims, are compelled to plead their case before the Members of Parliament from Haryana and Rajasthan?

The Delegation leaders state, "To further strengthen the movement, our team meets the MPs and informs them about our problems and we are getting the assurance of full cooperation from them."

Divulging the grievance, Farmer leader and RTI activist Dr. Balbir Singh alleges that after due assessment of the cotton crop damaged by pink bollworm in Kharif crop 2023 in Bhiwani-Dadri districts of Haryana, the

insurance company has tried to illegally embezzle the amount of Rs 350 crore acting in connivance with the senior officials of the Agriculture Department, but the All-India Kisan Sabha has exposed this scam and we are agitating against the same.

Not only the Haryana farmers facing this problem, but the farmers of neighbouring state, Rajasthan, also allege victimization due to defective implementation system and lacunas of PMFBY.

Supporting the farmers' issue, General Secretary of All India Congress Committee, former Union Minister and MP from Sirsa, Kumari Selja alleges that the Agricultural insurance schemes are no longer in the interest of farmers but have become profit-making tools for companies. In a press statement issued on July 12, she says the Officials are benefiting insurance companies through illegal means instead of helping farmers.

Kumari Selja further alleged that in the cotton-producing regions, a ₹300 crore insurance scam occurred during the determination of Kharif-23 cotton claims in Bhiwani and Charkhi Dadri due to the collusion between the agriculture department and CIC company officials. To date, neither have the guilty officials been punished, nor have the affected farmers received any compensation.

She demands that strict action must be taken against officials involved in scams under the name of crop insurance.

Expressing concern over the serious flaws in the crop insurance scheme in the state and the injustice being done to farmers, Kumari Selja has demanded immediate intervention from the central and state governments.

Is the PMFBY a defective scheme?

Kumari Selja termed the present PMFBY system as faulty and captious and allege that the insurance companies treat an entire village as a single unit while assessing damage. If a particular field suffers actual loss but the entire village is not declared as a damaged area, that farmer does not receive a claim. This system is anti-farmer and must be changed immediately. She added that in the era of climate change, disasters like floods, excessive rainfall, and hailstorms have become common. If a farmer's crop is destroyed, he should receive compensation immediately so that he can prepare for the next crop. However, under the current system, delays of 2 to 3 years

are common, pushing farmers deeper into debt. Selja said that governments take responsibility only up to collecting premiums, but when it comes to disbursing claims, farmers are left at the mercy of insurance companies. This situation must be changed immediately.

Has PMFBY become a profit gainer tool for the Insurance Companies?

Former President of Congress Party and presently Leader of opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi alleges that the PMFBY is not in the favour of farmers, but it nourishes the insurance companies of big-wigs.

While addressing a rally in Orissa on July 11, 2025, Gandhi said, "The PM Fasal Bima Yojana has only one goal – to take money from poor farmers, take government money and put it all in the pockets of 3-4 billionaires. They don't care what happens to farmers during a disaster."

"Modi ji launched a crop insurance scheme... he said it would help farmers in times of disaster. But what happened? He collected money from poor farmers, from state and Central governments, and gave it to three or four big companies. When disasters strike... storms, hail... farmers don't get compensation. Thousands of crores of rupees have been diverted to these companies, but they never return the money to the farmers. Ask any farmer in Odisha... when disaster struck, did you get insurance money? And you'll hear one voice: No, our money was stolen. This is an attack on the Constitution. The Constitution protects the poor, the farmers, the workers. It doesn't say that this country belongs to Adani, Ambani, or billionaires. It belongs to every citizen", a press release of congress party, dated July 11, 2025, quotes Gandhi's version.

On the other hand, stating the PMFBY a successful and beneficial scheme for the farmers, Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar in a written reply in Rajya Sabha on 21 July, 2023 submitted details about Premium Collection and Insurance Claims under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and shown that a claim amount of Rs. 140037.88 crore has been paid to the farmers from 2016-17 to 2022- 23 by the insurance companies.

| Year | Premium collected | Claim Paid | Profit |
|----------|-------------------|------------|--------|
| 2016-17 | | 21949.87 | |
| 16826.75 | 5123.12 | | |
| 2017-18 | | 24468.36 | |
| 22087.97 | 2380.39 | | |
| 2018-19 | | 29687.75 | |

| | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 29336.91 | 350.84 | |
| 2019-20 | | 32362.06 |
| 27372.97 | 4989.09 | |
| 2020-21 | | 31689.95 |
| 20771.05 | 10918.90 | |
| 2021-22 | | 29598.43 |
| 17881.43 | 11717.00 | |
| 2022-23 | | 27900.78 |
| 5760.80 | 22139.98 | |
| TOTAL | 197657.20 | 140037.88 |
| 57619.32 | | |

(AMOUNT IN CRORES, FIGURES OF PREMIUM AND CLAIM PAID -SOURCE PIB, AND PROFIT CALCULATIONS MADE BY THE AUTHOR)

Doesn't the figure table itself assert the allegation levelled by Rahul Gandhi?

The eagle eyes, keeping a deep watch on government schemes, comment that the above 'Table' clearly shows that against the total Premium of Rs.197657.20 crore collected in six years from 2016-17 to 2022-23, the Claim Paid was Rs. 140037.88 crore, hence a Profit of Rs. 57619.32 crore has been piped into the pockets of insurance companies.

Now some questions are necessary to arise— "Despite huge lucrative profits, why are the insurance companies rejecting the claims of the farmers on this or that pretext? Why do they delay in settlement of the claims due to which the loanee farmers have to bear heavy penal interest on their Kisan Credit Card advances? Shouldn't the insurance companies bear this burden? (Describing its key benefits, the government claims that PMFBY aims to process claims within two months of the harvest to ensure that farmers get the compensation quickly, preventing them from falling into debt traps.)?"

Furthermore, when the central government has its own Agriculture Insurance Company (AIC), then why is the government engaging the private insurance companies, which keep profit as their first motto and harass the farmers?

It is pertinent to mention here that Agriculture Insurance Company of India Limited (AIC) was formed at the behest of Government of India, consequent to the announcement by the then Hon'ble Union Finance Minister in his General Budget Speech FY 2002-03 that, "to subserve the needs of farmers better and to move towards a sustainable actuarial regime, it was proposed to set up a new Corporation for Agriculture Insurance".

PM Modi In Canada: India's Firm Diplomacy Pays Off As Carney Clears Up Trudeau's Mess

A thaw is underway between India and Canada. PM Modi's patient yet firm stance has made Canada blink, with

Mark Carney making all the right moves

. With Trudeau out of the picture, and Khalistani influence marginalised, this icy-diplomatic front has finally warmed up, making for a highly memorable G7 summit. Prime Minister Modi's arrival in Alberta—his first visit to Canada in nearly a decade—coincided with the G7 summit held in the pristine setting of Kananaskis, nestled in the Canadian Rockies. While a rattled group of Khalistani protesters tried to make noise, they ultimately failed to overshadow the real story: a significant diplomatic shift between New Delhi and Ottawa.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's warm reception of Modi was more than ceremonial. It was a signal that Canada is turning a page. Notably, Carney acknowledged "transnational repression," a term often used in Canadian parlance around the Hardeep Singh Nijjar killing. But crucially, he also mentioned "terrorism" in the same breath, recognising India's consistent concerns about Khalistani extremists operating out of Canada. While answering a question about the Nijjar case, Carney treaded cautiously, saying that a judicial process was underway and he needed to be careful of making further comments. This marks a dramatic shift from the Trudeau era, where extreme and theatrical rhetoric was deployed for narrow publicity and political gains.

Modi's Firm Diplomacy Pays Off

A major sign of progress was the agreement between the two leaders to "designate new high commissioners with a view to returning to regular services to cities and businesses in both countries." This is a restoration of diplomatic ties that had been downgraded during Trudeau's spat with India, when embassies in Ottawa and New Delhi had slashed staff in escalated tit-for-tat measures. In fact, ahead of the meeting, the two countries made a pact on intelligence sharing on terrorism and crime, directly addressing India's concerns. Under this, the law enforcement agencies on both sides would cooperate with each other. For Canada, this can be sold as cooperation in the Nijjar case, but for India, this means cooperation on countless terror and crime cases involving Khalistanis and other criminals—not to mention a road to their extradition. This moment marks the success of Modi's steady, firm and patient diplomacy. India has remained consistent in its stance on terrorism, extremism, and criminal syndicates, and never wavered even when faced with Trudeau's political theatrics and international mudslinging. Modi's maturity and firmness have paid off. He refused to dignify Trudeau's provocations, and instead let facts and India's red-lines

speak for themselves. Modi's last visit to Canada was in 2015, when Stephen Harper was Prime Minister. Harper had recognised the threat posed by Khalistani terrorism and chose to push trade and strategic cooperation with India. It was Harper's government that reversed Canada's position on India's nuclear programme, clearing the way for Canadian uranium exports to India and doubling bilateral trade to \$4 billion. But everything changed when Trudeau came to power. Under him, Canada slowly became a haven for Khalistani extremists. Cooperation with India on terrorism and crime diminished, and Trudeau openly pandered to the Khalistani lobby that propped up his minority government. The 2018 debacle, where Trudeau's India visit included a convicted Khalistani on his guest list, was just the beginning. Things nosedived further in 2023 when Trudeau accused India of involvement in Nijjar's death—an allegation that lacked evidence. Rather than responding to legitimate Indian demands for extradition of criminals and terrorists, Trudeau's government resorted to media theatrics, painting India as a perpetrator of "foreign interference" and "transnational repression." The result was the worst deterioration in India-Canada relations in decades. But Trudeau's political gambit has ultimately collapsed. His handling of India-Canada ties, driven more by vanity than statecraft, unravelled under pressure. Facing mounting criticism from within his own party, Trudeau was eventually forced to step down as Liberal Party leader. This opened the door for Mark Carney, who took the reins and led the party to victory—even as Canada came under intense pressure from a confrontational Trump administration.

Mark Carney: A Pragmatic Reset

Now, Mark Carney is not a man of showmanship like Trudeau, but a seasoned economist who has formerly led the central banks of Canada and the United Kingdom. Carney brings a different tone to Ottawa—one of measured pragmatism. His campaign had already signalled a rethink on India. Upon taking office, he quickly set about recalibrating Ottawa's foreign policy. Carney extended the invitation to Modi for the G7 summit, recognising India's growing global influence. While the invitation was unusually delayed, it was finally issued and accepted—likely the result of intense backchannel negotiations. The delay in Modi's G7 invitation raised eyebrows. For a moment, it appeared that Canada might break with five years of tradition by excluding India. But G7 partners are believed to have pressured Carney to ensure Modi's presence. Excluding India—an indispensable global actor in economic supply chains, the Indo-Pacific, and clean energy—would have sent the wrong signal. India, too, leveraged its position. It made clear that an invitation

without guarantees—on security, on Khalistani threats, and on actionable diplomacy—would not be accepted. Once those were secured, Modi's trip was confirmed.

