



The South Asian

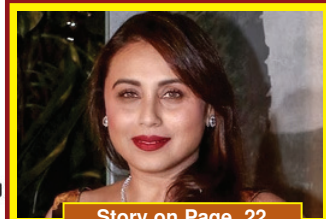


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Is Scared Of
'Gen Alpha'**



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US Senator Steve Daines Concludes India Visit, Calls Talks Productive



(Staff Reporter) : U.S. Senator Steve Daines wrapped up a three-day visit to India after a series of high-level meetings aimed at strengthening bilateral ties and advancing trade and strategic priorities between the two countries.

Daines, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was in India from January 17 to 19. During his visit, he met External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, members of parliament, and leaders from the U.S. and Indian business communities, according to the US Embassy in India. Reflecting on the visit, Daines said, "I came to India to reaffirm our two

countries' shared values and strategic partnership and to advocate on behalf of Montana's pulse crop farmers.

I appreciated Minister Goyal for listening to our farmers' concerns and will continue to work with President Trump to press this important priority."

The U.S. Mission India said discussions with senior Indian officials and lawmakers focused on expanding U.S.-India defense cooperation, securing supply chains, and reinforcing the strategic partnership to support shared security goals and a stable, open Indo-Pacific region. In a statement issued after the visit, the embassy said, "While in India, Sen.

Second Lady Usha Vance Announces Pregnancy, Baby Due In July

(News Agency) The family of U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance is set to grow as Second Lady Usha Vance announced that she is pregnant with the couple's fourth child, with the baby due in July. The news was shared in a post on the social media and quickly drew congratulations from political leaders and supporters across party lines.

"We're very happy to share some exciting news. Our family is growing!" SLOTUS wrote on X. She also shared a statement from her husband, Vice President J.D. Vance, confirming that the couple is expecting a baby boy. "We're very excited to share the news that Usha is pregnant with our fourth child, a boy," the statement said. "Usha and the baby are doing well, and we are looking forward to welcoming him in late July."

The Vice President also expressed appreciation for the medical professionals supporting the family. "During this exciting and hectic time, we

are particularly grateful for the military doctors who take excellent care of our family and for the staff members who do so much to ensure that we can serve the country while enjoying a wonderful life



with our children."

The announcement makes Usha Vance the first Second Lady in U.S. history to give birth while her husband is in office, though several First Ladies in the past have welcomed children during their spouses' presidencies. J.D. and Usha Vance currently have three children, two sons, Ewan and Vivek, and a daughter, Mirabel. The couple's fourth child will further expand their young family.

Indian-Origin Astronaut Sunita Williams Ends Historic NASA Career



(News Agency) Sunita Williams, one of the most respected and accomplished figures in human spaceflight, has retired from NASA, bringing to a close a remarkable 27-year career marked by record-setting missions, leadership in orbit, and lasting contributions to space exploration. Williams retired from the NASA effective December 27, 2025, the agency said in a statement.

Her retirement comes after completing an unexpected nine-month mission aboard the International Space Station, the longest of her career, following technical issues that extended what was originally planned as a short stay.

"Suni Williams has been a trailblazer in human spaceflight, shaping the future of exploration through her leadership aboard the space station and paving the way for commercial missions to low Earth orbit," said NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman

while announcing her retirement. "Her work advancing science and technology has laid the foundation for Artemis missions to the Moon and advancing toward Mars, and her extraordinary achievements will continue to inspire generations to dream big and push the boundaries of what's possible. Congratulations on your well-deserved retirement, and thank you for your service to NASA and our nation," Isaacman added. Born in Euclid, Ohio, Williams considers Needham, Massachusetts, her hometown. Her father, Deepak Pandya, was born in Jhulasan in Gujarat's Mehsana district and later moved to the U.S., where he married Bonnie Pandya, who is of Slovenian origin. Outside her professional life, Williams enjoys spending time with her husband, Michael, and their dogs, along with outdoor activities, home renovation projects, and working on cars and aircraft.

Toronto Hosts High-Level India-Canada Talks On Inclusive Artificial Intelligence

(News Agency) India and Canada took a step toward deeper cooperation in artificial intelligence as senior leaders from both countries gathered in Toronto for a high-level dialogue focused on responsible and inclusive AI development.

The "India-Canada AI Dialogue 2026" was hosted by the Consulate General of India in Toronto and organized in partnership with the University of Waterloo, the Canada India Tech Council, and Zoho. The event brought together more than 600 participants, including C-suite executives, policymakers, researchers, and technology leaders from across Canada.

According to the Indian Consulate, the dialogue was among a select group of pre-summit events held globally ahead of the India AI Impact Summit 2026, scheduled to take place in New Delhi from February 19 to 20. The Toronto meeting was aimed at building momentum and gathering diverse perspectives in advance of the Global South-focused summit. India's High Commissioner to Canada, Dinesh K. Patnaik, said the

dialogue highlighted the shared approach of both countries toward the future of artificial intelligence. "The India-Canada



AI Dialogue 2026 reflects our shared vision for shaping the future of artificial intelligence responsibly. As we build momentum toward the India AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi, this engagement highlights how trusted partners like Canada can collaborate with India to drive innovation that is inclusive, ethical, and globally relevant," he said.

Canada's Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, Evan Solomon, said AI is already reshaping societies and economies. "AI is no longer an abstract or future-facing conversation — it's shaping how we work, govern, and relate to one another.

Rakhi Israni Enters Race for California's 14th Congressional District

(News Agency) Indian American community leader Rakhi Israni officially launched her campaign for California's



voice that prioritizes solutions over partisan bickering," Israni stated. As a legal professional and educator, Israni brings a diverse perspective to the race. Her supporters point to her dual expertise in law and the education sector as a vital asset for drafting complex legislation and understanding the grassroots challenges faced by California students and families.

California's 14th Congressional District covers parts of the eastern Bay Area, parts of Alameda County, and the East Bay. It houses diverse suburban communities with a significant population of professionals, immigrants, and families.

The district has been a focal point in recent elections amid broader debates over the cost of living, education, and governance in California. Israni joins a growing number of Indian Americans seeking high-level political office in the United States, reflecting the community's increasing influence in national politics.

14th Congressional District on Tuesday. Stepping into a competitive race, Israni's platform focuses on tackling the soaring cost of living, bridging deep-seated political divisions, and delivering "reform-focused" leadership to the Bay Area. In her campaign announcement, Israni emphasized that her bid is a response to the growing frustrations of residents dealing with economic instability and a polarized political climate.

Her candidacy aims to prioritize the needs of middle-class families and small businesses, which she argues are being overlooked by current legislative priorities. "The 14th District deserves a

Israni, announced her campaign through a video on social media, highlighting her background as an educator, attorney, and mother of four, and framing her candidacy around what she described as a moment of responsibility in public life. "This moment calls on each of us to serve a purpose greater than ourselves and to stand firmly on the side of truth," Israni said in the video.

FedEx CEO Raj Subramaniam Pushes Back On Claims Of Favoring Foreign Workers

(News Agency) NEW YORK, NY — For the first time since allegations surfaced last December accusing FedEx of favoring Indian candidates over Americans, FedEx CEO Raj Subramaniam has publicly addressed the controversy, insisting that the company operates strictly on merit and within the law. Speaking to The New York Times, Subramaniam said he firmly believes in legal immigration and described his own rise as proof of what he called the American story. "I'm just grateful for the opportunities given to me," Subramaniam told the New York Times.



"It's very much an American story because I think it's going to be rare for these kinds of stories to happen in other countries. That's one of the true, great strengths of America," Subramaniam, 59, is only the second CEO in FedEx's history and has spent his entire professional career at the company. He joined FedEx in the early 1990s as a marketing analyst and

steadily rose through the ranks before becoming president and CEO in 2022. His journey to the United States began years earlier in India, where he grew up in a middle class household in Trivandrum.

The controversy around Subramaniam and FedEx erupted after a report by The Dallas Express claimed the company received a \$2.2 billion federal contract in 2022 and subsequently hired hundreds of foreign workers on H 1B visas. Critics directly blamed Subramaniam, noting that FedEx's use of the H 1B visa program increased after he took over as CEO. Records show H 1B approvals for FedEx rose from 37 in 2021 to 102 in 2025, even as the company carried out multiple rounds of layoffs. Subramaniam rejected the narrative that FedEx favors any nationality or uses immigration programs to displace American workers. "From a FedEx point of view, we are a meritocracy," he said.

Imagine Learning names Anjeneya Dubey as CTO

(News Agency) Arizona-based digital-first K-12 education company, Imagine Learning has appointed Anjeneya Dubey as its chief technology officer, effective immediately.

The company announced the appointment on Jan. 20, saying Dubey will lead its technology and engineering operations as it expands the use of artificial intelligence across its curriculum and assessment platforms, with a focus on what it describes as "Curriculum-Informed AI" — an approach aimed at linking curriculum, classroom data and instructional outcomes.

In a statement, Leslie Curtis, executive vice president and chief administrative officer of Imagine Learning, said Dubey's background in software-as-a-service products, data platforms and artificial intelligence was a factor in the appointment.

"As we build the next era of learning technology, we are investing in leadership that understands both the complexity of enterprise-scale systems and the nuance of classroom impact," Curtis said.

Dubey said he is joining the company at a time when the role of artificial intelligence in education is expanding. "I'm thrilled to join Imagine Learning at such a pivotal moment," Dubey said. "This role is a chance to shape how AI can responsibly

enhance instructional outcomes, deepen personalization, and support the educators who drive student success every day." Dubey joins Imagine Learning from Honeywell, where he most recently served as global head of platform engineering and earlier led cloud operations and site reliability engineering. Before joining Honeywell, Dubey spent nearly eight years at McGraw-Hill Education, where he held



senior engineering leadership roles overseeing site reliability, performance, capacity engineering and infrastructure for digital education platforms used in higher education and K-12.

Dubey has more than two decades of experience in software engineering, cloud platforms and artificial intelligence, and has led engineering organizations of more than 400 people across multiple regions.

Fareed Zakaria Says India Choosing Flexibility Over Firm U.S. Alignment

(News Agency) As global power balances shift, India is choosing flexibility over firm alignment, reflecting a wider move by major countries to reduce dependence on the United States, according to Fareed Zakaria. Speaking on CNN's Fareed Zakaria GPS, the veteran Indian-origin journalist said India's approach is not about siding with China's political system but about managing risk at a time when confidence in U.S. leadership is weakening. He argued that countries are adjusting to a more uncertain world by hedging rather than committing to one camp.

"The world is no longer building on an American platform," Zakaria said. "It is building around it." Zakaria pointed to global trade data to explain why this shift is taking place. China's exports to the U.S. have dropped sharply, he said, but its overall exports have continued to rise as Beijing redirects trade toward Asia, Europe, Latin America, and Africa. China's trade surplus climbed to nearly \$1.2 trillion in 2025, showing its ability to absorb tariffs by spreading trade across multiple markets. That resilience, he said, has made it harder

for Washington to economically isolate Beijing. For India, those numbers matter.

Zakaria said New Delhi has expanded trade with both the U.S. and China while resisting pressure to lock itself into any single bloc.

He described the strategy as calculated rather than hesitant, driven by a desire to preserve options as rivalry between the world's two largest economies deepens. Polling data supports that view, he said. Surveys by the European Council on Foreign Relations show declining support across emerging powers, including India, Brazil, and South Africa, for joining a U.S.-led bloc. Zakaria said that in India's case, the decline reflects doubts about American reliability, not approval of China. He argued that recent U.S. actions have unsettled partners.

The use of tariffs against allies and a more transactional approach to alliances have weakened trust and encouraged countries to seek greater autonomy. India, Zakaria said, remains cautious about China's regional ambitions, especially along their disputed border.

At 45, Nitin Nabin Is BJP's Youngest Ever President

(News Agency) NEW DELHI – Nitin Nabin, born on May 23, 1980, in Ranchi, Jharkhand, has emerged as one of the youngest and most dynamic leaders in Indian politics.

On January 20, he was elected as the national president of the Bharatiya Janata Party at the age of 45, succeeding Jagat Prakash Nadda.

His elevation reflects the party's emphasis on generational change, organisational discipline and grassroots connect. With thirty-seven nomination sets, including those from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and former Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, the transition was smooth. Nitin Nabin is the son of late Nabin Kishore Prasad Sinha, a four-time MLA



from Patna West and a senior BJP figure in Bihar. His mother was the late Meera Sinha.

He belongs to the Chitraguptavanshi Kayastha community. He completed his schooling at St Michael's High School in Patna, followed by

intermediate studies at CSKM Public School in New Delhi in 1998.

Nitin Nabin stepped into electoral politics early. In 2006, he won a by-election to the Bihar Legislative Assembly from Patna West after his father's demise.

Following delimitation, he shifted to Bankipur constituency and has represented it uninterrupted since 2010, securing victories in 2010, 2015, 2020 and 2025. This makes him a five-time MLA with consistently strong margins. In successive NDA governments in Bihar, he handled important cabinet portfolios, including Road Construction on multiple occasions, Urban Development and Housing, and Law and Justice.

His tenure saw focus on infrastructure projects, urban renewal and welfare measures for journalists, ASHA workers and other sections. Parallel to his legislative career, Nitin Nabin built a reputation for himself within the party. He served as the state president of Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha in Bihar and later as national general secretary. He was

entrusted with critical in-charge roles in Sikkim and Chhattisgarh, notably steering the party's campaign in the 2023 Chhattisgarh Assembly polls. In December 2025, he was appointed national working president, a position that positioned him directly for the top organisational post. He is known for his quiet determination, ideological clarity, administrative efficiency and unwavering loyalty to the party.

With Assembly elections approaching in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, and the 2029 Lok Sabha battle on the horizon, his presidency is expected to strengthen booth-level machinery, expand the party's footprint and align organizational efforts closely with the government's development agenda under Modi's leadership. (IANS)

Give wife status to women in modern web of live-in relationships: High Court



(News Agency) Women in live-in relationships should not be left without legal protection and may, in appropriate cases, be given the status of "wife", the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court said, drawing parallels with the Indian tradition of Gandharva marriage.

According to a report by news agency ANI, the observation was made by Justice S Srimathy while hearing a plea for anticipatory bail by a man from Tiruchirappalli district who feared arrest in a case involving a live-in partner.

Prosecutors alleged the man had multiple physical relations with the woman after promising marriage, but later backed out.

Calling live-in relationships a "cultural shock" to Indian society, the judge said they are nevertheless widely

prevalent. She noted that women enter live-in relationships assuming themselves to be modern, but later realise that the law does not automatically extend protections similar to those available in marriage.

The court said ancient Indian texts recognised eight forms of marriage, including Gandharva marriage, where a union was formed out of mutual love and consent, without rituals. Live-in relationships today, the judge said, could be viewed through a similar lens to ensure women are not rendered vulnerable.

Justice Srimathy stressed that courts have a duty to protect women caught in the "modern web" of live-in relationships, as they often lack the legal safeguards available to married women, reported Live

Law. She also flagged how men exploit this legal grey area.

Initially, they project themselves as modern, but when the relationship sours, they question the woman's

character, she remarked. Referring to Section 69 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the judge said sexual relations based on deceit, especially a false promise of

marriage, constitute a criminal offence. A man who makes such a promise and later refuses to marry cannot evade the law, she added.

Kerala woman detained over suicide of man she accused of sexual misconduct

(News Agency) Police in Kerala's Kozhikode, have detained a 35-year-old woman, Shimjitha Musthafa, in connection with the suicide of a 42-year-old local resident, Deepak U, after a video she posted online accusing him of sexual misconduct went viral and triggered intense public scrutiny. The detention follows widespread public outcry and a preliminary investigation into whether the online accusations and the subsequent cyber harassment contributed to Deepak's death.