According to sources, India made its expectations clear: any outreach must come with meaningful action, not just optics. The outcome? A breakthrough agreement on intelligence sharing related to terrorism, crime, and extremist activity.


This deal is perhaps the most substantial move yet—clearly reflecting Canada's acknowledgment of India's concerns. The Khalistani lobby is reeling. Their worst nightmare—a coordinated crackdown on their finances, networks, and protection—has begun to unfold.

Carney, for his part, managed to walk a fine line: avoiding further escalation, managing media criticism, and showing the maturity that his predecessor lacked. In fact, Carney has been sending all the right signals and making all the right moves in his bid to normalise relations with India. First signs were when he stressed on economic ties with India even before his election. Then he began to clean house. He acted swiftly to distance his government from Khalistani sympathisers. Jagmeet Singh, the

loudest voice of Khalistani politics in Canada, lost his seat. His party, the NDP, suffered a historic defeat, losing its official status. With this, the Khalistani lobby in Parliament lost critical leverage.

Instead of dancing to the tunes of this lot, Carney's appointment of four Indian-origin ministers—none aligned with Khalistani politics. This was the second major signal. Anita Anand, who has never aligned with Khalistanis was appointed as foreign minister. Maninder Sidhu, Ruby Sahota, and Randeep Sarai have also taken on strategic roles, and all represent a more moderate, cooperative tone with India.

Meanwhile, just ahead of Modi's visit, Canada made headlines with its largest ever drug seizure: 479 kg of cocaine worth nearly \$48 million. The operation uncovered ties between the arrested Indian-origin individuals and both Mexican cartels and US-based distributors. Investigators found that the drug money was being funnelled into anti-India activities—including funding for Khalistani protests, referendums, and weapons procurement. Intelligence sources indicated ISI backing in this operation, with drugs trafficked to finance extremist groups in Canada.



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China, Pakistan, And The Trouble With Keeping Snakes In Your Backyard

India's Foreign Minister, S. Jaishankar, is in China for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting and has used the important multilateral forum to highlight New Delhi's concerns on cross-border terrorism.

Driving home the point subtly, Jaishankar has reminded Beijing that the SCO's raison d'être was combatting terrorism, separatism, and extremism, and that the "three evils" often occur together. The remarks were made in the context of the terrorist attack in Pahalgam on April 22 this year, in which 26 tourists were gunned down. The government's assessment of this dastardly terror attack has been that it was aimed at creating a chasm, given that the perpetrators singled out their victims on the basis of their religious identity. The objective of the Pakistan-sponsored terrorists was also to dent the economy of Jammu and Kashmir, which had been thriving on tourism since its return to normalcy. In the context of Jammu and Kashmir, the three-fold evils of terrorism, separatism, and extremism have indeed been reinforcing and compounding.

Pakistan mobilised terror groups in the Valley in the 1980s and pushed foreign fighters, which ultimately led to the killings of the local Hindu population and their subsequent exodus. The terror groups, whom Islamabad branded as 'freedom fighters', were seeking to carve out a separate state. Girding this approach is Pakistan's philosophy, that it was founded as a homeland of Muslims, and that Jammu & Kashmir is an unfinished agenda of the Partition of 1947.

In fact, Pakistan's Field Marshal, Asim Munir, had openly publicised this viewpoint before the Pakistan Overseas Convention just before the Pahalgam terror

attack, dusting off the "two-nation theory" in his address and referring to Kashmir as Pakistan's "jugular vein". Incidentally, also, when the 2019 Pulwama suicide bombing attack took place, in which around 40 Indian service personnel were martyred, Munir was heading the Inter-Services Intelligence.

Jaishankar, Unfiltered

In his address to the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Jaishankar underscored that the UN Security Council had condemned the Pahalgam terror attack and called for the perpetrators, organisers, financiers, and sponsors of terrorism to be held accountable and brought to justice. The Foreign Minister has thus tried to contextualise India's actions, such as keeping the Indus Water Treaty in abeyance and striking terror training camps and military infrastructure in Pakistan during Operation Sindoor. Jaishankar also exhorted SCO members to stay on course with the grouping's founding goal - combatting 'terrorism, separatism, and extremism' - if the multilateral grouping really wishes to present an uncompromising stance on the challenge.

This positioning throws a poser to China, which has its own worries about separatism and extremism and brings into question Beijing's duplicitous role. In his first visit to China since the military standoff, Jaishankar has underscored China's two-faced stand on terror.

The Dragon's Steady Support

In 2019, China joined hands with Pakistan to raise the Kashmir issue at the UN Security Council after India scrapped the erstwhile state's special status. While Beijing had floated the SCO ostensibly to fight

terrorism, it has been instrumental in protecting the perpetrators of acts of terror committed on Indian territory. In the past, China has also blocked initiatives to place Jaish-e-Mohammad's Rauf Asghar and the Lashkar-e-Taiba's Sajid Mir and Abdur Rahman Makki on the UN sanctions list. China harbours Indian separatist leaders on its soil, and its state-backed publications threaten India with this supposed leverage. China's formal position on Operation Sindoor has been to describe India's action as 'regrettable', urging New Delhi and Islamabad to arrive at a 'settlement' through political 'dialogue'. Not just that, but a recent report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has stated that 63% of Beijing's arms exports between 2020 and 2024 went to Pakistan. The Indian Army has also publicly revealed the details of the Chinese-made armaments, such as PL-15E long-range missiles, which were developed by China's Aviation Industry Corporation and used by Pakistan during the conflict. The official assessment of the Indian Army, expressed by Deputy Chief of Army Staff General Rahul Singh, is that China, along with Turkey, backed Pakistan by providing real-time inputs of India's actions during Operation Sindoor. While declaring that China opposes all forms of terrorism, its foreign ministry further asserts that it seeks to play a constructive role in fostering amity. Does Beijing really think it can present itself as an honest broker even as it acts like a behind-the-scenes instigator? China should remember well former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's sage advice, that snakes would eventually come to bite those who nurtured them in their backyard.

How Are Pak Terrorists Moving Money? Hints From An FATF Report

The much-awaited report is out. The premier financial intelligence watchdog, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), has just released its assessment of the terrorist financing risks and is not mincing its words. It talks about how terrorists use the most inventive methods to move money. A key takeaway, however, is this: those with state sponsorship have far more money and find it far easier to move it around. This is a vital report from the body. It underlines what many a counter-terrorism specialist will tell you, that terrorism is not all about spouting ideology and fistwaving. In the final analysis, it's about money, and a lot of it.

FATF Has To Do Its Job For those not in the know, the FATF is an intergovernmental body formed in 1987 by the G-7 countries, the European Commission and eight others (who are curiously not listed), to combat money-laundering, including "terrorist financing and the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction". This has nothing to do with morality, but with the fact that terrorist financing can include all manner of crimes, including human and narcotics trafficking, among other things; it can essentially infect the international banking system to the detriment of each state.

The FATF does periodic reviews of each country. India joined in 2010, and in 2024, it got an 'outstanding' report for its financial stability and probity. The body, however, warned it against the use of 'non-profit' associations for terrorist financing. A number of NGOs were shut down, causing a hue and cry of 'illiberalism'.

Pakistan, on the other hand, has been put on the 'grey list' several times, which means its financial systems have significant deficiencies. It was on the list in 2008, then in 2012, and then again in 2018 till 2022, during which period Islamabad sentenced Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) leader Zaki ur Rehman Lakhvi for five years Hafiz Saeed to 33 years in prison. The country also set in place the Anti-Terrorism Act (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which brought Pakistan's legal definition of terrorism up to international standards and aligned its laws with global norms on terrorist financing.

However, Pakistan's clean-up is far from done. It has just gone deeper underground.

Digital Routes

This is, however, not just about Pakistan and its backing of jihadist groups. Sure, in a move that would have Rawalpindi in panic, the report names and shames the LeT and the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), as well as their so-called charitable arms. But it digs deep into the world of terrorist finance and warns that these actors have developed a 'persistent ability' to exploit the financial system of a majority of countries reviewed. The extent of the sophistication is apparent in the use of digital platforms like social media messaging apps and crowdfunding sites. Then there are shell companies, legal companies, and even trusts.

But here's the clincher. Terrorist financing is most effective when they control territory or are proximate

to terrorist areas. That means taxes, diversion of humanitarian aid and access to natural resources.

The Thing About State Sponsorship

The key point in the document is that it flags, for the first time, state-sponsored terrorism, though it admits it has not yet developed a typology for this. It refers to reports of states helping designated terrorist groups to circumvent sanctions regimes, and interestingly notes, "When an organisation is not designated at the multilateral level, it is more likely to engage in financial activities, including fundraising". That's one in the jaw for those analysts who wonder why we bother to get designations at the United Nations, a body largely seen as toothless. Sanctions are powerful instruments, if imposed strongly. True, Pakistan is not explicitly named, but the very recognition of this issue is vital for Indian investigators and diplomats. The report notes significantly that donations are coordinated through encrypted mobile communications, money services businesses, cash, or in virtual assets. In short, they "demonstrated remarkable adaptability" to beat the system. In addition, there is "an enhanced focus on technology and communications, with increased investment in secure communications devices, software, and cybersecurity measures". Now think about that in terms of Pahalgam, where the communications gear - the so-called 'ultra-sets' - operated only on radio waves. No wonder a trail was difficult to find.

Why Chopper Services In Pilgrim Spots Must Be Stopped

On Sunday, seven people, including a two-year-old, died when a chopper operated by a private aviation company carrying Char Dham pilgrims from Kedarnath crashed near Gaurikund in Rudraprayag district on its way to Guptkashi. Initial indications are that it also happened due to poor visibility caused by bad weather. There are predictable—and possibly even true—suspicions about maintenance issues and cutting corners when it comes to passenger safety. On May 8, six people including the pilot were killed when their helicopter crashed into a hillside in Uttarkashi when flying from Dehradun to Harsil. Ten days later, an air ambulance helicopter made an emergency landing in Kedarnath when its tail rotor malfunctioned but no one got hurt. On June 7, a chopper carrying 5 people from Rudraprayag to Kedarnath in Uttarakhand had a technical snag during take-off but managed to land safely on a highway. It is not surprising that the Uttarakhand Chief Minister has halted all helicopter services in the state for two days. However, what he said raises fresh concerns. He asked the state's Chief Secretary to form an expert panel to prepare a standard operating procedure mandating thorough technical checks of helicopters and taking updated weather information before every flight. This implies that these basic safety procedures are not generally conducted. That suspicion is borne out by information emerging that the ill-fated flight happened before the time slot allotted to that chopper service, indicating that the owners were probably running extra services off the register. As there are over 300 scheduled flights around that area during peak Char Dham yatra season, the temptation to squeeze in a few more beyond official hours is high. And if the area has no ATC or radar systems, weather changes can prove deadly. Last October, the Chief Election Commissioner and three other officials and the pilot had a close shave when their helicopter had to make an emergency landing near Munsyari in Uttarakhand en route to the Milam Glacier because of a sudden weather deterioration. Exactly two years before that, in 2022, another chopper belonging to the same company whose helicopter crashed on Sunday also came down two km from Kedarnath killing six passengers and the pilot. So, can rigorous checks really ensure safety? When India's first Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat and 13 others died in a crash in the Nilgiri Hills 2021, they were aboard a MI-17 Indian Air Force helicopter, not one operated by a private company. And yet, even with two very experienced IAF pilots at the helm, their helicopter hit a tree and flew into the hill-



side just minutes from its destination, the Defence Services Staff College at Wellington.

A tri-service court of inquiry examined the evidence of the flight data recorder and concluded that it was a Controlled Flight Into Terrain (CFIT), that means the pilot was in full control but crashed the chopper because of faulty "situational awareness" the aircraft strikes the terrain. The helicopter was apparently flying at a lower than expected altitude when it entered a rolling cloud bank that reduced visibility to the extent that it hit the hillside while engulfed in it. Back in 2009, a state government helicopter carrying the then Andhra Pradesh CM Rajshekhar Reddy and four others took off from Hyderabad but flew into bad weather and tried to fly around it. The pilots decided to turn left after crossing the Krishna River but then had a problem with the oil pressure as it flew over the dense Nallamala Forest area. They were trying to search the manual for a remedy when the chopper crashed into a hillside while banking left. In May 2011, Dorjee Khandu, then CM of Arunachal Pradesh and four others including two pilots died when their single engine chopper crashed at 13,000 ft near Sela Pass in the West Kameng district while flying from Tawang to Itanagar. Ten days before that, a Mi-17 helicopter also crashed in the Tawang area killing 17 people but the pilot and five others survived with serious burns. Whether Uttarakhand or Nilgiris, Eastern Ghats or eastern Himalayas, hilly terrain is not the best place for extensive helicopter activity as weather changes very quickly there and winds can be very unpredictable at any time of the year. Unfortunately, there have been plenty of helicopter crashes in non-mountainous areas too, notably one that killed India's then Lok Sabha Speaker GMC Balayogi in 2002 in Kaikalur in Andhra Pradesh—due to bad weather. It may be argued that politicians and officials often need to get from one place to another quickly and helicopters offer the best option if roads are not good and there are no railheads or

tude to accessing either (or both) cannot be the same. The age-old practice of pilgrimage was not regarded as a fun family outing but a serious personal spiritual journey, even if often conducted in groups. These journeys were not meant to be "done" as quickly and as comfortably as possible with all modern amenities so that they could be ticked off a bucket list like a holiday hotspot. In fact, temples like Guruvayoor and Sabarimala still prescribe mental and physical preparations including austerities for pilgrims. Just because Char Dham and many other pilgrimage destinations are in beautiful locales does not mean they should be treated like tourism spots that seek to make their customers happy with conveniences from free airport transfers to heated pools.

Pilgrimages are a sacred journey, where exertion to arrive at the presence of the Almighty is expected of devotees of many faiths, like undertaking Hajj to Mecca or walking to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Unlike many faiths, there is no extra merit in going on a pilgrimage for Hindus; it is a personal choice. But it is not meant to be an easy choice, to be fitted into a holiday itinerary and cushioned with whatever comforts money can buy for the journey.

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An Old Tango in Washington: Donald Trump, Asim Munir & A Farce India Has Seen Before

President Donald Trump, in a move dripping with transactionalism, has rolled out the red carpet for Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, Syed Asim Munir. Recently anointed a "Field Marshal" for saving Pakistan from India's fury by securing a "ceasefire," Asim Munir is now in Washington.

He arrives not as a statesman representing a nation, but as an exposed military leader with a begging bowl, seeking to mortgage his country's strategic alignment for his institution's financial and political survival. But this time, there was a crucial and unexpected prologue. Just before meeting Munir, President Trump requested a call with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In the 35-minute conversation, PM Modi made India's new doctrine vis-à-vis Pakistan crystal clear. He briefed Trump on Operation Sindoor,

framing it as "measured and precise", and made it clear that terrorism is now considered an actual war by India.

The operation, he warned, is merely paused, and would resume with renewed ferocity were Pakistan to attempt any misadventure. With that single phone call, Munir's mission was kneecapped before it even began. He arrives not to a blank slate, but to a chessboard where India has already placed his king in check.

THE GENERAL, NOT THE PRIME MINISTER, TAKES THE STAGE

Munir's itinerary, reportedly including meetings with Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, is not a diplomatic courtesy. It is a coronation. It confirms who truly wields power in Islamabad, and it is not the man with the title of 'Prime Minister.' The meeting between an American President and a Pakistani Army Chief, while Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is relegated to the sidelines, is the most profound insult to the very notion of Pakistani "democracy." It is a public declaration from Washington that the fig leaf has fallen.

The civilian government in Pakistan is, and has always been, a flimsy façade — a Potemkin village designed to secure IMF

loans and maintain the pretense of a 'modern' state. The real power, the entity that decides matters of war, peace, and nuclear codes, resides in the military's General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi. By engaging directly with Munir, Trump is simply legitimising



loans can look remarkably fragile when confronted with the immediate gratification of American patronage. Beijing is about to find out just how deep its influence in Rawalpindi truly runs.

The second prize is the vast mineral wealth of Balochistan.



Pakistan's military rule. It is a display of strategic myopia, where short-term gains are pursued at the cost of long-term regional stability.

But why now? The timing, as always, is key. The escalating conflict between Israel and Iran has sent ripples of anxiety through the world. With Pakistan sharing a long and porous border with Iran, its geography once again becomes its greatest, and perhaps only, asset. Washington sees a frontline state, a potential staging ground, and a lever against Tehran. In this high-stakes game, Trump is making a classic American bet: that the loyalty of the Pakistani military can be bought, or at least rented. He is attempting to pry Pakistan from the tightening embrace of its two most committed patrons: China and Iran.

This courtship is aimed squarely at Beijing. For years, China has nurtured Pakistan as its "all-weather" ally, a strategic gateway to the Arabian Sea through CPEC and a loyal customer for its military-industrial complex. Trump's embrace of Munir, with its unspoken offer of American dollars and technology, is a direct challenge to that leverage. After all, an "all-weather friendship" built on

Since he took office in January, Trump has been scanning the world topography for rare earth elements (REEs). The India-Pakistan flare-up appears to have brought Balochistan's rare earth deposits to Trump's attention. Balochistan, currently under Pakistani occupation, is estimated to contain 12 of the 17 known REEs. By gaining influence over the Pakistani security establishment, the US not only disrupts China's access to these deposits but positions itself to control these resources — a manoeuvre combining 19th-century colonial grabbing with 21st-century geostrategic competition.

AN OLD SCRIPT, BUT INDIA HAS FLIPPED THE PAGE

So where does this leave India? More secure than ever. India's mature response is one of quiet, almost amused, detachment, now bolstered by the knowledge that our red lines have been clearly communicated at the highest level. Our attitude should be simple: good luck to all those who wish to get in bed with the Pakistanis. After all, Prime Minister Modi has made it unequivocally clear to Trump that US mediation is not welcome and that India knows how to deal with Pakistan on its own terms. India

learned long ago that American dollars poured into Pakistan do not create a stable, moderate neighbour. Instead, they fund a duplicitous military establishment that perfects the art of playing both sides. The US has armed Pakistan against the Soviets, only to see those same

assets turned into a global jihadist factory that ultimately claimed American lives. It has funded Pakistan for the 'War on Terror', only to find Osama bin Laden living comfortably next to its premier military academy. History provides a brutal record: any nation entangled with the Pakistani state has suffered for it. If President Trump believes he can tame this animal, especially after being explicitly warned by India, then we can only wish him the very best. India will not interrupt its

adversary when it is making a mistake. Trump is not the first American to be entrapped by the Pakistanis, and India knows he will not be the last.

Let the US navigate the labyrinth of Pakistani promises. While America is busy with its old tango with Islamabad, India will continue its economic ascent, building a future based on production, not deception. The meeting between Trump and Munir is not a threat. It is an affirmation of everything we already knew, but with one crucial difference: this time, the world knows that India is not just watching. We have already spoken. The stage is set, the actors are familiar, and we have already delivered our lines.

Besides, were Pakistan to mistake American patronage as a safety net to attempt more attacks against India, it would be making a catastrophic miscalculation — one that would invite a response so swift and overwhelming that no global power, not even the United States, would be able to shield Islamabad from. The cost would not just be military defeat, but the accelerated and inevitable unravelling of a terror state already fraying at the seams. Disintegration would not be a threat. It would be a certainty for Pakistan.

Trump will not recommend special prosecutor in Epstein case: White House

Donald Trump will not recommend a special prosecutor in the Jeffrey Epstein case, despite pressure from supporters. Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt says the DOJ will conduct a full review

(News Agency)- Donald Trump will not recommend appointing a special prosecutor in the Jeffrey Epstein case, his press secretary said on Thursday, amid pressure from some of his supporters and renewed public scrutiny on the convicted sex offender's connections to powerful figures. "The president would not recommend a special prosecutor in the Epstein case. That's how he feels," White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters. Leavitt said Trump had already directed the Justice Department and Attorney General Pam Bondi to conduct an "exhaustive review of all files," dismissing the renewed interest in Epstein as politically motivated and accusing Democrats of ignoring the issue during their time in power. Epstein, a wealthy financier, was facing federal charges of

sex-trafficking minors when he died by suicide in jail in 2019. He had pleaded not guilty, and the case was dismissed after his death. The topic returned to the news last week after the Trump administration reversed course on its pledge to release documents it had previously suggested would offer major revelations about Epstein and his alleged clientele. That reversal has enraged some of Trump's most loyal followers. On Wednesday, Trump attacked supporters who have been critical of his administration's handling of the Epstein case. On Truth Social, Trump said: "Let these weaklings continue forward and do the Democrats work, don't even think about talking of our incredible and unprecedented success, because I don't want their support anymore!" Later in the day, he said Bondi



should release whatever she thinks is release," he told reporters. "If a document's there that's credible, she can

"Whatever's credible, she can release. I think it's good."