Police have registered a case against Shimjitha on charges of abetment to suicide. On Tuesday, the police also registered a case against Shimjitha and issued a non-bailable warrant against her. The incident came to light when Shimjitha recorded and uploaded a video on social media alleging that Deepak had sexually harassed her during a crowded bus journey from Payyannur railway station to a nearby bus stand. In the video, she claimed that he had touched her inappropriately several times during the ride. The clip quickly spread across platforms, amassing more than two million views and drawing heavy online commentary.

Within days of the video going viral, Deepak was found hanging in his room at his residence in Govindhapuram, Kozhikode. According to police, his parents attempted to wake him on a Sunday morning but received no response. Neighbours and family

members later broke open the door and found him dead. Initially, the Kozhikode Medical College police registered a case of unnatural death.

However, following complaints from the victim's family and a review of the social media fallout, the investigation was escalated to examine the role of the viral video and the alleged online harassment in the events leading up to the suicide. Deepak's parents told news agency ANI that the accusations had destroyed their son's reputation.

"They further accused the woman of assassinating the victim's character for the sake of online publicity," the family said. They added that Deepak "stayed away from controversies throughout his life" and had denied the allegations of sexual harassment. Relatives alleged that soon after the video surfaced, Deepak became the target of massive online abuse, which caused severe mental stress. "According to his relatives, Deepak ended his life after the video went viral on social media," the family said. Following these allegations, police issued a lookout circular and took Shimjitha into custody for questioning. Investigators are also examining why the allegations were made public through social media instead of being formally lodged with the police. Meanwhile, the Kerala State Human Rights Commission has taken suo motu cognisance of the case.

Air India told to pay Rs 1.5 lakh over 'horrible' Delhi-New York flight experience

The complaint, filed by Shailendra Bhatnagar, alleged broken seats, non-functional in-flight entertainment systems, unhygienic washrooms, poor food service and lack of response from the cabin crew.

A father-daughter duo, who alleged that they faced horrible conditions on an Air India Delhi-New York flight in 2023 with broken seats, unhygienic washrooms and poor food service, have been awarded Rs 1.5 lakh compensation for "mental agony and harassment".

The airline had claimed that the complainants had levelled "unfounded allegations" to "illicitly obtain advantages" from Air India. The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (New Delhi), comprising President Poonam Chaudhry and Judicial Member Shekhar Chandra, was hearing a complaint filed by Shailendra Bhatnagar and his daughter against Air India, alleging that the aircraft on which they were asked to travel was 'horrible' and 'obnoxious'.

In an order dated January 14, the forum said, "Keeping in view



the facts and circumstances of the present case, this commission is of the view that the complainant will be entitled to compensation for causing mental agony and harassment for not providing the facilities for which a considerable

amount was charged by opposite party 1, Air India".

The complaint was filed by Shailendra Bhatnagar, who travelled with his daughter on Air India's Delhi-New York-Delhi flight in September 2023 on economy

class tickets booked through an online platform.

The complaint alleged broken seats, non-functional in-flight entertainment systems, unhygienic washrooms, poor food service and lack of response from

the cabin crew. The commission directed that the airline pay Rs 1.5 lakh in compensation to the victim.

"This commission, therefore, directs the opposite party 1 to pay Rs 50,000 each to the complainant and his daughter as compensation and Rs 50,000 as litigation expenses to the complainant," the forum said.

It was alleged that the in-flight washrooms were also dirty and terribly smelly.

He alleged that the food quality was extremely bad, and the staff was extremely rude and did not provide any solution to a single issue addressed by him. However, the airline submitted before the court that the said aircraft underwent meticulous examination prior to departure, and an inspection was also done by the engineering department, which showed no 'discernible issues'.

Supreme Court seeks long-term plans from Delhi, NCR states to curb air pollution

The Supreme Court has directed the Delhi government and NCR states to submit time-bound action plans to implement CAQM's long-term air pollution control measures, making it clear that no objections to the recommendations will be heard.



The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Delhi government and governments of states in the National Capital Region (NCR) to submit concrete, time-bound action plans to tackle air pollution, stressing that the long-term measures recommended by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) must be implemented without delay.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, along with Justices Joydip Bagchi

and Vipul M Pancholi, said that while some additional steps may be required beyond CAQM's proposals, there was "no doubt" that the commission's long-term recommendations must be given effect at the earliest.

"We therefore call upon the stakeholders to submit their respective action taken plans to give effect to these measures," the court said, making it clear that it would not entertain objections to CAQM's recommendations. The

bench reiterated that it was "not inclined to hear any objections" against the commission's measures and directed all concerned agencies, particularly the Delhi government and NCR authorities, to explain why the directions should not be implemented without any delay. It clarified that what was required from Delhi and other NCR agencies, including those in neighbouring states, was a clear action plan and a timeline for compliance.

During the hearing, the court directed the Delhi government to submit an action plan and timeline based strictly on CAQM's recommendations. It underlined that future hearings would focus on compliance reports rather than arguments on the merits of the measures. Appearing for the Centre, Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati told the court that,

as per an expert committee report, implementing agencies had already been identified and funds earmarked. She added that multiple studies had been consolidated into a meta-study, which has been uploaded on the official website and opened for public feedback.

The CJI emphasised that long-term planning must involve all stakeholders, including NCR governments as well as the ministries of coal and transport. The bench also stressed the need for phased removal of highly polluting vehicles and strengthening the pollution under control (PUC) certification regime.

The court flagged the need to revisit the electric vehicle policy, offer higher incentives for scrapping old vehicles, and explore stronger incentives to shift vehicle owners to cleaner new vehicles. Location-based

tracking of public transport and structural issues such as the lower cost of trucks passing through Delhi instead of using peripheral routes were also discussed. On the issue of the Environment Compensation Charge (ECC) fund, the bench said CAQM may submit a separate proposal for a suitable revision. It directed the Delhi government to place on record a plan for utilisation of ECC funds for implementing CAQM's long-term measures as well as interim recommendations.

Bhati urged the court to consider long-term and short-term measures separately and sought permission to file a detailed status report.

The matter will be taken up next for further consideration, with the court indicating that implementation of CAQM's roadmap would be central to the proceedings.

Republic Day 2026: History, Significance And Kartavya Path Celebrations



India's Constitution.

While India attained Independence on August 15, 1947, the Constitution came into effect on January 26, 1950, replacing the Government of India Act (1935). This date was chosen to honour the Purna Swaraj declaration of 1930, symbolising complete self-rule and democratic aspirations.

Republic Day Parade at Kartavya Path

The Republic Day Parade, held along Kartavya Path (formerly Rajpath) in New Delhi, remains the centrepiece of the celebrations. Stretching from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate, the ceremonial boulevard hosts:

Marching contingents of the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force
Colourful tableaux from states and Union Territories
Cultural performances highlighting India's diversity
Displays of technological and defence

capabilities
Parade Theme The theme for Republic Day 2026 will commemorate 150 years of 'Vande Mataram', India's national song. The theme celebrates the song's historical role in the freedom movement and its enduring emotional significance.

Key Highlights of Republic Day 2026 Celebrations

A blend of military strength and cultural heritage
Special focus on the Indian Army's animal contingent, including camels, dogs and indigenous breeds
Enhanced crowd management and security arrangements by Delhi Police and paramilitary forces
Use of modern surveillance and monitoring systems to ensure public safety
Matters Republic Day is not just a ceremonial event – it represents constitutional values, unity, equality and democratic.

(News Agency) Republic Day 2026 Celebrations: India will celebrate its 77th Republic Day on January 26, 2026, marking the day the Indian Constitution came into force in 1950. This historic moment transformed India into a sovereign, democratic republic, completing its transition from colonial rule to self-governance.

Republic Day is a national holiday, celebrated with flag-hoisting ceremonies, patriotic programmes, cultural events and community gatherings across the country.

History and Importance of Republic Day

The roots of Republic Day lie in the Indian Independence Act of July 18, 1947, which ended British rule and empowered the Constituent Assembly to draft



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'Mother, I Bow to Thee': The Many Lives of Vande Mataram

India's national song Vande Mataram celebrates its 150th anniversary this year. It was on November 7, 1875, that Bankim Chandra Chatterjee wrote the iconic song. As Sri Aurobindo rightly observed, viewing the country as a personified divinity, undoubtedly inspired the masses and strengthened their struggle for freedom. Seventy-five years after that struggle came to fruition, the image evoked by those lines remains a glorious one, and any Indian would be awestruck by its greatness of that image.

Here is the first stanza of the song, as translated by Sri Aurobindo.

Mother, I bow to thee!
Rich with thy hurrying streams,
Bright with thy orchard gleams,
Cool with thy winds of delight,
Dark fields waving, Mother of might,
Mother free.
Glory of moonlight dreams
Over thy branches and lordly streams, —
Clad in thy blossoming trees,
Mother, giver of ease,
Laughing low and sweet!
Mother, I kiss thy feet,
Speaker sweet and low!
Mother, to thee I bow.

As many might know, Vande Mataram is not the only patriotic song that gained popularity during the freedom movement. There are various poems and songs in many Indian languages that eulogize India. "Parukkulle Nalla Naatu," sang Subramania Bharati in Tamil — Our India is the best country in the world. "Bharatamenna per kettal abhimana poorithamakanam antharangam," wrote Vallathol Narayana Menon in Malayalam — Your heart should be filled with pride when you hear the very name of this country. "Sare Jahan Se Acha, Hindostan Hamara," sang Allama Muhammad Iqbal in Urdu — Our Hindustan is better than the entire world.

Yet none of these songs captured the attention and imagination of the entire nation like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Vande Mataram. From Lahore to Tuticorin, from Calcutta to Bombay, the song was sung, chanted, and invoked as a powerful slogan — it

became a mantra on the lips of Indians at a time when the song is at once a divine hymn and a powerful force that has echoed through time, leaving an



indelible mark on the very identity of India. The idea of Bharat Mata owes much to this song. Sri Aurobindo observed that Bankim Chandra's greatest service to the nation was in giving Indians a vision of their Mother. An intellectual idea of the motherland, he explained, cannot by itself be a great driving force of a movement. It is only when the country takes shape as a divine and maternal power in a form of beauty that can inspire and dominate the mind that patriotism works miracles and saves a nation from doom.

The idea of Mother India — Bharat Mata — is precisely what sets Vande Mataram apart from other patriotic songs. Even before Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, there were instances where the idea of Bharat Mata was invoked. Dwijendralal Roy praised Janani Bharatabarsha (Mother Bharatavarsha) in one of his songs. Kiran Chandra Banerjee wrote a play titled Bharat Mata. These works, however, were largely confined to Bengal. It was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Bharat Mata — evoked through powerful imagery in the song set to a stirring melody — that took the country by storm and soon became known across India.

In 1896, Rabindranath Tagore set the lines to music and sang them publicly at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress. In 1905 Sri Aurobindo teamed up with Bipin Chandra Pal to publish a magazine titled "Bande Mataram". The Alipore Bomb Case and the subsequent repression of the magazine only made the mantra, Vande

Mataram, more popular. In fact, Aurobindo himself described Vande Mataram as a mantra. He says it is a mantra that converted an entire people to the religion

of patriotism. He further explored and interpreted Vande Mataram as envisioning the nation as possessing sthula, sukshma, and karana shariras — concepts drawn from Yogic philosophy. It was perhaps the first time such a philosophical framework was applied to the idea of a nation.

Ironically, Rabindranath Tagore, who had set the lines to music, later rejected the very idea of nationalism associated with the imagery depicted in it. In a 1908 letter to Aurobindo Mohan Bose, a writer and journalist, Tagore wrote: "If we downgrade the Almighty and make patriotism our highest ideal, our patriotism will become the blindest of superstitions. [...] We must firmly remember that our country is not a god and therefore we cannot substitute it for God." This, however, was in the context of the Swadeshi movement. Even so, it is significant that Tagore did not identify with the kind of nationalism envisioned in the poem.

In 1937, the Indian National Congress adopted Vande Mataram as the national song. This was the version edited by a committee headed by Jawaharlal Nehru. Notably, Rabindranath Tagore, who had expressed reservations about a form of nationalism that accorded divine status to the country, was among those who recommended its adoption. Later, in 1950, the Constituent Assembly decided to honour Vande Mataram equally with Jana Gana Mana, granting it an equal status.

The song, soon after it caught the public's attention, became the subject of heated debate, largely because of the imagery it

contains. This pattern of controversy, criticism, and acclaim has always been a part of the song. Many Muslims expressed discomfort with singing it, arguing that its portrayal of the motherland as a goddess conflicted with their religious beliefs, an interpretation that stemmed more from theological sensitivity than from the song's intent. Mahatma Gandhi remarked that the song "should never be a chant to insult or offend Muslims."

He also compared Vande Mataram to the cry Allahu Akbar, which, he noted, had acquired a troubling association in India, as "it often terrified the Hindus because sometimes the Muslims came out of the mosques in anger with that cry on their lips to belabour the Hindus." A commitment to the vision of the country as portrayed in the song was turned into a litmus test of patriotism for non-Hindu nationalists, and this became one of the reasons that prompted a review of the song, says Tanika Sarkar, who argues that it carries darker undertones that are rarely discussed.

The debate is still very much alive, even after all these decades. In 1998, the issue resurfaced in Uttar Pradesh when Muslim parents began withdrawing their children from schools following advice from the Muslim Law Board. The reason was a government directive requiring students across the state to recite Vande Mataram daily. The controversy subsided after the government withdrew the directive and dismissed a deputy minister.

In 2006, when the centenary of Vande Mataram was celebrated (it was in 1906 that Sri Aurobindo and Bipin Chandra Pal launched their magazine Bande Mataram), the government again issued a directive to recite the song in schools.

This, too, drew objections from some groups. Professor Nanavati, a Sanskrit scholar and academician from Baroda, went so far as to claim that there is no historical evidence to support the assertion that Vande Mataram was ever officially declared the national song.

Though not directly about the song, a recent controversy in

Kerala touched upon related sentiments. This was about the image of Bharat Mata. A few months ago, a large image of Bharat Mata was displayed at a program organized on World Environment Day in the Senate Hall of Raj Bhavan. This Bharat Mata was not the one painted by Abanindranath Tagore; instead, it was the more popular version in which the mother goddess holds a double-pennon saffron flag. The Minister for Agriculture, Mr. P. Prasad, boycotted the event, stating that the image came from the RSS repertoire and that he could not accept it. The leftist climate prevailing in the state, already carrying earlier objections to the ideas of Bharat Mata and Vande Mataram in its latent memory, readily supported the minister's boycott and praised him for his stance.

The song and the imageries of it have become etched in the soul of this nation like no other. Of course, there is religiosity associated with it. Of course, the idea of a personified goddess is a religious one. But this is a goddess you will not find in any religion's pantheon, least of all in Hinduism. There are no temples or rituals dedicated to her. The religiosity here, therefore, is not religious in the conventional sense. It is more a form of religiosity that is invoked to inspire a sense of nationalistic fervour among those who sing or hear the song. That nationalistic fervour was entirely justifiable at the time it was written. Even Tagore, who held largely different views on nationalism, accepted the song and acknowledged its significance.

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, in his monograph on the song, writes that "the political appropriation of Vande Mataram transformed its meaning time and again."

Over the years, many meanings have been inscribed upon the song by different generations and individuals. Yet, none of these meanings have ever been universally accepted. Perhaps, on the 150th anniversary of the song, a new meaning will emerge—one that comforts and unites everyone. After all, the imagery in the song is that of a mother, and that is what mothers do.

India And Bangladesh: Are We Missing The Woods For The Trees?

Are national memories short, or selective, or both? What explains India and Bangladesh's recent political behaviour? Non-business visa services on both sides remain suspended. Bangladeshi cricketer Mustafizur Rahman signing up for the Pakistan Super League after being removed from the ICC following the Indian cricket board's directives would point to that.

That this came soon after the Indian Foreign Minister's Dhaka visit to attend former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's funeral appears even more unpropitious. Bangladesh reacted predictably, with a request for shifting the IPL T20 series away from India, voicing a security threat for their players. India and Bangladesh seem to have forgotten the 1971 Liberation War they fought together. Bangladesh, for one, seem to definitely have moved on from the memories of rampage, genocide and the political injustice they faced at the hands of Pakistani leaders, which forced East Pakistan to seek an independent state away from Pakistan.

The Growing Ties With Pak India and Bangladesh have been on a sticky wicket ever since Sheikh Hasina, India's trusted Bangladeshi leader, had to step down in face of popular protests in August 2024. Since then, Pakistan has made significant inroads into the country. In the recent past, they offered the use of Karachi port when India banned import of a number of jute products and textile products through its land routes. Talks of buying Pakistani fighter jets are being heard. Dhaka and Karachi will soon have direct flights.

Sheikh Hasina often referred to restoring the pre-1965 connectivity ties between India and Bangladesh; now, Islamabad is attempting to restore the erstwhile Bangladesh and Pakistani ties. The violence against minorities in Bangladesh is the latest trigger for India. The death of Bangladeshi youth leader Osman Sharif Hadi saw angry mobs attacking secular institutions, torching media houses and brutally attacking Hindus. His killing was an opportune moment for a particular section to push their agenda effectively.

The initial inaction of the interim Mohammed Yunus government during this latest round of violence also added to the escalation. Violence against Hindus is not new in Bangladesh. Can a political message from India deter such disruptive behaviour or ensure minorities' safety? In October 2001, Bangladesh saw the worst attack in a single day on the largest number of Hindus in a post-electoral win for the BNP. India immediately sent an emissary, and while the two countries did not enjoy strong

political ties during those five years, the scale of violence against minorities certainly ebbed through quiet diplomacy. There exists a general understanding that post-2009, given the close association of minorities with the Awami League (AL) party, their lives seemed safer. Particularly, Hasina ensured that minorities were present within the police forces, and this mitigated fears for Hindus, especially in rural areas. Even so, according to one study, over 600 Hindus have been leaving Bangladesh annually for over the last several decades, including during Hasina's rule.

India's Political Message

Given the present impasse that exists between the neighbours, can the hardening on both sides ensure the safety of minorities? Expecting the interim government - which seems to be in an exit mode now that the Jatiya Sangsad elections are only a few weeks away - to take strong security measures is a futile exercise. Declaring Bangladesh a non-family posting in anticipation of violence is a sharp political message. India securitising Bangladesh means feeding the hardliners on both sides. The section that desires to postpone elections and change the political landscape of the country to revoke plurality and democratic norms is finding a greater space in this sharp, distanced bilateral environment.

The election campaign for Bangladesh started yesterday, as notified by the Election Commission. While the BNP had suggested that they were in favour of AL joining the elections, under the students' pressure, the interim government preferred to ban AL's political activities. India has been calling for inclusive elections (read elections that include AL) for long. In Sheikh Hasina's years, too, allegations of one-sided elections surfaced every now and then. But India distanced itself from these, terming them Bangladesh's 'internal matter'. There is also the question of the return last month of Tariq Rahman, Khaleda's successor who will subsequently assume the BNP chairmanship. That is expected to give a boost to the BNP's electoral fate, though given his prolonged absence, his grip over Bangladeshi political intrigues remains moot. Interestingly also, as per a few recent polls, the Jamaat-e-Islami seems to be gaining popularity. Their student wing swept the elections to the critical university student unions. The newest political party, the National Citizen Party, which arose from the July movement, has decided to forge an electoral alliance with the Jamaat.

Trump Isn't the Chaos: He's the Sonic Boom Responding to It

For years, the political establishment and global commentators have used a singular word to describe the presidency of Donald Trump: chaos. They point to the aggressive tariffs, the blunt demands for NATO reform, the uncompromising stance on border security, and the upheaval of traditional trade agreements as evidence of a "wood-chipper" approach to international order.

But this perspective misses the forest for the trees. To understand the current era, one must realize that Donald Trump is not the source of the chaos. He is a response to it.

The Era of Silent Chaos

Long before the current administration took office, the world was already mired in a silent chaos. This was a world where international norms were being quietly dismantled by bad actors, where China's rapid and often predatory economic rise went unchecked, and where the United States was increasingly at the receiving end of lopsided deals. The "order" that critics are so desperate to protect was, in reality, a managed decline of American influence. Trade: Decades of hollowed-out manufacturing were masked by the convenience of cheap imports. Security: NATO allies grew comfortable under the American security umbrella while failing to meet their own defense commitments.

Borders: A global migration crisis was treated with bureaucratic indifference while local communities felt the strain.

This was not stability; it was a slow-motion erosion of sovereignty. The "chaos" was already there—it was just quiet.

The Sonic Boom of Action

Trump chose to act, and he chose to act fast. In the world of diplomacy, speed and bluntness are often mistaken for recklessness. However, when a system is stuck in a terminal loop of ineffective dialogue, a sonic boom is required to break the cycle. Whether it is the recent

threat of 100% tariffs on NATO allies to protect Arctic interests or the uncompromising "Remain in Mexico" style policies that forced regional cooperation on immigration, these moves are designed to achieve one thing: leverage.

By demanding control over Greenland or threatening trade penalties on European nations that resist American security priorities, Trump is signaling that the era of "business as usual" is over. It is a jarring, loud, and disruptive process, but it is a necessary corrective to a world that had forgotten that the United States has its own interests to protect.

The New Realism

Critics argue that these moves undermine the post-war global order.² But an order that doesn't account for the rise of a hegemonic China or the shifting realities of 21st-century technology is an order in name only.

Trump's foreign policy is a form of hyper-realism. It acknowledges that: Multilateralism is failing if it only benefits one side.

Tariffs are not just economic tools; they are national security instruments. Sovereignty is the foundation of any stable international system. Conclusion: Clearing the Fog The sudden shifts we are seeing—the trade wars, the diplomatic standoffs, the rapid-fire executive orders—feel like chaos because they are dismantling the status quo.

But the status quo was a house on fire that everyone was pretending was fine. Donald Trump didn't bring the fire; he brought the sirens and the axes. The "sonic boom" of his presidency is the sound of the world finally waking up to the reality that the old rules no longer apply. For the United States, and for a world that requires a strong and focused America, this isn't the beginning of chaos—it's the beginning of the end of it.

By Sharanjit Thind

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Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2025: Reforming The ELECTRICITY SECTOR—But For Whom?

Jag Mohan Thaken

To go ahead for reforming the Electricity Sector, the central government, in a press release through PIB on November 22, 2025, claims that the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2025, is a major step toward transforming India's power system to meet the needs of a rapidly growing economy. It aims to create a future-ready electricity sector that delivers reliable, affordable, and high-quality power to every consumer: farmers and households, to shops and industries. The Bill moves away from the old monopoly supply model and encourages a performance-driven approach, where both public and private utilities compete fairly to improve consumer service. It promotes better use of the existing electricity network with transparency and accountability so that citizens get more value for every rupee spent.

The government stresses on its Key Takeaways:

The Bill aims at making the Indian industry and logistics more competitive by rationalising electricity cost and reducing hidden cross-subsidy, promotes cost-reflective tariffs to ensure financial viability of the sector, while fully protecting subsidised tariffs for farmers and low-income households. Strengthens regulatory accountability to prevent financial distress in the sector and create a stable, investment-friendly environment.

It enables shared network use to avoid wasteful duplication, lower system costs, and support rapid expansion of distribution infrastructure and focuses on improving supply quality and reliability, and ensuring better coordination between the Centre and States in policy implementation.

The Government claims that the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2025, is a major step toward transforming India's power system to meet the needs of a rapidly growing economy. It aims to create a future-ready electricity sector that delivers reliable, affordable, and high-quality power to every consumer: farmers and households, to shops and industries. The Bill moves away from the old monopoly supply model and encourages a performance-driven approach, where both public and private utilities compete fairly to improve consumer service. It promotes better use of the existing electricity network with transparency and accountability so that citizens get more value for every rupee spent.

Importantly, the reforms fully protect subsidised tariffs for farmers and low-income households. By providing a platform for the Centre and States to work together, it gives a big role to the states in shaping policies. More than just an update, this Bill is a blueprint for a modern, efficient, and resilient power sector. It aligns with India's developmental aspirations, from farmers to industries. The bill supports the country's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047,

supporting India's long-term economic growth.

The press release mentions this bill a step to 'Correcting the Current: The Push Behind the Amendment,' and reveals that the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2025, was brought forward to resolve deep-rooted inefficiencies, ease financial strain on the power sector, promote competition, and optimise network cost across India's power distribution sector to overcome the persistent financial losses in distribution companies (discoms) due to poor billing efficiency, high aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses.

Lack of competition in electricity supply, with consumers tied to a single discom, limiting service quality and innovation. Cross-subsidisation distortions, where industrial users pay inflated tariffs to subsidise other categories, making Indian manufacturing less competitive.

The Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2025, aims to transform the existing market structure by rationalising cross-subsidy, promoting cost-reflective tariffs, and enabling direct procurement of power by industrial users. It seeks to dismantle longstanding barriers to India's manufacturing competitiveness, making industrial power more affordable, reliable, and responsive to market demands, and at the same time protecting the subsidised tariff for farmers and other eligible consumers.

The Bill empowers State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs) to determine cost-reflective wheeling charges to ensure adequate network development by all the distribution licensees in accordance with the framework established by the SERCs. These regulated charges will be uniformly applicable to all users of the distribution network, whether public or private. This mechanism ensures that utilities have sufficient financial resources for staff salaries, routine maintenance, and future network development.

The central government terms this bill as 'The ISTS Model: Efficient, Fair, Reliable' and states that India already operates a successful Inter-State Transmission System (ISTS) built on shared infrastructure. Both public and private Transmission Service Providers (TSPs), including PowerGrid (a CPSU), compete to develop ISTS assets under the oversight of the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC). Monthly payments made by users are fairly redistributed among the TSPs. This model has helped reduce costs and construction time for ISTS projects while maintaining high reliability.

The government claims it a pace to

'Powering Reform: Core Pillars of the Bill', and asserts that the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2025, sets the stage for a more efficient, environmentally and financially sustainable, transparent, and consumer-focused power sector. It blends structural reforms with regulatory clarity to modernise electricity distribution across India. By aligning policy with evolving needs, the Bill aims to deliver quality service, financial discipline, and sustainable growth.

The Bill promotes fair competition between government and private distribution companies in electricity supply, overseen by State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs). This approach is expected to enhance service quality, boost operational efficiency, and offer electricity supply to the industrial sector at a reasonable cost. By shifting from a monopoly-based supply to performance-driven delivery, it fosters a more accountable and consumer-oriented power sector, while protecting the interests of the farmers and other consumers.

What Structural Reforms the Bill will come up with? The government pleads that it will facilitate regulated competition in electricity distribution, allowing multiple licensees to operate in the same area using shared and optimized infrastructure. It mandates Universal Service Obligation (USO) for all licensees, ensuring non-discriminatory access and supply to all consumers, while enabling SERCs to make Distribution licensees free from USO, in consultation with State Governments, for large consumers eligible for Open Access (more than 1 MW).

The Bill will be a step ahead towards 'Tariff and Cross-Subsidy Rationalisation', the government observes. It will promote cost-reflective tariffs while protecting subsidised consumers (e.g., farmers, poor households) through transparent budgeted subsidies under Section 65 and seek elimination of cross-subsidy for the Manufacturing Industry, Railways, and Metro railways within five years. It will bring reforms in -- Infrastructure and Network Efficiency, Governance and Regulatory Strengthening, Sustainability and Market Development, and Legal and Operational Clarity.

Why Power Engineers are against this Bill?

But on the other hand, Power Engineers are protesting against the Bill. Why they are terming National Electricity Policy is Anti-Consumer, Anti-Farmer and Anti-Employee? Why they claim that this amounts to privatisation of profits and socialisation of losses? The All India Power Engineers Federation (AIPEF) has strongly opposed this policy and

pleads through a press release dated 22 January, 2026, that the policy allows private companies to use power distribution networks built with public funds by State DISCOMs, while the responsibility of maintenance, losses and system stability remains with public utilities. This amounts to privatisation of profits and socialisation of losses. Exempting private companies from Universal Supply Obligation will enable them to supply power only in profitable urban and industrial areas, abandoning rural, agricultural and poor consumers which by default will become responsibility of Govt Discoms.

The Power Engineers Federation (AIPEF) states that the National Electricity Policy 2026, issued by the Central Government on 20 January, promotes rapid privatisation of the power sector and is against the interests of consumers, farmers and power sector employees. Shailendra Dubey Chairman of AIPEF has urged that ongoing Chintan Shivir of Power Ministers should also discuss the damage to be caused by Farmers, poor consumers & employees due to Privatization, EA Bill and NEP.

The AIPEF claims that sharp increase in electricity tariffs, Weakening of subsidised power supply to farmers, Higher cost of irrigation and adverse impact on agriculture

Increased burden on poor and middle-class consumers due to expensive and unreliable power. It will also have an adverse Impact on Power Employees and their Job security will be threatened. Due to this there will be rise in contractualization and retrenchment, dilution of service conditions, ignoring experienced engineers and employees and will weaken the power system.

Showing its concern AIPEF demands that the Government of India should immediately withdraw the National Electricity Policy 2026, Retain electricity as a public service, not a profit-driven commodity and frame any policy only after meaningful consultation with States, consumers, farmers and employees. The Power Engineers Federation warned that if the policy is imposed, power engineers and employees across the country will be compelled to launch a nationwide agitation.

Why do the farmers' unions term this Bill as a threat to farmers and vulnerable consumers?

All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) states that free /subsidised power for farmers, Dalits, Tribals, aquaculture and more will become uncertain. This Bill is structurally next to push corporate profits over farmers' interests. Therefore, the Farmers unions are demanding its withdrawal, and are planning to protest across the country to force the GOI to repeal this draconian Bill.



JAG MOHAN THAKEN

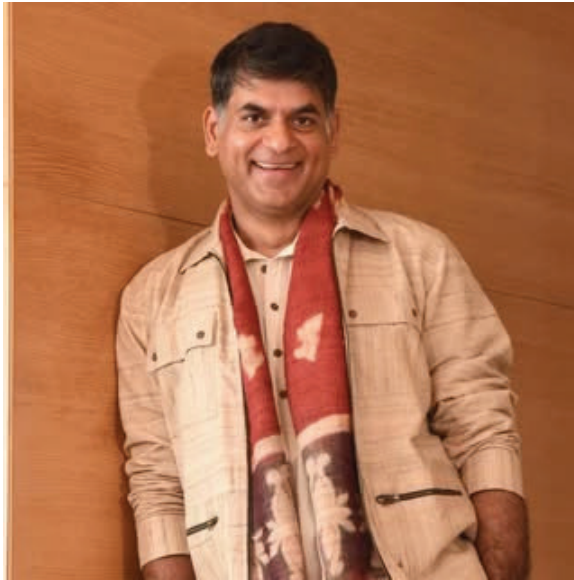
The sacking of Saurabh Dwivedi

The recent resignation of Saurabh Dwivedi, the editor of the well known Hindi digital news platform The Lallantop, is being widely discussed in India, and has created a great stir in Indian media circles. Digital media consulting

There are many speculations about why he resigned from The Lallantop after having conceived of the idea of a Hindi digital platform, and almost single handedly built it up for 12 years, and made it very popular.