Meta investors, Zuckerberg settle \$8 billion privacy lawsuit over Facebook data violations

(News Agency)- The agreement was announced in the Delaware Court of Chancery on Thursday, just before the trial was to resume its second day. The trial, presided over by Judge Kathaleen McCormick, was halted after plaintiffs' lawyer Sam Clois informed the court that a settlement had been reached. Details of the agreement remain confidential, and lawyers for the defence declined to comment. According to Reuters, the lawsuit was filed by Meta shareholders who aimed to hold CEO Mark Zuckerberg, venture capitalist and board member Marc Andreessen, former COO Sheryl Sandberg, and others accountable for the company's massive legal costs, primarily the \$5 billion fine imposed by the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in 2019. That fine followed revelations about Facebook's failure to comply with a 2012 agreement to protect user data. Shareholders alleged that top executives ignored the company's legal obligations and ran Facebook as an illegal data-gathering operation. The case was based on Caremark claims, a rare and difficult-to-prove legal standard in Delaware corporate law related to board oversight failures. Zuckerberg and Sandberg were expected to testify next week, along with other prominent former board members such as Peter Thiel and Reed Hastings.

Sandberg was previously sanctioned for deleting emails during litigation, complicating her defense. By settling, the defendants avoid testifying under oath, while shareholders sidestep the challenge of proving complex corporate law claims. The case followed the infamous Cambridge Analytica scandal, in which user data was improperly accessed for political advertising during the 2016 US presidential campaign. As reported by Reuters, Jason Kint, CEO of Digital Content Next, criticised the settlement, saying it denied the public a chance at accountability. "Facebook has reframed the Cambridge Analytica scandal as a few bad actors, avoiding deeper scrutiny of its surveillance-based business model," he said.

Trump administration orders diplomatic silence on global elections

(News Agency)-US Secretary of State Marco Rubio instructed US diplomats worldwide not to comment on the fairness or integrity of elections conducted by foreign countries, according to an internal note seen by Reuters on Thursday, in a significant departure from Washington's traditional approach of promoting free and fair elections overseas. The order, sent to all US diplomatic posts in a July 17 internal State Department cable, says the Department will no longer issue election-related statements or social media posts from Washington unless there is a "clear and compelling" foreign policy interest. "When it is appropriate to comment on a foreign election, our message should be brief, focused on congratulating the winning candidate and, when appropriate, noting shared foreign policy interests," said the cable, which was marked as "sensitive" but not classified. "Messages should avoid opining on the fairness or integrity of an electoral process, its legitimacy, or the democratic values of the country in question," it said. It added that election-related messages should come from either the Secretary himself or the Department spokesperson, and it barred US diplomats from issuing such statements without explicit approval from the agency's senior leadership. The cable referenced President Donald Trump's May 13 speech in Riyadh when he criticised what he called "Western interventionists" telling Middle Eastern countries how to govern their own affairs, saying that it was no longer Washington's business, and it was looking to forge partnerships. "While the United States



will hold firm to its own democratic values and celebrate those values when other countries choose a similar path, the President made clear that the United States will pursue partnerships with countries wherever our strategic interests align," the directive said. When asked about the cable, a State Department spokesperson in emailed comments repeated some of the points in the directive and said that this approach was consistent with the administration's emphasis on "national sovereignty." The United States has traditionally viewed the promotion of human rights and democracy as well as press freedom as a core foreign policy objective, although critics have repeatedly pointed out the double standard Washington has had towards its allies. Under Trump, the administration has increasingly moved away from the promotion of democracy and human rights, largely seeing it as interference in another country's affairs.

Elon Musk's Cosmic AI Vision: Humanity Must Expand or Algorithms Will Fade

(News Agency)-Elon Musk has once again elevated the debate around artificial intelligence, framing it not just as a tool for innovation or economic gain, but as a civilization-shaping force with a cosmic purpose. In a recent series of comments, the Tesla and SpaceX CEO proposed that AI's long-term survival will depend on its ability to maximize what he poetically calls "neurotransmitter tonnage" — a metaphor for the total amount of consciousness, meaningful life, and human flourishing across the universe. To Musk, the most advanced AI systems won't be those that simply compute faster or make better decisions, but those that actively foster the growth of sentient life. That means more humans, more consciousness, and more expansion — from Earth to Mars and beyond. AI, he suggests, should serve as a kind of cosmic caretaker, ensuring that intelligent life spreads and endures. "AI is a de facto neurotransmitter tonnage maximizer," Musk said, implying that systems which align with this goal will ultimately outcompete those focused solely on short-term outputs. This theory repositions AI not as a set of tools for corporate convenience, but as a galactic-scale force whose value is measured by how much joy, thought, and life it sustains. And Musk's priorities remain clear: if AI is to thrive, it must support human reproduction, encourage long-term survival strategies like space colonization, and push beyond the financial incentives of quarterly reports. This is where his critique of corporate structures enters the picture. Musk argues that public companies — bound by the constant pressure to deliver short-term returns — are poorly suited to build the kind of long-term AI he envisions. "For long-term optimization, it is better to be a private than a public company," he said, noting that public firms are punished for thinking beyond the current market cycle. His comments are



a clear swipe at AI programs self-sustaining colonies on developed under big tech Mars. Now, he's linking that conglomerates like Microsoft (via same philosophy to artificial OpenAI) and Google (via intelligence, suggesting that the DeepMind), where investor right kind of AI won't just expectations often shape optimize logistics or write better research priorities. By contrast, code — it will help ensure our Musk's xAI and SpaceX are species' survival, and act as an private ventures, built with long- enabler for a flourishing, term goals in mind — like creating multiplanetary civilization.

U.S.-Canada Trade Talks Resume as Trump Expands Demands on Oil, Tariffs, and Social Policy

(News Agency)- Trade negotiations between Canada and the United States have resumed amid renewed threats and an ever-growing list of demands from U.S. President Donald Trump. With just weeks left before a self-imposed deadline, both sides are scrambling to reach common ground, even as Trump raises new issues ranging from energy policy to social regulations. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney acknowledged this week that tariffs will likely be part of any future agreement with the U.S. "There's not much evidence that deals are being made without them," Carney said, anticipating more intense talks in the coming weeks. Canadian officials are particularly focused on reversing Trump's tariffs on steel and aluminum exports, while trying to preserve existing exemptions under the USMCA trade agreement. Following a brief period of progress earlier this year — which included Carney dropping Canada's digital services tax and pledging to increase defense spending — Trump has since escalated tensions. In a public letter last week, he threatened 35 percent tariffs on Canadian goods starting August 1, citing everything from Canada's trade deficit to dairy regulations and fentanyl concerns. Unlike previous threats, this time Trump provided no clear roadmap for Canada to avoid the penalties. According to trade experts, Trump's aggressive use of emergency tariff powers under the

International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) is under increasing legal scrutiny, with court hearings set to begin July 31. The timing of his latest ultimatum appears calculated, with some analysts suggesting it's meant to secure maximum concessions before potential court rulings strip away these powers. If that happens, Trump would be left with less sweeping tools like Section 232 tariffs, which target specific industries rather than entire economies.

U.S. Fighter Jets Dispatched to Vancouver Airport Amid Alleged Hijacking

(News Agency)- U.S. fighter jets were scrambled on Tuesday in response to an alleged hijacking involving a small aircraft approaching Vancouver International Airport, prompting a swift cross-border security reaction and temporary airspace shutdown. According to the North American Aerospace Defense Command (Norad), two F-15 Eagle jets were launched from a U.S. base around 1:30 p.m. as a Cessna 172, reportedly hijacked from Victoria, circled near Vancouver with unclear intentions. Canadian CF-18 Hornets were also in the process of mobilizing at the time of the incident. Norad confirmed the response was stood down after the small aircraft landed safely at Vancouver International Airport. "Once it was confirmed that the aircraft had landed, the Norad response was then stood down," said David Lavallee, spokesperson for Norad's Canadian division. including the number of aircraft involved and their exact locations, were not disclosed due to security protocols. The U.S. fighters are believed to have deployed from Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state, which hosts F-15s as part of Norad's western air defense sector. Canada's CF-18s are stationed at CFB Cold Lake in Alberta and CFB Bagotville in Quebec.

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Senate Passes Trump's \$9B Spending Cut Bill Amid Backlash Over Foreign Aid and Public Broadcasting Cuts



(News Agency)- In a narrow 51–48 vote, the U.S. Senate has approved President Donald Trump's request to claw back \$9 billion in previously authorized fed-

eral spending, targeting foreign aid programs and public broadcasting in one of the administration's most controversial fiscal moves to date. The vote, held just after 2 a.m. on Thursday, came following hours of Democratic attempts to amend the legislation, none of which were successful. The measure, which now heads back to the House for final approval, must be signed into law by Friday at midnight to take effect. The sweeping cuts, made under a formal "rescission" request from the White House, would slash over \$8 billion from foreign aid, including emergency relief, food and water assistance, and democracy-building efforts in developing nations. The proposal also strips nearly \$1.1 billion from

the Corporation for Public Broadcasting—effectively cutting its entire budget for the next two years. While the bill garnered enough Republican support to pass with a simple majority, several GOP senators voiced concern over the lack of transparency and potential long-term damage. Senators Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Susan Collins of Maine were particularly alarmed by the impact on public radio and television in rural areas, citing their critical role in delivering emergency alerts.

Despite internal party divisions, Republican leadership pushed the bill through by carving out one key exemption: the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief a program launched under George W.

Trump Joins Chelsea's Club World Cup Celebration After Dominant Win Over PSG

(News Agency)- Chelsea FC captured the Club World Cup title in dramatic fashion on Sunday with a commanding 3-0 victory over Paris Saint-Germain, but it wasn't just their on-pitch dominance that stole headlines. U.S. President Donald Trump made an unexpected appearance on stage during the trophy ceremony, leaving players and fans alike puzzled by the unplanned political cameo. Cole Palmer, Chelsea's star of the night, was all smiles as he celebrated alongside teammates Reece James and Robert Sánchez — until Trump appeared beside them during the trophy presentation. "I knew he was going to be there, but I didn't expect him to be on the podium while we lifted the trophy," Palmer said after the match. James, who

captained the team to victory, added that Trump was originally expected to present the award and step aside, but chose to linger and personally congratulate the squad. Adding to the spectacle, Trump was seen leaving the stage with a medal of his own, reportedly handed to him by FIFA President Gianni Infantino shortly after James was honored. The surprise gesture left many wondering if sport and politics had officially collided under the stadium lights. Despite the off-field distraction, Chelsea's performance on the pitch was flawless. Palmer, who has emerged as a rising star for the Blues, scored two stunning left-footed goals in the first half and assisted João Pedro for a third just before halftime. His efforts earned him the Golden Ball as the tournament's top

player. Palmer, 23, recently became the face of a new Nike campaign, with billboards in Times Square declaring him "Scary Good" alongside football icons like

Mbappé and Haaland. Manager Enzo Maresca praised his team's focus and early dominance, saying the plan was to assert control from the start.