My own opinion about the matter is this : Saurabh Dwivedi became so famous because of his shows that many people thought him to be the owner of The Lallantop, and he himself started thinking that he was indispensable, and could do whatever he liked. The truth, however, was that he was only an employee (though a highly paid one), the employer being The India Today Group, run by Aron Puri.

There was a time in India when editors could function in-



dependently, without interference by the owner. But all that changed in 1998 when Ashok Jain, the owner of the Times of India newspaper, having the highest circulation in India among English newspapers, sacked the editor HK Dua.

Ashok Jain (1934-1999) was the Chairman of the parent com-

pany of The Times of India, Bennett, Coleman & Co. (BCC) and H.K. Dua was the Editor of The Times of India when he was dismissed. Media history books

After Ashok Jain's 1998 arrest on a charge of Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) violations, H.K. Dua claimed his dismissal was a result of his re-

fusal to use his editorial position to garner support for Jain from politicians and the public. It appears that when Ashok Jain asked HK Dua to accompany him to the FERA court, the latter refused, saying this was a personal matter of Jain, and was no part of his job as the editor. The next day he was unceremoniously dismissed.

This incident sent a strong message to the entire Indian media that editors were only employees, and must do whatever the owner said. From that date editors lost their independence, and began kowtowing to the owners.

It seems that Saurabh Dwivedi forgot this. He had become so big and well known that he probably started imagining that he could do whatever he liked in his shows, irrespective of the owner's wish.

Now owners are businessmen, and would like to be in the good books of the government, as they seek several favours from the government, and would not like to displease it as that

may entail adverse consequences (in the form of income tax and ED raids etc).

Some recent shows in The Lallantop seem to have upset the owner of the India Today Group, as they had apparently annoyed the BJP government, e.g. the show 'Does God exist' featuring the Urdu poet Javed Akhtar and a Muslim cleric. The last straw was the show in The Lallantop about the death in Indore of some children who drank toxic water. In his show Saurabh Dwivedi put the blame for this tragedy on the Madhya Pradesh government, which is run by the BJP. Digital media consulting

Saurabh Dwivedi's sacking from The Lallantop will reiterate today the message sent in 1998 to editors in India after HK Dua's sacking : do whatever you are told by the owner, don't think you are independent, and don't get too big for your boots, unless you wish to lose your job, which may possibly drive your family to penury or starvation.

By Justice Markandey Katju-

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Why India Must Applaud - And Learn From - Carney's Davos Speech

In the frost-bitten landscape of Davos this week, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney delivered a speech that was less diplomatic routine and more clarion call. In essence, he outlined a manual for survival that resonated around the world.

Addressing the World Economic Forum, Carney - a man who transitioned from the central banking boardrooms of London and Ottawa to the helm of a G7 nation - spoke of a rupture in the global system rather than a mere transition. He announced the death of the rules-based international order, warning that the grim reality where, in Thucydides' classic formulation, "the strong do what they can while the weak suffer what they must", is no longer a historical footnote, but our current lived experience. He was greeted with a standing ovation. Many leaders wished they had had the courage, or the nerve, to deliver a version of the same speech themselves.

For an Indian audience, Carney's analysis should ring with a familiar, if unsettling, clarity. As we navigate 2026, the global architecture we once relied upon for trade and security, and served to define our place in the world, is being systematically dismantled by President Trump's great-power transactionalism. We need to be as honest with ourselves about the situation as Carney was in his speech.

A Prescription For India, Too
Carney's prescription for Canada - building strength at home, diversifying abroad, and forming issue-by-issue coalitions - offers a compelling mirror for India's own journey. Indeed, these are the very elements I have been stressing in my columns and speeches over the past year. However, for a subcontinental giant like India, the path forward requires a delicate balance between Carney's approach and our own aspirations: endorsing the middle-power solidarity Carney suggests while carving out a unique trajectory rooted in our own strategic autonomy. Carney's most potent observation was that nostalgia is not a strategy, urging nations to stop waiting for a return to the 1990s and to accept that economic integration is now

being misused as a weapon. Whether through aggressive tariffs or the weaponisation of financial chokepoints, the era of trade as mutual benefit is being replaced by an ethos of coercion.

India has long sensed this shift. From our refusal to join the RCEP to our Atmanirbhar Bharat

instance, Canada's massive investment in minerals and energy is a direct opportunity for India's electric vehicle and green-tech ambitions. By joining "buyers' clubs" with the G7 and Canada, India can secure supply chains that are currently choked by a single-source

- who represent the Silenced Majority of the human race. While Carney focuses on values-based trade with the West, India's destiny is inextricably linked to the Global South. Our influence in Africa and Southeast Asia is not just about trade; it is about providing

building strength at home through tax reform and inter-provincial trade, but India's task is more Herculean. Our fortress must be built on the rapid formalisation of our economy, the massive skilling of our youth, and the creation of a technological infrastructure and a manufacturing base that can serve as a global alternative to China. Our strategic autonomy is only as strong as our GDP growth.

What 'Power' Now Means

The world Carney describes is one of variable geometry - a messy, fragmented, but highly active international system. We are moving toward a multinodal world where influence is acquired less by achieving a seat at the UN Security Council (whose relevance is increasingly questioned), and more by the leverage that comes from the relevance of one's domestic market and the attractiveness and reliability of one's exports. To cope, India must be both principled and pragmatic. Multi-alignment and strategic autonomy are not just slogans: they must be instruments of obtaining and deploying the leverage we are still developing and have not yet fully acquired.

India should applaud Carney for calling out the hypocrisy of the old order and join him in building new, resilient trade corridors. But we must also remember that in the "world of fortresses" that the Canadian decried, India is a continent-sized entity. Our best defence is not just a seat at the table, but the realisation that we can construct our own table at which others will wish to be served.

Carney said he wanted to move from reliance on "the strength of our values" to "the value of our strength". In that area, India has so much more strength to invest in, from its imminent ascent to being the world's third-largest economy, to its increasingly-acknowledged status as a first-tier AI power, to the value of its pluralism and diversity and the allure of its soft power.

From the Himalayas to the Indian Ocean, it is our job to ensure that while the old rules may be fading, the new ones will not be written without us

Shashi Tharoo



mission, New Delhi has proactively moved toward "de-risking" long before the term became a Brussels buzzword. We must endorse the Canadian call for clarity; we cannot live within the lie that global institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO) or the UN Security Council will protect our interests in their current paralysed states. Resilience today is not about isolation, but about a sovereignty anchored in the ability to withstand external pressure.

The Great 'Middle'

This leads directly to the power of the "middle". One of the most actionable parts of the Carney Doctrine is the call for middle powers to band together, arguing that while hegemony can go it alone, everyone else is on the menu if they aren't at the table (a phrase I have used myself for two decades, but which has never seemed as apposite as now).

India finds itself in a unique position here. While we often view ourselves as a leading power rather than a middle power, the tactical benefits of Carney's approach are immense. There is a natural common cause to be made with nations like Canada, the UK, Japan, ASEAN and the EU (and maybe even Russia). For

monopoly. Similarly, in the realms of AI and quantum computing, India and Japan can lead the way in creating open-source democratic standards, instead of being trapped under a digital iron curtain that seems to be falling between the US and China. Much like Canada's decision to join European defence procurement initiatives, India can deepen its Indo-European security ties with Germany and France, without giving up its first-mover advantage with Russia, to hedge against a potentially inward-looking United States. By collaborating with these powers, India avoids the vassalage of the re-emerging bipolar world. As a "multi-aligned" power, we aren't choosing a side, we are building a network.

A Table Of Our Own

However, where Carney speaks for a nation of 40 million, New Delhi stands up for 1.4 billion. Our scale dictates that we cannot simply be a member of a middle-power bloc; we must be an anchor. There are significant areas where India must deviate from the Carney blueprint and follow its own path of strategic autonomy, most notably regarding our leadership of the Global South

an alternative model of development that is neither Western-prescriptive nor Chinese-coercive. India must remain the bridge between the Davos elite and the developing world.

Furthermore, we must navigate the Russia-China paradox with a level of pragmatism that middle powers in the West do not require. For Canada, Russia is a clear-cut adversary. For India, the relationship is nuanced by decades of defence history, diplomatic support and a pragmatic need for energy security. Our multi-alignment strategy - in this case, engaging with the Quad while maintaining our involvement with BRICS - is a necessity. And unlike Canada, which just signed a major agreement with China in Beijing, we have a long-disputed frontier with China, which Beijing periodically probes. Canada does not have Chinese troops nibbling away at its territory.

Nonetheless, we must continue to resist the pressure to pick a side in conflicts that do not serve our immediate national interest. This external autonomy must be backed by domestic fortresses. Carney spoke of

Allies, Greenland Must Not Abandon Rule of Law

Keeping the upper hand in the rare earth minerals race isn't just about defending the global economy and

and ultimately extract rare earth minerals at the Kvanefjeld site, which is one of the largest untapped sources of critical

When governments rewrite rules to suit shifting political pressures, contracts lose credibility and investment

and due process without consequence exposes a serious inconsistency. Investors take note: it sends a damaging message that political convenience outweighs the law.

This inconsistency weakens Western credibility and discourages investment needed to secure long-term stability.

Blocking responsible mining in democratic countries does not eliminate the global demand for rare earths but shifts production to countries with fewer safeguards and less transparency.

Critical supply chains are then pushed beyond the reach of accountable legal systems, resulting in corrupt and irresponsible mining practices elsewhere. Greenland's mineral resources matter. They support advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, defense, and technology. Their location in the Arctic is strategically significant, as the region becomes increasingly central to global security. Our long-term strategy should be looking to the north. If Western democracies are serious about upholding legal and

commercial standards and promoting responsible resource development, then we must make it clear that Greenland's treatment of ETM is unacceptable. Defending rule of law among allies is not about coercion or intervention, but maintaining shared standards that make cooperation and investment possible.

Across political ideologies, there is a broad agreement on the importance of property rights, rule of law, and national security.

What's happened to ETM in Greenland is a violation of all three. If we can't defend these principles to our own allies, we erode the foundations that make Western markets credible, investable, and secure.

Greenland still has an opportunity to restore confidence by reaffirming its commitment to due process and legal integrity.

Doing so would strengthen its standing with investors and reinforce the broader economic system on which Western security and prosperity depend.

By Duggan Flanakin



international security, but also defending western values and the free world. •Over the past decade, Greenland has increasingly been recognized by policymakers, investors, and security analysts as strategically important. •It might be considered that the growing interest stems purely from territorial, expansionist ambition. But in reality, it's because of its growing role in mineral supply chains, Arctic governance, and the resilience of Western economic systems.

As demand for rare earths increases, decisions made in Greenland will help determine whether critical resources remain within transparent, rules-based markets or move further into jurisdictions with fewer safeguards.

Today, there's an opportunity for Western democracies to stand up for what they believe in and distinguish themselves from authoritarian systems.

This specific case calls for the U.S. to speak up and expect allies to uphold legal standards that support free markets, long-term investment, and geopolitical strategy.

Australian mining company Energy Transition Minerals spent years navigating the bureaucratic hurdles forming Greenland's regulatory system to secure a license to explore

rare earths.

The company invested tens of millions of dollars, met every requirement the Greenlandic government demanded, and completed extensive environmental and technical assessments about the project. It was a textbook example of lawful and responsible commercial conduct by a foreign investor in a democratic jurisdiction.

However, when a left-wing government came into power in 2021, Greenland retroactively changed the laws governing rare earth development, introducing a ban tied to naturally occurring elements—specifically uranium.

This was in response to appeasing environmental activists.

Through an after-the-fact ban tied to a naturally occurring element in rare earth deposits, the government revoked ETM's license for Kvanefjeld.

Years of work and millions in investment were erased by an overnight, short-sighted political decision.

This goes well beyond any singular mining project.

The retroactive nullification of legal contracts and seizure of property without due process undermines the principles that market economies rely on.

becomes contingent on political favor rather than compliance.

Western governments regularly emphasize supply chain security, economic resilience, and democratic norms.

Allowing allied governments to disregard property rights

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Begging On The Streets: Is India Ever Going To Solve Its Big, Dirty Malaise?



He was a regular at Indore's bustling Sarafa jewellery market. The leprosy-stricken man would slide through the lanes on a wooden cart with a torn, shabby bag on his back, begging from passers-by. While people bought and sold precious metals and stones in the local shops, 50-year-old Mangilal had quietly struck gold.

When the women and child development department "rescued" him during an anti-begging drive—begging is banned in Indore, celebrated as India's cleanest city for a decade—they discovered that the man was richer than many of his donors.

He owned three houses, ran a money-lending business which earned him over Rs 1,000 a day, and rented out a small fleet of autorickshaws. He came to beg daily in his car, steered around by a driver.

Or take Bharat Jain, for example. Known as the world's richest beggar, he operates in Mumbai and earns about Rs 2,500 daily. He has a net worth of about Rs 7.5 crore. Jain owns a posh two-bedroom flat and rents out two shops, creating extra income.

Clearly, begging is not always the last resort of survival in India, it is also business. In many cases, big business, as it is run by crime syndicates with the backing of police and politicians. In Lucknow, for instance, syndicates reportedly control more than 14,000 beggars as part of a multi-crore illegal business, trafficking men, women, and children and

assigning them specific zones where earnings are collected daily.

Besides being a horrific predicament for the individual's self-esteem (especially when it is a child), begging is destructive for the self-image of the entire nation. It is the grotesque ramp walk of its poverty and moral inability to look out for not just the poorest of the poor, but those vulnerable to exploitation by shadowy syndicates.

It hampers education campaigns, poses serious health and sanitation hazards, and puts children at grave risk of being sucked into a life of crime and drugs.

Local kingpins or handlers manage organised begging operations across cities. Profits can be significant. When a begging racket was busted in Hyderabad, the police found that the handlers each earned up to Rs 3 lakh per month.

The worst fallouts of begging are kidnapping and trafficking of children and luring missing kids into such rackets. In October 2024, the Odisha police rescued a five-year-old boy kidnapped by a begging mafia from Balangir and trafficked to Hyderabad. Padmini Majhi and Duryodhan Bariha were arrested for the abduction.

The Chennai police, with help from activists, rescued three babies in July 2024 who were being used for begging at traffic signals in Mylapore. Three women and an elderly couple were detained for investigation by the state child welfare committee. Not much is

known about the outcome of the probe.

According to the 2011

Census, India had about 4.13 lakh (413,000) beggars and vagrants nationwide, West Bengal being at the top with over 81,000. The Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 estimated 6.62 lakh rural households were dependent on begging.

Current figures are blurry. Social activists estimate 4-5 lakh could be engaged in begging, most of them children.

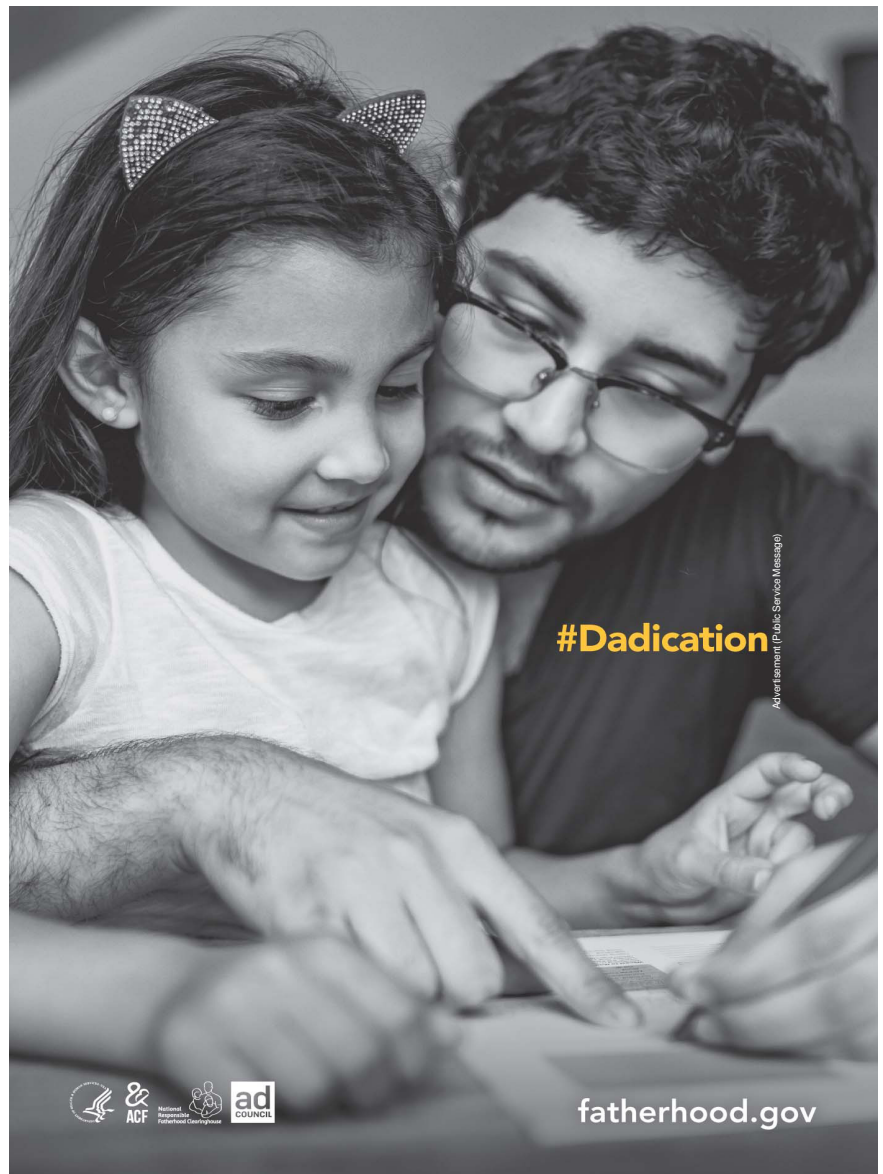
Laws like the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959, have not been effective because of weak implementation. Also, they often criminalise victims rather than perpetrators. Internationally, UAE imposes strict penalties on begging. Denmark and Sweden enforce anti-begging laws with

welfare support, and Luxembourg has a ban on begging.

Back home, Indore is the only city seriously fighting the menace. It announced an almsgiving ban from January 1, 2025, and fines donors. Indore backs up the drive with a massive awareness campaign and a sound rehabilitation programme for beggars.

No surge in GDP or place in the top five or three economies of the world can play down the inglorious sight of children made to openly beg on the streets without any state intervention to stop it. It is time the Centre and all Indian states take up the fight against begging on mission mode.

By Abhijit Majumder



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Europe Has The Weapons For Trump's Greenland Tariff



when the EU had to accept the 15 per cent levy. But just as those transatlantic trade terms have barely survived the New Year, last year's rush to declare the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as being back and better than ever under "Daddy" Trump looks wildly premature. Denmark is right to say that a hostile takeover of Greenland would be the end of the alliance as we know it. Trump's new threats go beyond the NATO "brain death" that Macron spoke of a few years back, and toward something like the forced obedience of the Soviet bloc's Warsaw Pact. To avoid this miserable fate, the rearming of Europe is ever more urgent.

European unity will be found wanting, of course. Poland and Italy are not on the tariff list and will doubtless try to deescalate. Trump's continental MAGA allies can be counted on to sow discord. The UK, under the cautious stewardship of Prime Minister Keir Starmer, may pursue its own routes to exemptions.

Nor will Europe be under any illusion: If the White House is determined to take Greenland in the face of opposition from the American public, Congress, the EU, NATO and the overwhelming majority of Greenlanders, it will succeed. Former Trump adviser Steve Bannon recently called the Arctic "the Great Game of the 21st century."

But if the status of American ally means being subjected to trade and technological subservience rather than being lavished with Cold War-style aid, cutting loose will become preferable. Trump's arrogant, unnecessary aggression over Greenland may well become that moment. Canada is getting closer to China, even though it shares a 5,525 mile border with the US. In today's White House, reality has outpaced fiction. Europe's mice must quickly find their inner tigers.

By Lionel Laurent,
Bloomberg

The Cold War satirical novel *The Mouse That Roared* imagined a tiny European statelet declaring war on the US in the hopes of being lavished with American aid after its inevitable defeat. It's a title that came immediately to mind when European nations sent three dozen soldiers to Greenland in response to Donald Trump's threats to wrest the island from Danish control. The idea seems to have been: Support Denmark, yes, but don't antagonise the White House when Ukrainian security is also on the line.

Whatever the intent, it hasn't worked. Trump's contemptuous delight in beating up US allies was given free rein over the weekend as he raised the ante over the Arctic territory. It's time for Europe to fight tariff fire with fire.

The president threatened a 10 per cent duty from February on US imports from the countries sending troops:

France, Germany, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, Denmark and non-European Union members UK and Norway. That would increase to 25 per cent in June until a deal is reached for his government to buy Greenland. In a grim flashback to last year's EU-US trade deal when the bloc had to swallow a 15 per cent tariff on its transatlantic exports, the underbelly of Europe's trade-dependent, soft-power regime is fully exposed.

The cost of such extra tariffs would be high. Bloomberg Economics estimates they could cut these countries' US exports by up to 50 per cent. Germany, Sweden and Denmark look especially vulnerable. But another timid acquiescence from the Europeans would be disastrous. This is textbook economic bullying, driven by a leader who recently said the only limitation on his global powers was "(his) own mind." If last year's tariff deal is

already being rewritten on the fly by the Americans, where will it stop? There has to be a point when even mice do more than squeak apologetically and submit to worse trade terms than China.

So even as Germany appears to be shipping its dozen or so soldiers back home – job done, apparently – European leaders must be ready to play hardball if these levies materialise. The starting point is bolstering the European Parliament's threat to hold back approval of last year's trade agreement, which was hailed by Trump's administration as providing "unprecedented levels of market access" for American products. The deal has not stopped the US from trying to strongarm Brussels into going easy on the tech barons of Silicon Valley and Seattle over regulations and antitrust.

It is time, too, to unbox the EU's "bazooka" for the fight ahead: The bloc's Anti-Coercion Instrument is

explicitly designed to defend member states put under tariff pressure by foreign powers. It allows retaliation beyond customs duties, and can potentially restrict market access for titans like Google owner Alphabet Inc. That's a much bigger stick than the usual clobbering of more niche US companies, such as Harley-Davidson motorcycles with higher import taxes. French President Emmanuel Macron, still nursing his wounds after failing to stop an EU trade deal with Latin America hated by French farmers, favors this trade weapon – and he's been backed by German industrial association VDMA. "Europe must not allow itself to be blackmailed," its president wrote over the weekend.

Then comes the longer-term question of whether Europe can get by on defence and security without American backing – in Ukraine first and foremost – the answer to which was a resounding no last year

Delhi Instead Of Davos? Why WEF Is Sliding Down The Wrong Mountain

In 1971, Klaus Schwab, a German engineer, set up the European Management Forum in Davos. The Forum did exactly as its appellation indicated—it brought European business leaders to Davos to learn American management techniques.

In 1987, the Forum was renamed the World Economic Forum. Despite its global pretensions, the WEF remained a body anchored in the Western Hemisphere. This was primarily because trade itself was not globalised. There were many insurmountable walls for goods and services to climb. One of them defined the Cold War—the Berlin Wall. This was the brick-and-mortar metaphor for a divided world in the heart of the Western Hemisphere. Davos in those early days provided a rare platform where Cold War Continental rivals could engage in quiet diplomacy.

The breakout moment for the World Economic Forum came only in the 1990s. The Berlin Wall was torn down, China opened, India liberalised, communism waned, and trade, finance, and technology flowed across geographies.

But because WEF was born in a world order where Europe and the US dominated capital, technology, institutions, and rule-making, Davos was and remains West-facing. Emerging economies were invited but only to participate, not shape, the global policy landscape.

That world no longer exists. The World Economic Forum has not adapted. Yet Davos remains physically, culturally, and intellectually anchored in Western Europe, even though the centre of global financial gravity has decisively shifted East.

Consider the facts. Asia now contributes over 50% of global GDP growth, according to the IMF and World Bank. India is the world's fastest-growing major economy, consistently expanding at 6-7%. China, India, ASEAN, and the Gulf together drive demand, infrastructure, digital adoption, and energy transition investments.

In stark contrast, Europe struggles to grow beyond 1%. It is demographically and structurally degrowing. Its share of global GDP has fallen from over 30% in 1980 to under 15% today. America has its own



problem, not in the least a crippling debt crisis.

So why should the world still fly to a Swiss ski town to discuss "the future of growth"? Why should a dwindling West be setting the rules—climate finance, AI governance, ESG, and trade—for the growing rest who bear the consequences?

Is India's Digital Public Infrastructure (UPI, Aadhaar), for instance, which is studied globally, treated as a rule-setting template at Davos? No. While it's no one's case that the Davos WEF jamboree is irrelevant, if it is to serve as a bridge between North and South, if it is to have a stake in multipolar stability, there is a

need for an Asian-hosted WEF summit. A beginning could be made with Delhi. Dubai and ASEAN capitals are other worthy contenders to play hosts on a rotational basis. To put it simply, a forum meant to shape the future cannot remain anchored in the economic past.

BY Rahul Shivshankar

The Beginning

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About the Author



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

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

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



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China: Contextualising A Purge



2025 recorded an unprecedented purge of China's top military and political leadership, that continued up to the penultimate day of the year, December 30, taking the tally up to "65 tigers" – high-level officials – the largest number in any year since the commencement of the anti-corruption campaign in 2012 and, on some accounts, since the beginning of China's era of reforms in 1978.

Central to the purge has been the most extensive and consequential changes in the leadership of the People's Liberation Army, with a raft of top officers removed, disappeared from public view, investigated and expelled from the military and from the Chinese Communist Party.

In a single announcement on October 17, nine top generals were expelled for "serious violations", including the abuse of power for personal gain and a "total collapse of beliefs".

Key military leaders who have been removed through 2025 include He Weidong, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), a Politburo member, and China's second-highest ranking general who commanded strategy and operations around Taiwan. Weidong was a Xi loyalist who disappeared from public view in March 2025, and was formally expelled in October. With him went

Miao Hua, Director of the CMC's Political Work Department and a former navy admiral, responsible for ideological indoctrination. Among the most significant expulsions were Wang Houbin, the former commander of the strategically critical Rocket Force; Lin Xiangyang, the commander of the Eastern Theatre Command; Zhang Lin, head of the CMC's logistics support; and Wang Chunling, commander of the People's Armed Police.

Western propagandists have seized on this as evidence of crisis, paranoia and imminent collapse, arguing that the sheer scale of dismissals will disrupt military readiness, command stability, organisational integrity, morale, response capabilities and the planned pace of modernisation. A laundry list of speculative motives has been imagined, including conspiracy theories regarding Xi's fears of a coup in reaction to the 'failures' of his economic policies, prompting a 'decapitation strategy' to suppress dissent, as well as other motives arising out of Xi's authoritarianism and attendant chronic insecurities. Much of this is just wishful thinking.

The purge of 2025 was not an abrupt and radical departure from the past that will reverberate long into the future. It is a continuum. Indeed, as many as 58 'tigers' were shown the

door in 2024, marking the then highest annual total since the anti-corruption campaign began in 2012 – with little noticeable impact on institutional continuity. Indeed, 2023-2024 saw the removals of two defence ministers (Li Shangfu and Wei Fenghe) and multiple Rocket Force leaders, and continuing rhetoric about tougher anti-corruption measures in 2026 suggested that more senior officials are likely to be targeted.

Western commentary has repeatedly projected the imminence of Chinese collapse in the wake of every transient challenge – be it economic slowdowns, demographic shifts, political purges, pandemics, or localised unrest – reflecting less an empirical assessment than a persistent projection of unfounded hopes. These forecasts have extrapolated short-term disruptions into systemic failure, assuming that the absence of 'liberal institutions' necessarily implies fragility. In doing so, they overlook the Chinese state's capacity for adaptive governance and social absorption of shocks, as well as the CPC's long-honed mechanisms of crisis management. The trope of impending collapse thus functions more as a recurring narrative device within the Western strategic imagination than as a serious analytical conclusion.

Where outsiders see crisis, insiders see consolidation in the face of intensifying external pressure, a hostile international environment and aggressive US strategies of containment. In such a context, any internal disunity, factionalism, corruption or ideological drift – particularly in the PLA – is seen as strategic vulnerability. Corruption, in particular, is not just a moral, or ethical failing, it is a strategic challenge.

It is useful to recall, here, that Mao's conception of the 'political army' fuses combat and ideology. An army that lacks political clarity, he argued, cannot fight effectively. Contemporary CPC and PLA doctrine continues this tradition. Significantly, Xi has repeatedly emphasised that the PLA must be able to fight and win "informatised and intelligitised" wars. But this goal cannot be achieved through technology alone. It requires moral discipline, ideological alignment, and trust in the chain of command. An officer whose primary loyalty lies with personal networks rather than the Party is, in strategic terms, a liability. A divided elite is vulnerable to pressure, infiltration and collapse. The instability of the global environment demands 'rectification'. Western policymakers are misreading consolidation as collapse.

By Ajai Sahni

Pakistan's NA passes bill to provide secrecy to assets of lawmakers

Islamabad, Jan 21 (PTI) Pakistan's parliament passed a bill on Wednesday to provide secrecy to the assets of lawmakers in case their publicity posed a risk to them, amid opposition from jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party. As per the existing law, members of the national parliament and provincial assemblies are required to annually submit details of their assets to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) by December 31. Under Section 138 of the Elections Act, the ECP publishes in the official gazette the details of their assets and liabilities, including those of their spouses and dependent children. The National Assembly (NA) passed the Elections Amendment Bill, 2026, making amendments to Section 138 of the Elections Act by inserting a provision. According to the provision, following the submission of a written application by a parliamentarian,

the NA speaker or Senate chairperson could bar the ECP from publicly publishing details of the assets of that member if it would "pose a serious threat to the life or safety" of that individual or their family. The amendment

true statement of assets and liabilities" to the ECP confidentially. The bill's statement of objectives and reasons further elaborates: "The proposed amendment is to ensure a balanced approach

liabilities serves a vital role in promoting public accountability, enhancing trust in public office, and ensuring good governance, it is recognised that unrestricted or excessive disclosure could potentially compromise the

the word "Supreme" has been replaced with "Federal Constitutional Court" in Section 155 of the Elections Act. Amendments were also made to Sections 202, 212 and 232, formally bringing the FCC into these provisions. According to the bill, the role of the FCC across various legal forums has been clearly defined, with the stated aim of ensuring transparency while balancing fundamental rights. The bill still needs the Senate's assent and the President's approval before it becomes law.