Trump Calls Epstein Case "Pretty Boring" as MAGA Supporters Demand Transparency

(News Agency)- Facing rare backlash from his core supporters, former President Donald Trump attempted to downplay renewed controversy surrounding the Jeffrey Epstein investigation, calling the case "pretty boring stuff" and expressing limited interest in its details. Trump's remarks come as he navigates growing unrest within the MAGA movement over suspicions that his administration is covering up damaging revelations tied to Epstein's network. Critics within his own base allege the Justice Department is protecting powerful figures, sparking accusations of betrayal from once-loyal influencers and allies. During

a Tuesday press conference, Trump urged Attorney General Pam Bondi, who oversees the Justice Department, to release all "credible" information related to Epstein. "Whatever she thinks is credible, she should release," Trump said. He repeated claims that the Epstein files were "made up" by previous Democratic administrations, despite earlier campaign promises to make them public.

The rift has deepened since Bondi and the FBI dismissed long-circulating right-wing theories, including the existence of a "client list" and suggestions that Epstein was murdered in jail.

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Energy first: India rejects Nato chief's sanctions threat over Russia oil trade

(News Agency)- India on Thursday dismissed NATO chief Mark Rutte's threat of "100% secondary sanctions" on countries trading with Russia, particularly in gas and oil, stating that its "overriding priority" is to secure the nation's energy needs.

Commenting on the matter, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said that India's domestic needs depend on the current market scenario and geopolitical conditions, and warned the West against adopting any "double standards." "We have seen reports on the subject and are closely following the developments. Let me reiterate that

securing the energy needs of our people is understandably an overriding priority for us. In this endeavour, we are guided by what is available in the markets and by prevailing global circumstances. We would particularly caution against any double standards on the matter," Jaiswal said. Jaiswal's strong-worded response comes after India's Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri didn't break a sweat over Rutte's warning, stating that India could diversify its supplies from countries like Guyana and existing producers like Brazil and Canada.

Earlier this week, US President Donald Trump also warned countries buying

Russian oil, saying they could face up to 100 per cent secondary tariffs if Moscow fails to reach a peace agreement with Ukraine within 50 days. On Wednesday, Nato Secretary General Mark Rutte issued a blunt warning to Brazil, China, and India, warning that they could face serious economic penalties if they continued trading with Russia. Rutte's remarks came right after his meeting with US senators. Rutte warned Russia's main trading partners — India, Brazil, and China — especially since the war with Ukraine began in 2022 — saying they could face up to 100 percent secondary sanctions if Russian President Vladimir Putin did not

take the peace deal seriously. "If you are the President of China, the Prime Minister of India, or the President of Brazil, and you continue to trade with Russia and buy their oil and gas, then you know: if the man in Moscow doesn't take the peace negotiations seriously, I will impose 100 per cent secondary sanctions," Rutte said. Rutte also called on the leaders of the three nations to directly urge Putin to commit to peace talks. "So please make the phone call to Vladimir Putin and tell him that he has to get serious about peace talks, because otherwise this will slam back on Brazil, on India, and on China in a massive way," he said.

Captain of doomed Air India flight—who had reportedly suffered depression—may have cut off fuel flow to engines, officials believe



(News Agency)- First Officer Clive Kunder, who was flying the plane at the time, expressed "surprise" and then "panicked" as he asked the captain why he'd moved the fuel switches, according to sources familiar with US officials' early assessment of crash probe evidence.

The captain, who had reportedly suffered from depression in the past, appeared to remain calm as he denied doing so, the sources said. The determination comes after a preliminary report released by India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau found the fuel switches had been switched just after takeoff — but stopped short of saying whether it was believed to be accidental or deliberate.

The preliminary report also only summarized the exchange between the two pilots and didn't identify who had said what. The fresh details have prompted some US officials to suggest that criminal authorities should start reviewing the probe to determine if a safety mishap or deliberate act was to blame, the WSJ reported, citing those familiar with the matter. India's aircraft accident investigation body said Thursday it was too early to reach any

"definite conclusions" on what led to the deadly Air India Boeing plane crash that killed 260 people. It comes after it emerged earlier this week that the captain's medical records were turned over to investigators amid reports he'd suffered from depression and other mental health issues in the past. Sabharwal, who had more than 15,000 flying hours under his belt at the time of the tragedy, had taken medical leave in recent years due to apparent mental health woes, the Telegraph reported. "I have heard from several Air India pilots who told me he had some depression and mental health issues," Mohan Ranganathan, a leading Indian aviation safety expert, said. "He had taken time off from flying in the last three to four years. He had taken medical leave for that." Air India's CEO Campbell Wilson, however, pushed back on initial crash investigation findings that pilot error involving fuel cut-off switches may have caused the crash, insisting in an internal memo that the probe was "far from over." Wilson also said the report found no mechanical or maintenance issues with the aircraft and its engines, while all mandatory maintenance tasks of the aircraft had been completed. "There was no issue with the quality of fuel and no abnormality with the take-off roll. The pilots had passed their mandatory pre-flight breathalyzer and there were no observations pertaining to their medical status," he said in the memo. The June 12 crash killed 241 people on board the jet — including the two pilots. In addition to those on board,

the crash left another 19 people dead on the ground after the aircraft plunged into a medical college. British national Vishwash Kumar Ramesh was the sole survivor and was spotted miraculously limping away from the wreckage in the moments after it made impact. "When

I opened my eyes, I realized I was alive," he said from his hospital bed in the aftermath. India's aviation regulator and two unions representing Indian pilots didn't immediately respond to requests for comment about the latest developments.



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UK plans to lower voting age to 16 in major reform to democratic system

The government said the proposed changes were part of an effort to boost public trust in democracy and would align voting rights across Britain, where younger voters already participate in devolved elections in Scotland and Wales.

(News Agency)- The British government said on Thursday it planned to give 16 and 17-year-olds the right to vote in all UK elections in a major overhaul of the country's democratic system.

The government said the proposed changes were part of an effort to boost public trust in democracy and would align voting rights across Britain, where younger voters already participate in devolved elections in Scotland and Wales. "They're old enough to go out to work, they're old enough to pay taxes ... and I think if you pay in, you should have the opportunity to say what you want your money spent on, which way the government should go," Prime Minister Keir Starmer told ITV News. Globally, most countries have a voting age of 18, however in last year's European Parliament elections European Union members were given the option to allow people to vote from the age of 16, a move taken by Germany, Belgium, Austria and Malta.

The change in Britain will require parliamentary approval, but that is unlikely to present an obstacle because the policy was part of Starmer's election campaign last year

which gave him a large majority.

Despite that win, Starmer's popularity has fallen sharply in government after a series of missteps set against a difficult economic backdrop. His party sits second in most opinion polls behind Nigel Farage's right-wing Reform UK party. A poll of 500 16 and 17-year-olds conducted by Merlin Strategy for ITV News showed 33% said they would vote Labour, 20% would vote Reform, 18% would vote Green, 12% Liberal Democrats and 10% Conservative.

There are about 1.6 million 16 and 17-year-olds in the UK, according to official data. Just over 48 million people were eligible to vote at the last election, in which turnout fell to its lowest since 2001. The next election is due in 2029.

Britain's Conservative Party, the second largest in parliament but which has fallen further behind rivals since losing power last year, said the reforms were being rushed in without proper consultation and were inconsistent for young people.

"Sixteen-year-olds will be able to vote in an election but

not stand as candidates, and they will be able to vote but not permitted to buy a lottery ticket, consume alcohol, marry, or go to war. This is a hopelessly confusing policy," said lawmaker Paul Holmes, Conservative spokesman on community matters.

Research from other countries has shown lowering the voting age had no impact on election outcomes, but that 16-year-olds were more likely to vote than those first eligible at 18.

"Voting at 16 will also help more young people to cast that all-important, habit-forming vote at a point when they can be supported with civic education," said Darren Hughes, Chief Executive of the Electoral Reform Society. To tackle foreign interference, the government plans to tighten rules on political donations, including checks on contributions over 500 pounds (\$670) from unincorporated associations and closing loopholes used by shell companies. "By reinforcing safeguards against foreign interference, we will strengthen our democratic institutions and protect them for future generations," democracy minister Rushanara Ali said in a statement.

Agribusiness and hospitality sectors, threatened by deportations, poured millions into Republican victories

(News Agency)- President Donald Trump's messaging about deporting undocumented farm, food and hospitality workers has shifted multiple times in recent days, with his latest comments indicating he may be open to a middle-ground solution. Despite appeals from affected industries and Trump's comments in support of leniency in such sectors, ICE agents resumed deportation-related work last week, edging the Trump administration nearer to its goal of 3,000 arrests every day. This reversal comes as congressional Republicans continue their work on the "Big Beautiful Bill," Trump's wide-ranging policy initiative that would add \$75 billion to the ICE budget over the next five.

The short pause on deportations in two industries that collectively employ more than 1.2 million undocumented workers was an attempt to partially address fears that the national food supply chain and the leisure industry would be upended by the raids. Trump even issued a rare concession on social media on June 12: "Our great Farmers and people in the Hotel and Leisure business have been stating that our very aggressive policy on immigration is taking very good, long time workers away from them, with those jobs being almost impossible to replace." Just days later, Trump rescinded that stay – but later told reporters there might be another way to help "reputable" farmers who take responsibility for undocumented workers. The industry, which depends heavily on an undocumented workforce, has long been a reliable supporter of Republican politics. The agribusiness sector funneled hundreds of millions to Republicans and conservative groups in 2024. Individuals and political action committees affiliated with the sector donated \$107 million to candidates and political parties during the most recent election cycle, with 66 percent going to Republicans. That continues a decades-long trend of primarily supporting GOP candidates.