The bill was moved last year by legislators Shazia Marri and Syed Naveed Qamar, the two lawmakers of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), but it could not get the support of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Apparently, backdoor communications worked, and finally, it was passed, providing relief to the lawmakers. This time, only the PTI opposed it. PTI SH ZH ZH



proposes that this restriction will remain in place for not more than a year and was subject to the submission of "a complete and

between transparency and the protection of individual rights. "While the publication of statements of assets and

personal security and privacy of parliamentarians and their families."

As part of the changes,

How An Islamist Party Is Gaining Ground In Bangladesh, Worrying Moderates

Long vilified for opposing independence and barred from electoral politics for over a decade, Bangladesh's biggest Islamist party is reinventing itself and attracting new support ahead of parliamentary polls next month, unsettling moderates and minority communities. Jamaat-e-Islami began its overhaul soon after a youth-led uprising in the Muslim-majority nation of 175 million people toppled Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August 2024. With Hasina's Awami League banned, Jamaat is betting on its anti-corruption image, welfare outreach, and what analysts describe as a more inclusive public stance to deliver the party's best-ever performance. A December opinion poll by the US-based International Republican Institute ranked Jamaat as the most "liked" party and projected a tight race with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party for the top spot in the February 12 election. "We started welfare politics, not reactionary politics," Jamaat chief Shafiqur Rahman told Reuters, citing its medical camp initiatives, flood relief and aid for families of those killed in the uprising. The UN says as many as 1,400 people lost their lives in the protests. "The constructive politics, which Jamaat and its associates ... are doing now, people will put their trust and belief in Jamaat-e-Islami," Rahman said. The party has its origins in

the pan-Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami movement, which emerged in India in the early 1940s and called for a society governed by Islamic principles. Jamaat opposed Bangladesh's independence, and during Hasina's rule many of its leaders were executed or jailed in a war crimes tribunal that was criticised by international human rights groups. In 2013, it was barred from elections after a court ruled its charter was in conflict with Bangladesh's secular constitution.

'We Want Something New'

The electoral ban was lifted last year and Jamaat's student wing swept the Dhaka University polls, beating the Gen-Z National Citizen Party formed by leaders of the anti-Hasina movement. Months later it formed an electoral alliance with the NCP, which some analysts say could help soften Jamaat's image. "We want something new and the new option is Jamaat," said Mohammad Jalal, 40, who sells coconut water from a mobile van in a crowded Dhaka market. "They have a clean image and work for the country." Political analyst and theologian Shafi Md. Mostafa said the party's shift from a "stigmatised force with limited space" to a "rehabilitated, pragmatic contender" had been helped by public anger over abuses during Hasina's rule.

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Taslima Says Bangladesh Media Are Now Echoing Her Long Held Concerns

(News Agency) NEW DELHI -Lamenting the minuscule representation by women candidates in Bangladesh's upcoming elections, a Dhaka daily on January 19 flagged "systemic design and failure" as the main reasons, echoing the voice of writer and activist Taslima Nasreen without naming her. "The lack of women candidates has nothing to do with women's competence or willingness to lead, but everything to do with systemic design and failure," opined the article in the Daily Star.

"Many women in Bangladesh are writing, raising the issues that I've been reiterating. It is welcome that journalists and authors in Bangladesh are raising the issues that I'd been talking about all this time, though they still can't mention or quote me," Taslima Nasreen told IANS, sharing her thoughts.

The writer, a feminist, secular humanist, and activist, living in exile for over three decades – first in Sweden, then



India – also reacted that her name does not feature anywhere in such pieces, though she is among the best-known advocates for gender equality.

"I understand that they can't name me," stated the author, adding: "It's not about whether I'm being quoted or not, referred to or staying unrecognized, but what I really wish is that there be

gender equality, secularism, and peace in Bangladesh." The Daily Star article noted, "Bangladesh is not unfamiliar with the image of women in power.

In fact, two women have governed this country for nearly the entirety of its democratic era. Their names are etched into national history and public memory alike. And yet, when the

arena shifts from symbolism to competition, women almost disappear." It was referring to the last Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, now in exile after being toppled in a student uprising and facing a death sentence, and the recently deceased Khalida Zia. While the former led the Awami League, now facing a political ban, the latter was the chief of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. However, they both entered active politics under compulsion, following a dynastic tradition, where Hasina's full-time participation was after the assassination of her father and the architect of Bangladesh's liberation, Mujibur Rahman. For Khalida, it was the assassination of her husband and BNP founder General Ziaur Rahman, who was also a leader in the liberation struggle.

"On paper, women are free to contest. In practice, nominations are shaped by patronage, money, informal loyalty networks, and a political culture

in which intimidation and risk are not incidental, but embedded. These are not gender-neutral conditions; they privilege those already embedded in male-dominated circuits of influence and capital," the newspaper article observed. "When political competition is designed in ways that systematically disadvantage women, low representation is all but inevitable," it added. Meanwhile, Taslima argued that women in Bangladesh have long been treated as unequal, and emancipation may come with more voices seeking parity.

"My books are still under a ban there; no publisher there can print my books, no reader there can buy them. A narrative has been built around my works as if these are very bad, very harmful," she pointed out. "I'm still undergoing the punishment that the Bangladesh regime had handed out to me for raising my voice," she said, adding, "I continue to live in exile." (IANS)

Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Indonesia, Pakistan, Qatar, UAE join Trump's 'Board of Peace'



(News Agency) DUBAI, Jan 21 (Reuters) - Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Indonesia, Pakistan and Qatar have accepted invitations to join U.S. President Donald Trump's "Board of Peace", the Saudi foreign ministry said in a joint statement that also included the United Arab Emirates.

The statement added that each country will sign accession documents in accordance with its legal procedures.

Kuwait has also accepted the invitation to join the Board of Peace, its foreign

ministry said. Trump has invited dozens of world leaders to join his initiative aimed at resolving global conflicts, although diplomats say the move could harm the work of the United Nations.

Sergi Reboredo/VWPics via AP Images & Andrea Renault/STAR MAX/IPx NATO released a statement on Wednesday shortly after President Donald Trump announced he and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte had "formed" a "framework" for a deal on Greenland. The NATO statement came amid new

reporting from the New York Times that the deal may include the U.S. being given "sovereignty over small pockets" of land in Greenland.

Trump has recently vowed to acquire Greenland from NATO ally Denmark, including by using military force if necessary. NATO Spokesperson Allison Hart released a statement saying, "The Secretary General had a very productive meeting with President Trump during which they discussed the critical significance of security in the Arctic region to

all Allies, including the United States." "Discussions among NATO Allies on the framework the President referenced will focus on ensuring Arctic security through the collective efforts of Allies, especially the seven Arctic Allies. Negotiations between Denmark, Greenland, and the United States will go forward aimed at ensuring that Russia and China never gain a foothold – economically or militarily in Greenland," concluded Hart's statement. Trump refused to offer any specifics of the deal when

pressed by CNBC's Joe Kernen in an interview shortly after the announcement, but said the deal would be "forever" and confirmed he was dropping the threat of additional tariffs on Europe.

The Times reported NATO members "discussed a compromise in which Denmark would give the United States sovereignty over small pockets of Greenlandic land where the United States could build military bases, according to three senior officials familiar with the discussion."

Pakistan rescuers scour blaze site for dozens missing

(News Agency) Pakistani rescuers scoured the charred remains of a Karachi mall Wednesday for dozens missing after a huge blaze destroyed the complex, while relatives gave DNA samples to aid the search.

Four days after the fire ripped through the three-storey Gul Plaza, police in the coastal city have confirmed at least 29 people were killed. But the toll is expected to rise considerably. "With the help of the police, we have verified 39 missing persons as yet," Karachi south's deputy commissioner, Javed

Nabi Khoso, told AFP. Nearly 50 others listed as missing are yet to be verified. Families have criticised authorities for the slow recovery operation at the mall, where AFP journalists saw at least five human remains recovered on Wednesday.

At the Civil Hospital Karachi, provincial health official Summaiya Syed said DNA samples from 51 families had been taken so far. "We will hand over the bodies (remains) to the family, once DNA samples are matched," she told journalists outside the hospital mortuary.

Empire of AI: Dreams and Nightmares in Sam Altman's OpenAI

Empire of AI

Dreams and Nightmares
in Sam Altman's OpenAI

Karen Hao

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of Sam Altman's OpenAI from the beginning, an eye-opening account of arguably the most fateful tech arms race in history, reshaping the planet in real time, from the cockpit of the company that is driving the frenzy. When AI expert and investigative journalist Karen Hao first began covering OpenAI in 2019, she thought they were the good guys. Founded as a nonprofit with safety enshrined as its core mission, the organization was meant, its leader Sam Altman told us, to act as a check against more purely mercantile, and potentially dangerous, forces. What could go wrong? Over time, Hao began to wrestle ever more deeply with that question.

Increasingly, she realized that the core truth of this massively disruptive sector is that its vision of success requires an almost unprecedented amount of resources: the "compute" power of high-end chips and the processing capacity to create massive large language models, the sheer volume of data that needs to be amassed at scale, the humans "cleaning up" that data for sweatshop wages throughout the Global South, and a truly alarming spike in the usage of energy and water underlying it all.

The truth is that we have entered a new and ominous age of empire: only a small handful of globally scaled companies can even enter the field of play. At the head of the pack with its ChatGPT breakthrough, how would OpenAI resist such temptations? Spoiler alert: it didn't. Armed with Microsoft's billions, OpenAI is setting a breakneck pace, chased by a small group of the most valuable companies in human history—toward what end, not even they can define. All this time, Hao has maintained her deep sourcing within the company and the industry, and so she was in intimate contact with the story that shocked the entire tech industry—Altman's sudden firing and triumphant return.

The Great Heist: China's Epic Campaign to Steal America's Secrets

The Story the CCP Does Not Want Revealed

THE GREAT HEIST

China's Epic Campaign to Steal America's Secrets



(News Agency) NEW YORK (AP)—People stop reading in adulthood for lots of reasons. But it's never too late to turn the page on old habits and start again.

Curling up with a good book can reduce stress, increase creativity and boost

empathy. A recent analysis of U.S. government data found that the percentage of Americans who read for pleasure during an average day has fallen to 16% in 2023 from 28% in 2004.

That includes not just books but audiobooks, e-books and periodicals like magazines. Some people say they're fatigued from years of assigned reading in school. Others don't have the time or would rather zone out by doom-scrolling on social media. And many just got out of the habit.

"It's difficult for people who are really tired and busy to think about getting into reading if it's not something they're used to," said Jacqueline Rammer, director of Menomonee Falls Public Library in Wisconsin. For those looking to set reading goals or resolutions in 2026, here's how to get back into the habit. This article is part of AP's Be Well coverage, focusing on wellness, fitness, diet and mental health.

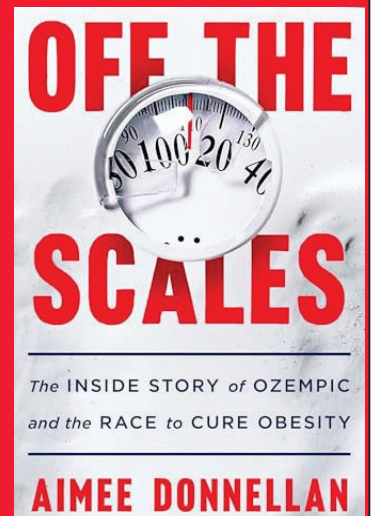
Off the Scales: The Inside Story of Ozempic and the Race to Cure Obesity

(News Agency) The inside story of the race to develop Ozempic, and its potentially revolutionary impact on public health and culture. A "cure" for obesity has long been the holy grail for the pharmaceutical industry, one that seemed unattainable until recent breakthroughs in type 2 diabetes research led to the development of Ozempic, a weight loss medication that activates hormones in the stomach, making people feel fuller for longer.

The treatment is so effective that it is already disrupting many industries—from health care to fast food to fashion—and it has quickly made its creator, Denmark's Novo Nordisk, the most valuable company in Europe. But the impact of these drugs goes far beyond billion dollar profits; a true long-term cure for obesity could save 40% of American adults from dangerous preventable illnesses.

And as their success continues to grow, one question looms in the minds of investors, healthcare workers and are they too good to be true? In Off the Scales, Reuters journalist Aimee Donnellan illuminates the history of the latest medical breakthrough that is poised to change the world, while bringing difficult social questions about inequality and morality to the forefront.

Through original reporting and rigorous research, she forecasts the future of Ozempic and similar medications—and examines what their explosive popularity tells us about our ideals of beauty, the lengths to which people will go in order to become thin, the current state of healthcare, and the inner workings of the pharmaceutical industry. Along the way, Donnellan profiles the scientist who

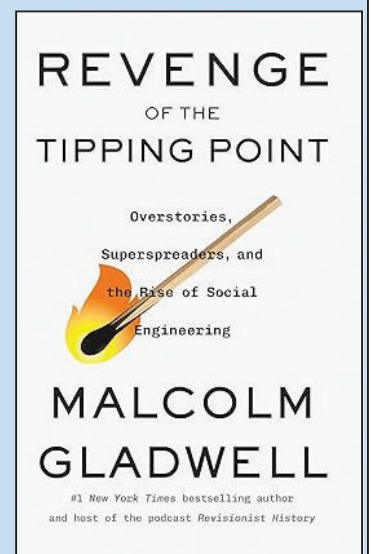


first discovered GLP-1 and her fight for recognition while her colleagues were thrust into the limelight, and offers new insights into the ways that the food and beauty industries made billions while promoting unhealthy and unrealistic body image standards and accelerating the obesity crisis. She also reveals the lengths that the celebrity class went to obtain this medication when supplies were limited and prescriptions were costly, and relates the firsthand accounts of several early Ozempic users and the transformative effect the drug has had on their weight loss journeys. Above all, Off the Scales is an informative and entertaining study of the unexpected social consequences of finally getting what we've wanted for so long.

Revenge of the Tipping Point

(News Agency) Twenty-five years after the publication of his groundbreaking first book, Malcolm Gladwell returns with a brand-new volume that reframes the lessons of The Tipping Point in a startling and revealing light. Why is Miami...Miami What does the heartbreaking fate of the cheetah tell us about the way we raise our children? Why do Ivy League schools care so much about sports What is the Magic Third, and what does it mean for racial harmony In this provocative new work, Malcolm Gladwell returns for the first time in twenty-five years to the subject of social epidemics and tipping points, this time with the aim of explaining the dark side of contagious phenomena. Through a series of riveting stories, Gladwell traces the rise of a new and troubling form of social engineering.

He takes us to the streets of Los Angeles to meet the world's most successful bank robbers, rediscovers a forgotten television show from the 1970s that changed the world, visits the site of a historic experiment on a tiny cul-de-sac in northern California, and offers an alternate history of two of the biggest



epidemics of our day: COVID and the opioid crisis.

Revenge of the Tipping Point is Gladwell's most personal book yet. With his characteristic mix of storytelling and social science, he offers a guide to making sense of the contagions of modern world. It's time we took tipping points seriously.

Strengthening Naturalization: U.S. Bill Targets Fraudulent and Terror-Linked Citizens

(Staff Reporter) A new bill introduced in the U.S. Senate would expand the government's power to revoke the citizenship of naturalized Americans who commit serious crimes or are found to have concealed misconduct during the naturalization process.