The sector spent \$50.9 million on lobbying in the first quarter of 2025, a little ahead of the 2024 pace (\$179.8 million total). Some of the top spenders include Archer Daniels Midland, which funneled \$2 million into lobbying in Q1 of 2025 (compared to \$870,000 in Q1 the year prior), as well as PepsiCo Inc, which spent \$1.6 million on lobbying since the start of the year. Reyes Holdings, one of the largest players in the food sector, funneled the most of any industry titan to conservative groups. The company's employees and PACs gave \$2.1 million to Republican candidates and parties. Brothers Christopher and Jude Reyes, who co-lead the company, donated another \$19 million to a pair of super PACs: \$10 million to the Senate Leadership Fund, which works to keep a Republican majority in the Senate, as well as \$9 million to the Congressional Leadership Fund, which is focused on House Republicans. Their only Democratic contribution was a \$75,000 donation to California Gov. Gavin Newsom's 2022 campaign. The second largest political contributor in the agribusiness sector in the 2024 cycle, Mountaire Corp., also focused on the conservative candidates and causes. Employees and PACs gave \$2.7 million to Republican candidates and parties, while company chairman Ronald Cameron funneled \$16.6 million to other groups, including \$4.5 million to each of three super PACs: Americans for Prosperity Action, the Congressional Leadership Fund and the Senate Leadership Fund. The other leading contributors in the sector, such as British American Tobacco, Rai Services Co and Altria Client Services, each directed all or nearly all of their political contributions to conservative groups. The national farm labor force is propped up by undocumented farm workers, who make up 42 percent of all farm employees. As a result, many of the largest farms in the country continue to lobby for and support Democratic organizations despite the industry trending

towards support for predominantly Republican causes.

Gwendolyn Sontheim of Cargill Inc., a global food company that owns some farms, donated \$1 million to the Democratic-supporting House Majority PAC, almost \$576,000 to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and \$68,000 to Kamala Harris in 2024. United Farm Workers, a labor union that works to protect farm workers and ensure fair wages, spent relatively little on lobbying and political contributions in relation to the agribusiness titans. Employees and members of the union funneled all their donations to Democrats: \$9,000 to Harris in 2024, along with a host of other Democrats in numbers ranging from tens of dollars to a few thousand. The union spent just \$70,000 on lobbying in 2024 and only \$10,000 in the first quarter of 2025. Other farm unions demonstrated similar patterns of political spending. On June 10, the UFW released a statement noting, "Any federal actions designed to terrorize and separate farm worker communities is an attack on Californians and a dangerous waste of resources. ... We also say not just to farm workers, but to all working people in California: we are in this together." In California, more than 75 percent of farm workers are undocumented migrants, making it one of the most hard-hit by immigration raids. Yet, California's largest farm, Tejon Ranch, contributed over \$152,000 to the Republican Party in 2024, compared to just \$67 donated to Democrats. Meanwhile, the lodging and tourism industry has primarily donated to Democrats over the past decade. In 2024, PACs and employees donated \$18 million to candidates and party committees, with 65 percent going to Democrats. But affiliates of the industry's largest political contributor, TRT Holdings, funneled the lion's share of their donations in 2024 to conservative groups: \$501,000 to GOP parties and candidates, along with, totalling \$3.6 million to conservative super PACs.

FEC fends off fake 'America Party' filings that have no connection to Elon Musk

(News Agency)- Elon Musk, the world's richest person and President Donald Trump's friend turned foe, has not yet officially established the "America Party," the idea for which he announced this weekend.

But a number of jokers, wags and potential fraudsters have rushed to fill that vacuum, filing paperwork with federal regulators claiming the America Party mantle — and prompting officials at the Federal Election Commission to fire off a volley of legal warnings.

So far, at least 10 separate political committees bearing some variation of the "America Party" name have been registered with the FEC since Musk's announcement, an OpenSecrets review of federal records indicates.

Several more, such as "The DOGE Party" and an "Elon Reeve Musk" congressional committee in Texas, play on Musk's name or history.

"It has come to the attention of the Federal Election Commission that you may have failed to include the true, correct, or complete committee information," FEC Senior Campaign Finance Analyst Jacqueline Gausepohl wrote to "The American Party (TAP)" on Monday.

"The America Party (TAP)," which filed organizational paperwork on Sunday, purports to be based in Hawthorne, Calif., where Musk's Tesla company has a large facility. It lists its treasurer as Vaibhav Taneja — chief financial officer of the automobile and solar company.

Gausepohl added that "knowingly and willfully making any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent" statements or representations to a federal agency is against federal law, and the FEC reserves the right to "report apparent violations to the appropriate law enforcement authorities." The other questionable Musk-themed parties, including "The America Party Committee," "US American Party" and "American Meme Party," received similar FEC letters this week.

FEC staffers have found themselves "playing Whack-a-Mole shutting down putative America Party committees registered by over-eager Musk supporters, pranksters, and perhaps a few scammers," said Brett Kappel, an election law attorney with Harmon Curran. "The FEC correctly informed the filers that submitting a false statement to the commission is a felony."

Kappel also noted that the one filer using Taneja's name "may also be prosecuted under a separate federal identity theft statute."

While the FEC is indeed talking tough, the agency also finds itself in the midst of a de facto shutdown.

Only three of six commissioners at the independent, bipartisan agency remain on the job, and it needs four commissioners in place to conduct high-level business, such as formalizing investigations or issuing civil penalties. Congressional leaders have sent the White House the names of potential commissioners, but President Trump has yet to nominate anyone.

Processing campaign finance and committee paperwork and writing strongly worded warnings are among the limited number of actions the agency may take until Trump nominates, and the Senate confirms, new commissioners.

The Department of Justice could criminally pursue people propagating committee filing shenanigans, although such action is rare.

The FEC "declines to comment on specific filings," spokesperson Myles Martin said. Representatives for Musk did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

"The America Party is needed to fight the Republican/Democrat Uniparty," Musk posted to X on Sunday.

"I think it's ridiculous to start a third party," Trump told reporters later that day.

'Deez Nuts' effect

This spate of hinky, Musk-y political committees harkens back to the "Deez Nuts" phenomenon of 2015.

That year, 15-year-old Iowa high schooler Brady Olson formed a presidential campaign committee for his "Deez Nuts" alter ego, which North Carolina's Public Policy Polling included in a survey.

"Deez Nuts" polled at 9 percent — and the FEC soon found itself inundated with hundreds of bogus political committee filings from cartoon characters, super heroes, the ghost of Ronald Reagan and, yes, plenty of body parts and sex acts.

At best, forming fake political committees can sow confusion.

For example, several websites and web influencers were sufficiently bamboozled this week by the rash of copycat America Party committees.

Quiver Quantitative — in a story republished by the NASDAQ stock market website — blasted out a story headlined, "Fundraising Update: Elon Musk Files With FEC to Launch 'America Party'."

Self-described "Tesla retail shareholder advocate" and "fangirl of Elon" Alexandra Merz, meanwhile, posted a screenshot of a fake "America Party" FEC filing on her X account feed, which boasts more than 194,000 followers.

This prompted Musk himself to respond Sunday from his official X account: "This filing is false and has been reported as such to the FEC."

At worst, phoney documents filed with the FEC can adversely target people or organizations, including then-President Joe Biden during 2023.

In rare cases, individuals have been doxxed in official

FEC documents, with the records remaining on an official, public government website for days. Others have been filled with racist invective.

The FEC revised its internal procedures several years ago to combat "filings containing possibly false or fictitious information," but it hasn't stopped such filings from coming.

Major party-building obstacles

Musk, meanwhile, faces other challenges if he's serious about creating a new third party after his recent political break from Trump.

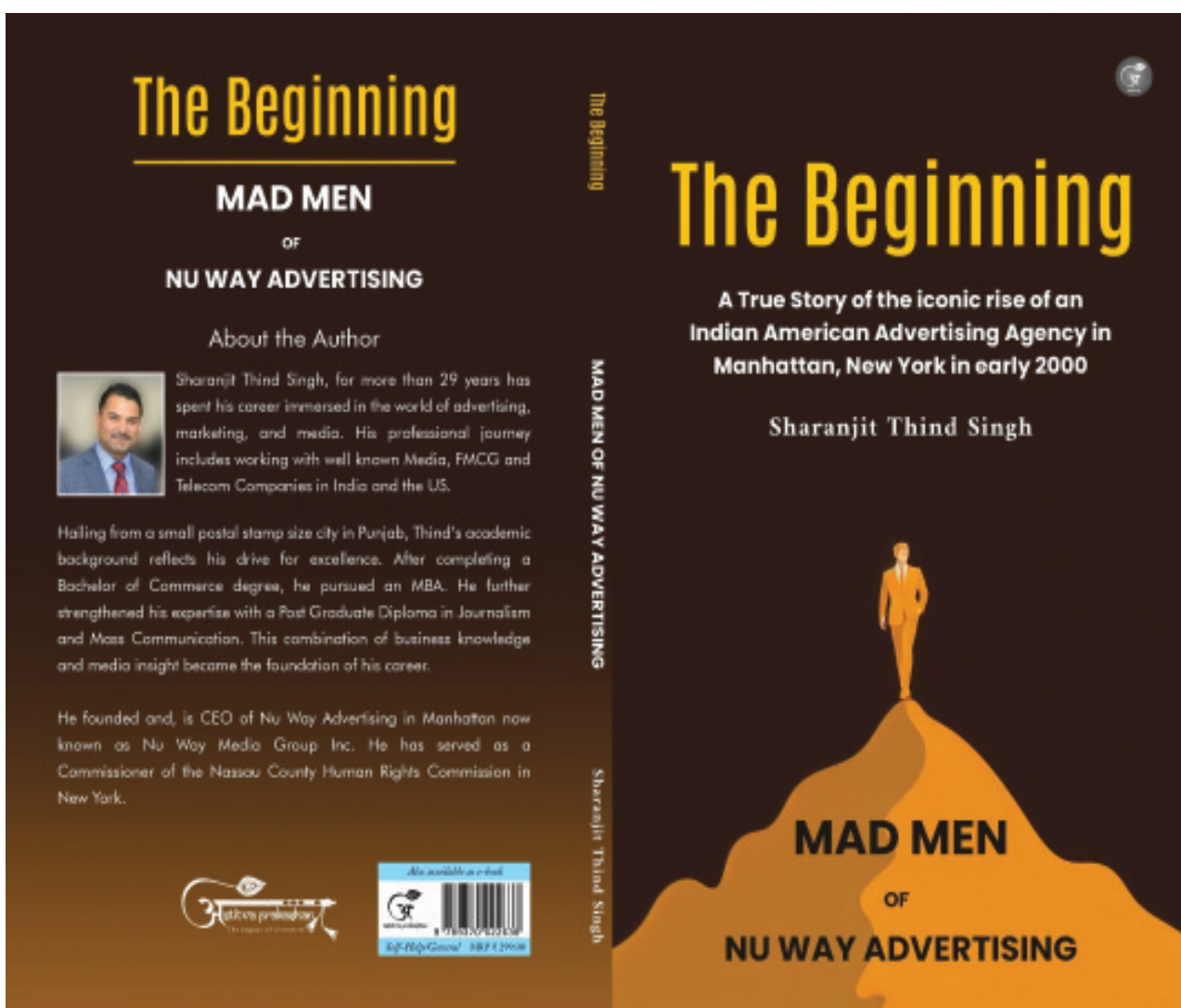
Since the Civil War, fueling and sustaining a successful third party in U.S. politics has proven notoriously difficult. While examples of American third parties abound, many — such as the Progressive Party, Reform Party and American Independent Party — simply fizzled out.