The proposal was put forward by Eric Schmitt, a Republican from Missouri, who said the measure is aimed at protecting the integrity of American citizenship. The legislation, titled the Stop Citizenship Abuse and Misrepresentation Act, or SCAM Act, seeks to make it easier for

authorities to bring civil cases to strip citizenship from individuals who later engage in major criminal activity. Schmitt argued that recent fraud cases show weaknesses in the current system.

He pointed to a large welfare fraud case in Minnesota involving naturalized citizens, saying such conduct demonstrates that those individuals did not meet the standards required for citizenship at the time they took the oath. Under the bill, the grounds for civil denaturalization would be expanded to include large-scale fraud against

federal, state, or local welfare programs, links to designated foreign terrorist organizations, espionage, and aggravated felonies.

The legislation states that these actions indicate a lack of good moral character and a failure to uphold the principles of the U.S. Constitution. The bill has support from the White House. Stephen Miller, the White House deputy chief of staff for policy and homeland security adviser, backed the proposal and cited the Minnesota case as evidence of the need for tougher measures. According to a summary released with the bill,

the Minnesota case involved a federally funded children's nutrition program. More than 70 defendants were charged or convicted, many of whom were naturalized citizens.

Prosecutors said at least 250 million dollars was stolen, with funds used for luxury purchases or transferred overseas through remittances. The SCAM Act would allow criminal convictions or admissions within 10 years of naturalization to be treated as strong evidence that citizenship was obtained through concealment or misrepresentation. Such findings could lead to the

revocation of citizenship and removal from the country. Several conservative immigration and policy groups have endorsed the bill, arguing that denaturalization is a civil process permitted under existing U.S. law and is necessary to protect national security and public funds. Critics in earlier debates have warned that expanding denaturalization powers could create fear among immigrant communities. They have argued that citizenship, once granted, should not be easily challenged except in clear cases of fraud.

Crushed Hopes Indian-Owned Stone Firms Grapple with Rising Silicosis Litigation

(Staff Reporter) Indian-origin business leaders found themselves at the center of a heated debate in the U.S. Congress last week as lawmakers weighed worker safety against corporate liability in the stone slab industry, an issue with implications for global supply chains and immigrant-owned enterprises. The discussion unfolded during a hearing before a House Judiciary subcommittee, where proposed legislation aimed at limiting lawsuits against artificial stone manufacturers and distributors drew sharply divided

views. Indian-origin entrepreneurs, labor experts, and industry representatives testified as Congress considered the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Stone Slab Products Act, known as H.R. 5437.

Former U.S. occupational safety chief David Michaels warned lawmakers that shielding companies from civil liability would worsen what he described as a growing silicosis crisis among countertop fabrication workers. He said artificial stone fabrication exposes workers to dangerous levels of silica dust and

has already led to widespread illness and death in the United States.

Michaels pointed to data from California showing hundreds of silicosis cases, dozens of deaths, and numerous lung transplants linked to exposure during cutting and polishing of engineered stone used in kitchen countertops. He argued that lawsuits play a key role in pushing industries to adopt safer materials and practices, citing Australia's nationwide ban on high-silica engineered stone, which he said led manufacturers to switch to

safer alternatives without job losses. Offering a contrasting perspective, Gary Talwar, vice president of Natural Stone Resources, an Indian-origin, family-run distributor based in California, urged lawmakers to pass the bill. Talwar told the committee that his parents immigrated from India in 1980 and built the business over decades, employing American workers while operating strictly as a distributor. He said his company does not fabricate stone and has no control over

safety practices inside fabrication shops.

Talwar argued that distributors are increasingly being swept into lawsuits over unsafe practices they do not oversee, leading to mounting legal costs that are threatening the survival of small, often immigrant-owned businesses. He said some firms have already spent hundreds of thousands of dollars defending themselves and are now considering closing operations altogether.

Pak Blames India For 'Losing' Afghanistan. Numbers Tell A Different Story

(Staff Reporter) So finally, a Taliban diplomat is officially in charge in Delhi. The Taliban's newly appointed ambassador to India, Noor Ahmad Noor, took charge of the Afghan Embassy in Delhi last week. A statement issued by the Taliban's embassy in India on Monday said he met Anand Prakash, Joint Secretary of the Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran Division at the Ministry of External Affairs, with discussions focusing on strengthening political and trade ties, including easing visa procedures.

Interestingly, just about a year ago, on January 8, India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri had met Muttaqi, the Taliban foreign minister, in Dubai for "detailed discussions" on bilateral relations. This was the first high-level meeting between the two sides following the Taliban's sweep to power in Kabul in August 2021; it came after a gap

of four years. Following the meeting, the Taliban Foreign Ministry termed New Delhi a "significant regional partner." By then, the rift between the Taliban and Pakistan had come to the fore - it was a time when Pakistan had launched airstrikes in Afghanistan's bordering regions to flush out terrorists, but which, according to the Taliban, had instead ended up claiming more civilian lives. The spokesperson for the Indian Ministry of External Affairs had criticised the Pakistani air strike on Afghanistan and the loss of civilian lives.

A Slew Of Visits

Since then, ties between India - which had been reluctant till then to extend recognition to the Taliban - and the Taliban have been dynamically developing. Three high-level visits have taken place by Taliban officials to Delhi in quick succession. The acting Taliban foreign minister, Mullah Amir Khan

Muttaqi, visited India in October, followed by trade minister Haji Nooruddin Azizi, and, more recently, in December, the acting Health Minister Noor Jalal Jalali. New Delhi announced that it was upgrading its representative office in Kabul to a full-fledged embassy. And now, it has welcomed the first official Taliban envoy to be stationed in Delhi. Noori's arrival coincided with a diatribe by the Pakistani Information Minister, Attaullah Tarar. Lashing out at the growing diplomatic engagement between the Taliban and India, he questioned the nature of their cooperation.

While accusing the Taliban of allowing Afghan soil to be used for attacks against Pakistan, funded by "foreign designs", he bluntly asked, "What kind of Islam is this where you take money from India to carry out explosions here?" Islamabad continues to accuse the Taliban and India of supporting

Baloch separatist groups and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

Pak Needs To Look Within

The accusations come as Pakistan faces a surge in militant violence, with over 5,000 terror incidents reported in 2025. However, to allege that India was behind them is a pathetic reflection of Pakistan's own desperation. After all, even in a world of constant geopolitical realignments and strategic shifts, the speed with which India-Taliban and Pakistan-Taliban relations have redefined themselves is rare.

The only consistency is that Islamabad continues to be at odds with whoever happens to be in power in Kabul. The appointment of Noor Ahmad Noor is significant for the Taliban's efforts to expand diplomatic presence abroad and gain greater international engagement. In this, India is neither the first nor the only country to

accept a Taliban envoy. It is following a regional consensus. China was technically the first one to accept an official Taliban envoy in Beijing, followed by Moscow, Tashkent, Astana, Jakarta, and, of course, Pakistan.

India's View

In fact, Afghanistan is perhaps the only foreign policy success for India in its turbulent neighbourhood.

As Bangladesh deepens relations with Pakistan, whose intelligence and army are now actively playing a role in bilateral relations, India's presence in Afghanistan gives it strategic depth there. On the other hand, India, as recently stated by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, is continuing with its time-tested humanitarian and people-centric approach to Afghanistan, building on the already existing goodwill in the country towards India.

Liquid Debt: Scientists Warn the Era of Water Bankruptcy Is Here

(Staff Reporter) A new era has begun of "global water bankruptcy", with humans depleting freshwater systems to the point they can't recover, according to a new United Nations report. Three-quarters of the world's population – about 6.1 billion people – now live in countries where freshwater supplies are insecure or critically insecure, according to the report published Tuesday by UN University's Institute for Water, Environment and Health. Four billion people face severe water scarcity for at least one month a year. Cities are experiencing more Day Zero events in which municipal water systems near collapse. An acute water shortage in Tehran recently led Iran's president to warn it may become necessary to evacuate parts of the city or even relocate the capital. In Turkey, roughly 700 sinkholes – some up to 100 feet deep – have appeared where aquifers have collapsed after their groundwater was drained. Drought and water scarcity are likely to drive migrations in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America, says the report, which is based on a peer-reviewed



paper. Global warming is increasing water demands and makes the natural supply of water less predictable. But water management is also a key part of the equation, said Kaveh Madani, director of the UN institute and the lead author of the report. "Water bankruptcy is not about how much water you have; it's about how you manage your water," he said. Chronic overuse of

groundwater, forest destruction, land degradation and pollution have caused irreversible freshwater loss in many parts of the world – problems that are compounded by climate change. Climate change is shifting freshwater on a planetary scale and, on a smaller scale, those effects can be made worse by local actions. A hotter, drier planet experiences more water-evaporating droughts.

That concentrates salts in the soil, as do certain farming practices. Higher temperatures contribute to more forest and peatland fires, while human clear-cutting and draining of wetlands worsen fire conditions.

"Droughts are no longer just natural but anthropogenic – meaning that we have climate change at the global level, and then also the land use changes from management decisions and infrastructure allocation decisions make water less and less available," Madani said. Use of the word "bankruptcy" to describe the extent of water depletion is new for the UN. Previously, UN University scientists used "water stress" or "water crisis" to describe systems that were under either prolonged or sudden and acute pressure. Both of those terms allow for the possibility of recovery. But that isn't feasible in many areas where humans have overdrawn the local supply of fresh water, squandering the annual influx from recharging sources like rivers and melting snow while exhausting groundwater and other natural reservoirs.

How China Got Trapped In Its Own 'Export Miracle'

(Staff Reporter) Last week, China reported the world's largest ever trade surplus for 2025, a year when Donald Trump's tariffs on more than 90 countries gave a jolt to the global economic order.

The Chinese trade surplus reached a massive \$1.19 trillion, despite Beijing reducing exports to the US by 20%. It simply sold much more to the rest of the world, including India. The staggering \$1.9 trillion trade surplus of China is just under half the size of India's GDP and close to the size of Saudi Arabia's, a G-20 member. Last year, China was the largest trading partner of Brazil – in America's backyard, of Central Asia – in Russia's backyard and the Gulf countries, where the US used to dominate.

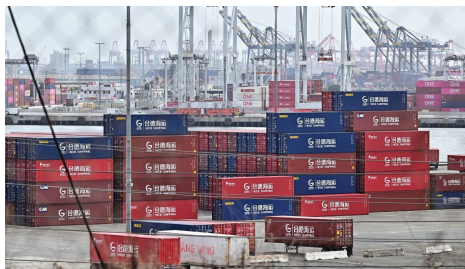
The US has already lost Africa to Beijing; if Trump continues with his disastrous tariff policies, even other regions could become China's number one trading partner, replacing the US. China has not had a global trade deficit since 1993. It has come a long way from being one of the world's poorest countries in 1978, when its leader Deng Xiao Ping introduced economic reforms, to becoming the world's second largest economy and a superpower. But in the process, China has also transformed the global economy, making everyone else dependent on it, based on a model that has created problems even for its own people. But can this model survive? The Making Of China's Economic Model Beijing's exports-based economic model

has roots in Deng's reforms, which paved the way for the country to become the world's manufacturing hub.

Large plants and factories were set up across the country to produce cheaper products for the rest of the world. Gradually, millions of Western manufacturing jobs were outsourced to factories in China. These state-subsidised plants forced many factories in other countries to close down because they could not compete with Chinese products. As early as 1994, silk farmers in India were complaining that the dumping of cheap Chinese synthetic silk in the country was driving them out of business. Beijing has often been accused of dumping its products in other countries. Such accusations have resurfaced after the publication of the latest record surplus figures. But China has continued to expand its production capacity, diversifying into many new fields.

The current Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, has taken the country's economic model to a new level. After becoming the head of the Communist Party in 2013, he focused on high-quality development by investing in strategic emerging industries to become a dominant force that could not only challenge China's rivals but also control them. Self-Reliance Or World Domination? At the core of China's economic strategy is making itself self-reliant, according to the

Chinese leaders. Xi's 10-year programme, known as Made in China, launched in 2015 to reduce dependence on the West, has achieved most goals. Beijing's unprecedented investment in green technologies has made it the undisputed world leader in renewables, electric vehicles and many other fields. Over the weekend, China's state media reported that the country consumed 10.4 trillion kilowatt-hours of power in 2025, according to the National Energy Administration. This is more than



double the use in the United States and exceeds the combined power consumption in India, Russia, Japan and the European Union. This suggests industrial plants and AI data centres in China are working harder than anywhere else. Xi has also prepared China for a trade war with the United States and ordered his officials to work on choke points for its economy, which he successfully employed last year in response to Trump's tariffs. As early as 2019, Xi described rare earths and other critical minerals as an "important strategic

resource." Beijing now has almost total control over the global supply of those minerals. India may be a leading supplier of pharmaceuticals, but China is the world's dominant producer of the ingredients needed to make antibiotics and other pharmaceuticals. The same is the case in the solar power industry.

Global Domination But Domestic Repression

China's economic growth helped its government to lift tens of millions of people out of poverty and make many others in the country rich, especially in the early years of reform. But its model of increasing growth by selling cheaply to the world has had its implications. For years, Chinese families subsidised the country's rise through foregone returns while the rest of the world splurged on discounted Chinese goods. While the rest of the world is fighting inflation, China is facing an acute problem of deflation, where prices continue to drop, discouraging customers from buying in the fear that goods would be even cheaper later. This is caused by overcapacity in factories and weak domestic demand. A persistent decline in consumption signals deeper economic trouble. Last year, Chinese authorities promised new child-care subsidies, increased wages and better paid leaves to revive a slowing economy. But that has failed to have any meaningful impact.

"I Look Healthy, So Why Can't I Conceive?": Understanding Hidden Fertility Barriers In Young Women Today



(Staff Reporter) Many young women who appear healthy and maintain a normal lifestyle are still unable to conceive and this is not unusual. Infertility, defined as the inability to achieve pregnancy after 12 months of regular, unprotected intercourse for women under 35 (or after six months for those over 35), affects about one in six couples worldwide.

Dr Rashmika Gandhi, Fertility Specialist at Birla Fertility & IVF, Gurgaon (Sector 14), shares all you need to know: A common misconception is that visible health equates to fertility. In reality, successful conception requires a sequence of finely balanced biological events: regular ovulation, transport of the egg through healthy fallopian tubes, adequate sperm quality, fertilisation, and

implantation in the uterus. Disruption at any of these steps—even without outward symptoms—can hinder pregnancy. Hidden factors in women include hormonal disorders such as polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), which affects up to 6–13% of reproductive-aged women and is a leading cause of ovulatory dysfunction.

Conditions like endometriosis, where uterine-like tissue grows outside the uterus, can impair both ovarian function and tubal transport without causing obvious pain. Structural issues, such as blocked fallopian tubes—often resulting from prior infections—

uterine abnormalities can also be silent yet significant barriers to pregnancy. Equally important, declining egg quality and

compromised sperm quality can lead to fertilisation failure, even when menstrual cycles appear regular and routine tests are normal.

Even with thorough testing, some couples receive a diagnosis of "unexplained infertility," likely reflecting subtler

anomalies in ovulation timing, egg-sperm interaction, or implantation that current diagnostic tools cannot detect.

In some cases, immune-related factors such as antiphospholipid antibody syndrome (APLA) can interfere with implantation or early

pregnancy development, despite the absence of obvious symptoms. If you've been trying to conceive for 6–12 months without success, a comprehensive evaluation by a fertility specialist is essential. Early identification of underlying issues significantly improves the chances of timely and effective intervention.