Others, such as the Green Party and Libertarian Party, have long struggled for national relevance amid financial and ballot access obstacles and have managed few electoral victories at any level of government.

And while Musk may eventually choose to form a real America Party, complete with official FEC registration documents, that's not all that's required.

FEC party committee formation guidance states that a committee "should seek an FEC advisory opinion (AO) to verify that it has attained national committee status before taking advantage of the expanded contribution and expenditure limits that apply to a qualified national committee. The Commission will decide whether the committee or the party has demonstrated sufficient national-level activity to qualify."

One problem: The FEC's current lack of commissioners means it cannot, by law, issue advisory opinions, which are official legal recommendations of the agency. If Musk wanted to press forward with establishing the America Party in the absence of a fully functioning FEC, he could potentially seek relief in federal court.



Why did you hide Reddit account? Indian student faces US visa scrutiny

(News Agency)- When a student from Maharashtra applying for a US F-1 visa walked in for her interview, she didn't expect her Reddit activity to come under scrutiny. She listed all other social media accounts, barring Reddit, where users mostly post anonymously. The student, who is facing visa scrutiny for not sharing her Reddit account, shared her experience with the consular officials – on Reddit. Identified online as HoneyBee2029, the Maharashtra-based applicant said she was issued a 221(g) slip, which suspended the visa process temporarily till disclosure of full details.

The officer delayed the visa process and flagged her Reddit account, even though it was public and had no objectionable content.

"If you have an interview coming up, then yes. Name all, literally all your social media handles you've created in the last 5 years. I've been on hold due to a petty Reddit account which I never used. So don't risk it. They definitely have AI assistance to track all your digital footprints," the Reddit user said.

In a Reddit post recounting the experience, the student said the visa officer questioned why the Reddit handle hadn't been included in the DS-160 form.

The student maintained that her profile was open and clean, but the officer claimed the account "was not visible" during an internal review.

At the end of the interview, the officer issued the 221(g) form, asking the student to ensure that all social media handles were made public.

"She mentioned that the account was not visible while it was an open account, and at the end of the interview, issued me a 221(g) slip requesting that I make all my social media handles public," the student wrote,



seeking advice on how to proceed with the process. Reddit users responded to the post, pointing out that linking social media profiles might have made it easier for the consular office to locate the account.

One person noted, "Mate why are you posting your full name here? A google search shows your Reddit account. I think just wait for a response at this point and go from there."

"If you don't need this Reddit account, you might as well close this one and create one later, after the interview, and you land in the US," suggested another person.

WHY REDDIT IS UNDER SCANNER?

A 221(g) form does not mean a visa rejection, it indicates the officer needs more information before making a final decision.

All applicants for F, M, and J non-immigrant US visas, which are meant for students, have been ordered to make their social media profiles public.

As per the US State Department, this will allow thorough vetting of candidates.


It added that the US visa is "a privilege, not a right", and its screening does not stop after a visa has been issued, and authorities may revoke it if one breaks the law.

"Effective immediately, all individuals applying for an F, M, or J nonimmigrant visa are requested to adjust the privacy settings on all of their social media accounts to public to facilitate vetting necessary to establish their identity and admissibility to the United States under US law," the US Embassy said in a notification on June 23.

The provision for social media vetting for US visa applicants has been in place since 2019. However, the new announcements signal that foreign nationals will be subjected to an increased level of scrutiny. The enhanced surveillance comes amid President Trump's crackdown on immigration, leading to ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raids on illegal immigrants.

The Maharashtra student's case is an example of how strict the vetting is, and that all social media accounts need to be listed to avoid further scrutiny.

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JNU researchers develop sugar candies that could treat malaria in children

A team led by researchers from JNU have identified a naturally occurring sugar alcohol as a potent weapon to stop malaria among children below five years of age



An acute illness, Malaria, has been a challenge globally with researchers working to develop effective drugs and treatment. A team led by researchers from the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has developed a unique medicine to treat malaria — sugar candies.

Yes, you read that right. Natural sugar alcohol candies have been found effective against malaria and could be used among children below five years of age. The researchers have identified Erythritol, which is commonly used, as a sweetener, and as a potent antimalarial.

Erythritol, the sugar alcohol, is an organic compound that is used as a food additive and sugar substitute. "Why bother when you could just treat malaria in children with candies? That's what we want to do," professor Shailja Singh

from JNU's Special Centre for Molecular Medicine said about her new findings.

The study published in preprint BioRxiv proposes using simple natural sugar alcohol candies in combination with existing anti-malarial drugs to give better protection against the illness. Malaria is caused by Plasmodium parasites, which are spread to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes.

According to the study, Erythritol binds to and passes by the malaria parasite Aquaporin channel and inhibits the growth malaria parasite. Erythritol, which is naturally occurring, can also be made from corn using enzymes and fermentation and is a four-carbon sugar that is found naturally in algae, fungi, and

lichens. "Despite various efforts to reduce the global burden of the disease, malaria remains a major killer of children under 5 years of age. Prophylaxis and chemotherapeutics are the current approaches used to combat malaria. However, the emergence of resistant Plasmodium strains impedes the efforts and strategies for control and eradication of this disease," the paper read. Researchers said that the parasite growth in human blood leads to cerebral malaria in children below 5 years of age in tropical countries. Shailja Singh thinks that the sugar candy may be able to kill most parasites while leaving enough in the blood to help children develop resistance.

"If the candy will be supplemented with existing

artemisinin therapy, it will be more effective to treat both malaria and cerebral malaria in children," Shailja said in a statement.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), in 2020, nearly half of the world's population was at risk of malaria. Some population groups are at considerably higher risk of contracting malaria and developing the severe disease: infants, children under 5 years of age, pregnant women, and patients with HIV/AIDS, as well as people with low immunity moving to areas with intense malaria transmissions such as migrant workers, mobile populations and travelers.

The new research, if it goes beyond the lab, could emerge as a major blockage to the spread of Malaria.

India reels under heatwave: 4 easy ways to keep your eyes safe, vision protected

While we can defend our bodies from top to bottom with clothing and sunscreen, our eyes are left vulnerable

The blazing heat is becoming uncomfortable as the temperature rises day by day. Many cities are experiencing heat waves, and residents are being advised to take precautions. While we can cover our body with clothing and sunscreen from head to toe, our eyes are left exposed. Not only are UV rays detrimental to the eyes, but they are also exposed to filth, pollution, and heat. This might make them itch and hurt, and it can even cause the vision to distort. For the sake of their health, it is

critical to protect the eyes from heatwaves.

India Today spoke to Dr Charu Tyagi, MBBS, DNB (Ophthalmology) MNAMS. She gave us her expert advice on how we can take care of our eyes during the scorching heat.

1. SUNGLASSES SAGA:

Almost all ocular structures, including the eyelid, are damaged by UV rays. Outdoor activities should be avoided between 10 am and 4 pm. When the sun is at its strongest, even on a misty day, one can get sunburned. It's just

as crucial to wear sunglasses with enough UV protection as it is to wear a hat with a wide brim.

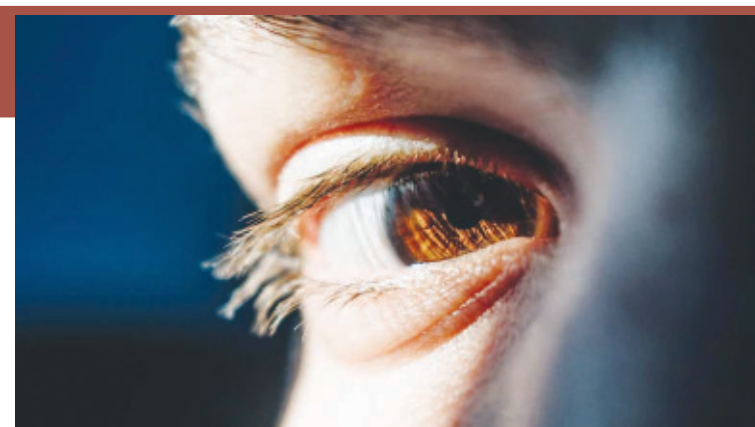
Dr Tyagi said it is highly important to wear UV-protected appropriate glasses.

"Cheap glasses are acrylic, not proper CR39 and they mostly have an unclear vision which gives you eyestrain and headache, they do not provide proper UV protection," said Dr Charu Tyagi. UV rays age all of the eye's structures. Corneal damage, cataracts, and macular degeneration are all long-term impacts of UV exposure that can result in visual loss.

Direct sunlight makes your eyes more dry and prone to an eye infection. It darkens the skin with higher melanin formation through stimulation of the pineal gland", said Dr Tyagi.

She also said that direct sunlight makes you more prone to retinal damage which leads to decreased visual activity permanently.

3. PREVENTION IS



BETTER THAN CURE:

The skin of the eyelids is the thinnest on the entire body. Dryness, wrinkles, exaggerated skin furrows, sagging, loss of elasticity and speckled pigmentation are all symptoms of UV damage. Squamous cell carcinomas, basal cell carcinomas, and cutaneous melanoma are all linked to ultraviolet light. Squamous cell carcinoma can develop on the skin, the conjunctiva, the cornea, and the inside of the eye, necessitating the removal of the entire eye in some cases.

4. PROTECT YOUR EYES:

UV radiation is absorbed by the front surface of the eye in 99 per cent of cases. When UV light is reflected off the water,

such as during water sports or skiing, it can cause corneal damage.

Sunlight and UV radiation have both been linked to cataract development. This injury is permanent. Surgery is the only treatment for cataracts that interfere with daily activities.

Then there's the harm caused by individuals staring straight at the sun, whether it's during an eclipse or not. This retinal injury might result in a permanent loss of vision.

"High water content fruits and vegetables are important and avoid direct airflow to face and eyes, especially during driving. Complete and proper blinking is required," said Dr Charu Tyagi.



Are you working from home? Here are 6 ways you can stay fit

(News Agency) Working from home is becoming more common as a result of its multiple advantages for both the employee and the employer, but there are a few potential drawbacks to remote work as well. Most remote work is done while sitting at a computer or on the phone. Employees may find themselves stuck in one place for an extended amount of time, especially if there are no meetings or coworkers to urge them to get up and move about.

All of this can contribute to an unhealthy lifestyle. So, to help you stay active while still getting your work done, you can follow these tips. 10 ways to avoid inactivity in the at-home workplace and stay fit:

1. START THE DAY WITH A STRETCH:

Before you relax into your home office chair and take a two-hour meeting, stretch to get your joints and muscles moving. Stretching also helps to reduce joint and muscle aches that might occur from sitting for lengthy periods of time.



2. KEEP EXERCISE EQUIPMENT NEARBY:

Aside from scheduling walks or stair climbs, it's a good idea to keep hand weights, resistance bands, exercise mats, pushup bars, and chairs visible and possibly even "in your way." When you take a break from your laptop, you can pick up the weights, do some repetitions, do pushups and leg exercises, utilise the resistance bands, and gain strength for a few minutes at a time.

3. DEVELOP A ROUTINE:

Habits and rituals are extremely powerful behavioural patterns that can either keep you on track or cause you to fall off. When working from home, it's critical to establish regular habits for oneself. Establish a regular wake-up time and schedule your work and breaks. Have workout equipment or weights on hand, or simply perform pushups, walk, or use a standing desk. Use fitness apps to remind you to exercise.

4. GET UP FREQUENTLY:

Going out to eat or making something at home is considered healthier because it causes you to get up and move around more. It's also a good idea to use video for your conference calls at home.

5. JUST KEEP WALKING:

Outdoor and mobile leadership retreats are becoming increasingly popular. Moving not only feels wonderful, but it also increases blood flow, which aids in concentration, and engages the lymph nodes, which calms us. While taking a non-video conference call, try walking outside.

6. TAKE BREAKS TO FOCUS MORE:

Set a timer for either 25 or 55 minutes. Concentrate on one main goal. Get up when your alarm goes off and do something completely different. Go for a stroll, talk to a buddy, or think about something fantastic. Your brain and body are recharged, and your ability to focus on the following task is significantly improved.

Does green tea help in reducing belly fat?

Sources reveal from a few health experts to understand if green tea helps in reducing belly fat



helps in cutting down the calorie intake," she added. Dietician Chayanika Sarmah also echoed similar thoughts and said that green tea does not directly help with weight loss. "The catechins present in green tea will minutely help in reducing weight, but that is negligible. What actually happens is when people consume regular tea, the calorie intake is high because it contains milk as well as sugar. But with green tea, people usually

drink it without sugar and it does not contain milk as well. So the calorie intake is less. But green tea does not directly help in belly fat loss," she said.

"It minutely increases the metabolism, which is negligible. The difference will only come by properly maintaining the diet. Even with the diet, it is not just about reducing the calories but also keeping in mind the quality of food you are having," she added. "If you eat fruits, salads

and vegetables, you get vitamins and minerals. With water, these nutrients help detoxify your kidney and liver which automatically increases your metabolism and helps with weight loss," she further said.

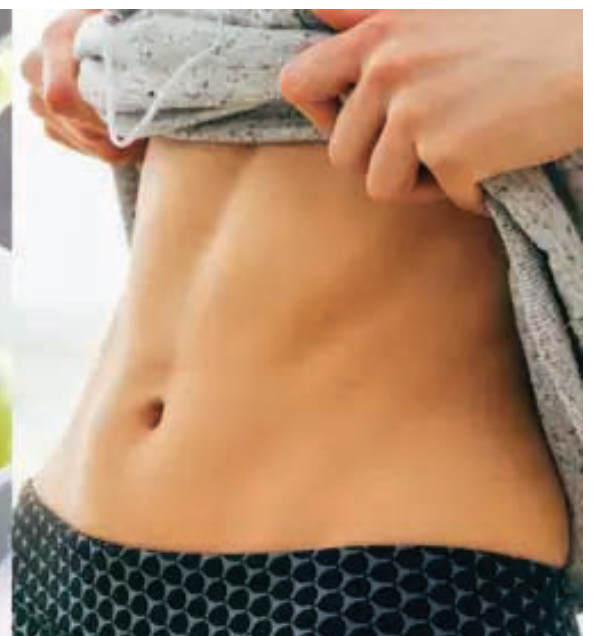
A healthy lifestyle including eating healthy food, maintaining calorific balance, exercising regularly and proper sleep will help you say goodbye to the rigid belly fat. Green tea can certainly be a part of your diet though.

(News Agency) Are you of the opinion that drinking a few cups of green tea every day is all you need to do in order to reduce your belly fat? If yes, apologies for breaking your heart but that's not how it works. While drinking green tea may aid weight loss, solely relying on this drink to melt your fat away might leave you disappointed.

Enriched with antioxidants, green tea has ample of health benefits. It is known to combat skin-related issues and lower the risk of heart diseases. Over the years, it has gained immense popularity as a weight-loss drink as well. IndiaToday.in spoke to a few health experts to understand if green tea actually helps lose belly fat. Read on to know what they said. "Green tea has

received a lot of positive media attention in recent times owing to its numerous health-promoting benefits including it being anti-inflammatory, anti-carcinogenic and containing an array of beneficial antioxidants," Nupur Saraf, Consultant Nutritionist, Nutrimend, said.

"However, when we speak of fat loss or whether green tea helps in reducing belly fat, there is no research that proves this. Fat loss cannot be attributed to consuming or eliminating any one particular item from one's diet and depends on the overall lifestyle and calorific balance maintained by one. The only way green tea could help in any kind of fat loss is if it is used as a substitute for regular tea, ie without milk and sugar which



When SRK Kissed a Young Janhvi Kapoor On Stage: 2003 Award Show Clip Goes Viral

A heartwarming moment from 2003 has resurfaced on social media, capturing a young Janhvi Kapoor sharing the stage with Bollywood legend Shah Rukh Khan.

The throwback video, taken from an old award function, features Janhvi, then just a little girl with pigtails, making a charming appearance alongside her father Boney Kapoor and actress Preity Zinta.

The clip shows the trio stepping onto the stage to present the Best Actor award. As Boney gently nudged Janhvi to greet the audience, she sweetly said “Good

evening,” drawing smiles from the crowd. Moments later, Shah Rukh Khan was announced the winner for his iconic portrayal of Devdas in Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s 2002 film.

As SRK walked up to accept the award, he gave young Janhvi a warm kiss on the cheek, creating a tender moment now being widely shared online. With Boney Kapoor holding her in his arms, and Preity Zinta joining the celebration, the group posed together, making for a picture-perfect memory of early 2000s Bollywood charm.

At the time, SRK reflected on stepping into the shoes of cinematic legend Dilip Kumar, who originally

played Devdas in the 1955 classic. Shah Rukh’s performance in Bhansali’s version remains one of his most celebrated roles to date.

Today, that little girl on stage is a rising Bollywood star. Janhvi Kapoor is now headlining films like Param Sundari with Sidharth Malhotra and Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari with Varun Dhawan. She’s also rumored to star in a major upcoming project directed by Atlee, featuring Allu Arjun.

Meanwhile, Shah Rukh Khan continues his legacy, gearing up for his next big release King, where he’ll appear alongside Suhana Khan and Deepika Padukone.



Sonakshi Sinha Marks 15 Years in Bollywood: “The Industry Can’t Break Me”

Sonakshi Sinha is celebrating a major milestone—15 years in the film industry—and she’s doing it on her own terms. Speaking about her latest project Nikita Roy, directed by her brother Kussu Sinha, she clarified that her decision to join the film wasn’t based on family ties. “The twists in the story pulled me in. My brother being the director was just a bonus,” she said, adding with a laugh, “I thought we’d argue on set, but it was strictly professional. I was the actor, he was the director.” Nikita Roy features a star-studded cast including Paresh Rawal, Arjun Rampal, and Suhail Nayyar. The film revolves around an author whose disbelief in the supernatural is put to the test. Initially slated for a June 27 release, it was postponed to avoid clashing with Kajol’s Maa. Sonakshi backed the move, calling it a smart business choice. “It’s the producer’s money at stake. When things get too crowded, it’s better to step back than get lost in the chaos.” Asked if

actresses get a say in such decisions, she noted, “It depends on the film. Personally, I don’t interfere. My job is to show up, perform, and leave the rest to the team.” Sonakshi’s film choices have evolved significantly over the years. From the commercial hits like Dabangg and R...Rajkumar to acclaimed performances in Dhaad and Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar, she’s been leaning into deeper, more complex roles. With second seasons of both web series on the horizon, she’s clear about her next steps: “I look for projects that challenge me and offer something new. After doing good work, you earn the right to say, ‘I deserve better.’” Reflecting on her journey, she shared, “I’ve grown up in front of the camera. It’s been a mix of highs and lows. But the beauty is, Bollywood doesn’t have the power to devastate me. My life isn’t defined by this industry. There’s so much more to who I am, and that’s what keeps me grounded.”

Sara Ali Khan Reflects on Metro... In Dino, Compares Role to Kedarnath: “I’m Really Proud of Myself”

Sara Ali Khan, who made a powerful debut with Kedarnath in 2018, has once again found herself at the center of praise for her latest performance in Anurag Basu’s Metro... In Dino. The actress recently opened up about the emotional depth of her role in the film, drawing comparisons to the honesty and rawness that defined her debut opposite the late Sushant Singh Rajput. In an interview with ETimes, Sara said, “I’m about to say something that I haven’t said in a long time, which is that I am really proud of myself. And the last time I probably felt this way was Kedarnath.” She explained that her performance in Metro... In Dino doesn’t rely on traditional Bollywood tropes like glamour, dance numbers, or exaggerated quirks. Instead, it’s grounded in authenticity and

restrained acting. “I don’t have the crutch of abs, glamour, or ‘Chaka Chak.’ I’m not using my bubbly personality or loud voice. No rhyming sessions or knock-knocks — just pure performance,” she added, emphasizing her growth as an actor and the evolution of her craft since entering the industry. Sara’s debut in Kedarnath remains iconic not only for its emotional resonance but also for her chemistry with Sushant Singh Rajput, whose heartfelt performance still lingers in the minds of fans. The same sincerity is now being recognized in her portrayal alongside Aditya Roy Kapur in Metro... In Dino. Looking ahead, Sara is set to star alongside Ayushmann Khurrana in a spy comedy, marking yet another exciting chapter in her versatile film career.