'Women Are Taught To Be Ashamed': Shobhaa De Reflects On Female Pleasure And Desire

(Staff Reporter) The second day of Jaipur Literature Festival 2026 unfolded as a layered exploration of ideas, intellect and self-expression. Held at Hotel Clarks Amer, Shobhaa De's session positioned sensuality not as spectacle, but as lived experience—one shaped by memory, conditioning and quiet resistance. Shobhaa De, whose writing has long occupied the space where glamour meets social commentary, approached the subject with characteristic candour. Rather than framing desire as transgressive, she spoke of it as intrinsic—something learned, unlearned, and often suppressed over a lifetime.

Speaking to News18 at Jaipur Literature Festival, De reflected on a pointed question: has shame around women's pleasure disappeared, or has it simply changed its language? She traced the roots of this discomfort far earlier than adulthood. "From a very young age, women are made to feel extremely self-conscious about their physical selves," she said, pointing out that even childhood is not spared the vocabulary of restraint. "Even a little girl is taught the meaning of the word shame. You grow up with those feelings of being ashamed of whatever

your fantasies may be. Even your thoughts are not left without censorship," she told News18.

She was quick to underline the contradiction at the heart of Indian society. "In a country like India, we have a very rich and glorious tradition of sensuality," she noted, gesturing towards the everyday food, colour, clothing, and ritual. Her most evocative example was the saree. She continued, "The saree is by far the most sensuous garment ever created. No designer can compete with the imagination that goes into draping that saree. Each woman treats it her own way."

For De, *The Sensual Self* is not about provocation for its own sake. It is about asking questions society has long discouraged about desire, trust, romance, love and the emotional lives of women at different stages.

"For a long time, we were too inhibited to question any of this, even for ourselves," she reflected, adding that meaningful conversations around women's pleasure were rarely encouraged. In giving language to what has long been censored—internally and collectively, Shobhaa De positions pleasure and desire not as rebellion, but as remembrance.

Rani Mukerji Is Scared Of 'Gen Alpha' Daughter Adira, And Moms Find It Relatable

(Staff Reporter) Bollywood actor Rani Mukerji has opened up about motherhood in today's fast-changing world, sharing honest and often relatable thoughts on raising her daughter Adira in a time shaped by technology and strong young voices.

Rani spoke about how parenting a Gen Alpha child comes with its own surprises, adjustments and moments of awe. The actress shared on Zoom's YouTube channel podcast series *Spotlight Sessions* that children have changed since her generation, pointing out that she is scared of her daughter sometimes. Rani also shared Adira's favourite movies of hers and how she reacted to her National Award win. Rani Mukerji

says she's scared of her daughter. She admitted that children today grow up very differently from earlier generations and are far more expressive about what they feel. "She also fires me. She is Gen Alpha, so she fires me, and I have to listen to her. Because every generation changes. I used to get slaps from my mom. I can't expect to do that with her because she would slap me back. She was jumping in the house while the National Awards were happening.

It's very sweet, but because she is an Alpha kid, I am very scared of her," Rani said, adding a touch of humour to her candid confession. She also spoke

about Adira's emotional connection to her work and how her daughter reacts to seeing her on screen.

"Though she has not seen

screen.

She loves *Hichki*, *Thoda Pyaar Thoda Magic*, and *Bunty Aur Babli*. *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* was tough for her to watch because, in the first scene, I die, so I couldn't go beyond that," the actress shared. Rani shared how Adira reacts to her makeup and said, "When I am wearing makeup, she tells me, 'Mamma, you are not looking like my mother.' So when I remove my makeup and come to her, she

tells me, 'Now you look like my mother.'" In the same interview, Rani got emotional and shared that she misses her late father. After my dad (Ram Mukherjee) passed away, I really miss getting his

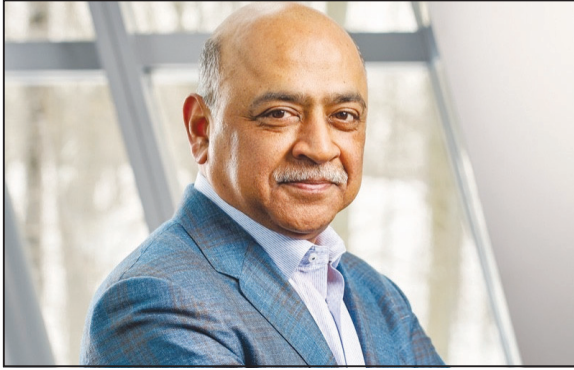
feedback on my performance. It is tough, but God balances things. He gave me my daughter. She is extremely close to me, and she is extremely proud of me. My daughter has taken my father's place.

She is my biggest cheerleader today." *Mardaani 3* trailer On the work front, Rani Mukerji is preparing for the release of *Mardaani 3*, slated to hit theatres on January 30, 2025. The film is expected to continue her powerful run in the franchise.

The trailer of the movie was recently released and has been receiving praise. Rani's character Shivani Shivaji Roy is back to rescue girls who go missing without a trace.



At Davos, IBM Chief Backs India's Push For AI Sovereignty



(Staff Reporter) India's push to shape its own artificial intelligence future took center stage at the World Economic Forum in Davos, where global technology leaders and Indian policymakers highlighted the need for homegrown capabilities across the AI value chain, from chips to real-world applications. Arvind Krishna, Chairman and CEO of IBM, said India must invest deeply in local strengths such as semiconductors, AI model development, and practical use cases to build stronger "AI sovereignty."

Speaking at the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos, Krishna noted that smaller, specialized AI models are quickly narrowing the gap with large foundational systems and now make up nearly 95 per cent of global AI consumption. "The underlying ecosystem whether it's semiconductors, model building, or usage applications is where the big breakthroughs will come for India," he told NDTV Profit. Krishna cited China's DeepSeek as an example of how success in AI often comes after repeated failures.

He argued that India should focus on specialized AI systems trained on local data from sectors such as healthcare, defense, and legal services, while also encouraging experimentation and accepting failure as part of innovation. India's policy direction on AI was reinforced by Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, who said Indian IT firms have already shifted toward AI, leading to increased hiring across the sector.

He said India is currently developing 12 AI models, with at least four expected to be launched soon. Vaishnaw emphasized that India is prioritizing focused, sector-specific smaller models that

can drive productivity gains across industries.

He added that the country has attracted \$70 billion in investment for AI-enabling infrastructure, including data centers from companies such as Google and Amazon. The minister also pointed to progress in India's semiconductor program, with 10 fabrication plants under

construction, three pilot projects underway, and four units expected to begin commercial operations in 2026. He said the government's decision to allow private sector participation in nuclear power generation could help meet the massive energy needs of large-scale AI computing.

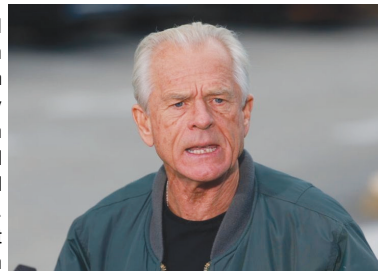
A recent report underlined the scale of the

opportunity, projecting India's semiconductor demand to rise from \$33 billion in 2022 to \$117 billion by 2030. The government's Rs 7,280 crore scheme for Sintered Rare Earth Permanent Magnets is also expected to support these ambitions by ensuring secure access to critical materials needed for advanced manufacturing.

White House Adviser Questions U.S. Support For AI Services Used In India

(Staff Reporter) Peter Navarro, a key trade adviser to President Donald Trump, criticized India during a television interview, raising concerns about American resources being used to support AI services abroad.

He argued that AI platforms operating from U.S. soil rely on American infrastructure and electricity while serving users in countries such as India and China, an issue he said needs to be addressed. Navarro's remarks come at a time of growing strain in India-United States relations.



The latest friction follows the Trump administration's decision to impose a 50 percent tariff on Indian goods, which includes an additional 25 percent duty linked to India's continued purchase of Russian crude oil. The relationship has also been tested by disagreements beyond trade. These include Trump's earlier claim that he helped end the India-Pakistan conflict in May last year, as well

as concerns in New Delhi over Washington's updated immigration policies. Navarro has repeatedly targeted India in the past. Last year, he sharply criticized New Delhi's trade policies and

oil imports from Russia, accusing India of maintaining high tariffs and benefiting unfairly from global trade.

He has also argued that India did not import Russian oil in large volumes before the war in Ukraine. India has consistently defended its position, stating that, like any major economy, it will take steps necessary to protect its

national interests and economic security.

Navarro has extended his criticism beyond India to the BRICS group, claiming that member countries depend heavily on access to the U.S. market and engage in unfair trade practices. His latest comments underline the increasingly confrontational tone of the Trump administration's trade policy toward key emerging economies.

A day in the life of a Bharat Taxi rider, what it's actually like to ride with the cooperative Uber and Ola challenger

(Staff Reporter) Bharat Taxi was officially launched in India on December 2, 2025. In a tweet posted on December 20, the Ministry of Cooperation described it as a soft launch.

It said that 1.01 lakh users had registered for the cooperative-based ride-hailing service in 16 days. As of January 4, 2026, it had registered over 4 lakh customers, which means that it had achieved a growth of approximately 296.04% in about two weeks. The Bharat Taxi app was released on the Google Play Store on October 31, 2025, and it has been downloaded over 5 lakh times since then. Apple users have given it an average rating of 4.9, which has catapulted it to No.38 among

travel apps on the App Store (this is at the time of writing). These numbers are very impressive for a service not yet fully rolled out to the public that wants to take on established players like Uber and Ola. But as impressive as these numbers are, they don't tell the whole story. On the road, Bharat Taxi is still a work in progress.

The ETAs are longer, the glitches are real, and the driver density is still building. But an even more surprising thing is the lack of awareness. Very few drivers seem to know about Bharat Taxi at this point in time. Largely, they seem clueless about how it could change their lives. The word "cooperative" does not ring a bell for many. For those who

do have some idea and have started to use it, most of them would rather wait and watch what happens rather than jump to any conclusions so early. To be fair, Bharat Taxi doesn't have the billion-dollar marketing budget of its rivals. The cooperative model might seem like Amul's – and it is in some ways – but it lacks any mascot and hasn't yet dipped its toes into the waters of witty, topical advertising.

Only recently have we started seeing Bharat Taxi banners outside or next to Amul stores and flyers being distributed inside RWA societies encouraging people to download the app. That education is crucial because the Google and Apple stores have multiple Bharat Taxi apps. One

Bharat Taxi app in particular has confused many, even the official account of the News Services Division of Akashvani, which has mistakenly used the logo of this other app in one of its posts (screenshot above). But that is only the tip of the iceberg. This Bharat Taxi app, which is developed by Insperon Technologies Private Limited according to the description provided on the App Store might also own the copyright for "bharattaxi" so there could be some legal implications down the road. Sahakar Taxi has not officially commented on the naming confusion. The government-backed Bharat Taxi app is built by Moving Tech Innovations, which is also the maker of the ONDC-backed Namma Yatri app. A day in the life with Bharat Taxi

For a rider, the experience begins with a familiar, orange-accented interface (you're greeted with India's tricolour flag every time you open the app). Armaan, a regular commuter in Delhi-NCR, was one of the early adopters curious to see if the cooperative dream matched the digital reality. "I booked the cab first, but it got cancelled immediately," Armaan recalls.

"There's still a lot of waiting time compared to Uber. When I finally got a bike request accepted, the icon on the map didn't move. Then the driver called me and asked me to cancel it. He said he was just 'testing' to see if the app actually worked. It's annoying, but you realise these guys are learning the ropes of their own business."

Scientists Discover New State of Matter That Could Change Computing

(Staff Reporter) In a breakthrough that feels like something out of science fiction, physicists have discovered a brand-new "quantum state" of matter. This isn't just a minor tweak to what we already know; it's a bridge between two major worlds of physics that were previously thought to be completely separate.

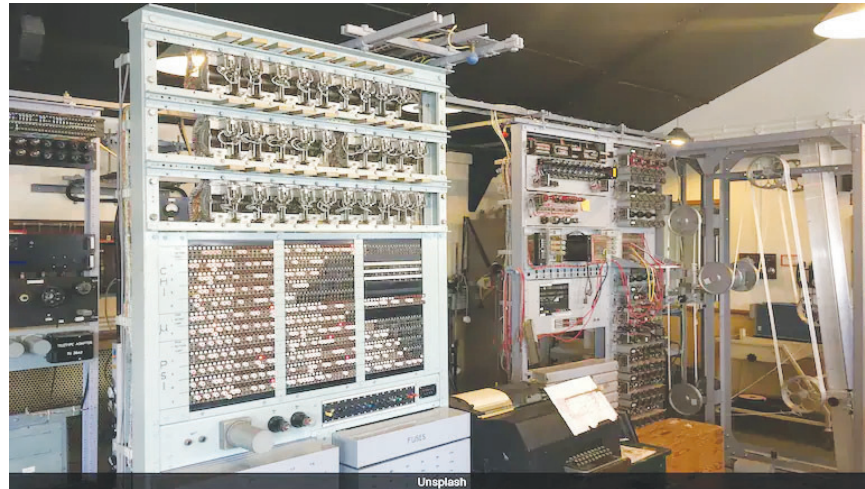
What actually happened?

Think of it like this: In physics, there are two big "trends" right now.

Quantum Criticality: This is when electrons are in a frantic state of indecision, fluctuating between different phases (like water being right on the edge of turning into ice).

Topology: This is about the "shape" or "twist" of electron waves. It's important because these twists are incredibly stable and don't break easily.

Until now, scientists thought



you couldn't have both. It was believed that the chaotic "fluctuations" of one would destroy the stable "twists" of the other. But researchers from Rice University and the Vienna University of Technology proved that theory wrong. According to

the study published in Nature Physics on January 14, They found that these two forces can actually work together to create a brand-new state of matter.

Why does this matter to you?

You might not see a

"quantum critical" laptop tomorrow, but this discovery is a huge deal for the future of technology. Because this new state is both highly sensitive (thanks to the fluctuations) and incredibly stable (thanks to the topology), it's the "Goldilocks"

zone for building better tech.

Super-Fast Computers: It could lead to quantum computers that don't crash as easily.

Ultra-Sensitive Sensors: Imagine medical or scientific sensors that can pick up signals we currently can't even detect.

Green Energy: This could help create materials that conduct electricity with zero waste, leading to much more efficient electronics.

A "Road Map" for the Future

"This is a fundamental step forward," says Professor Qimiao Si from Rice University. By merging these two fields, scientists now have a "map" to go out and find, or even design, entirely new materials that we didn't think could exist. We are essentially learning to play with the deepest rules of the universe to build the next generation of gadgets.

Study Reveals Greenland's Ice Completely Melted During Past Warm Period, Highlighting Future Risks

Scientific studies have revealed that a portion of Greenland's vast ice sheet completely disappeared during a naturally warm period.

(Staff Reporter) A new study is helping scientists understand how fragile Greenland's ice can be when the world gets warmer.

By looking deep under the ice, researchers found

clear signs that part of Greenland once lost all its ice during a warm time long ago, raising concerns about what could happen in the future as temperatures rise again, reported Forbes.com.

Recent scientific studies have revealed that a portion of Greenland's vast ice sheet completely disappeared during a naturally warm period about 7,000 years ago.

The temperatures at that time were similar to what scientists believe could occur by the end of this century if greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. Growing political interest in the Arctic region and new climate signals are making the region's future

increasingly important. As part of the GreenDrill project, scientists drilled through the ice at Greenland's Prudhoe Dome to a depth of more than 500 meters, reaching the bedrock beneath.

Luminescence dating techniques revealed that the overlying ice had completely disappeared between 6,000 and 8,200 years ago. This period is known as the Holocene Warm Period, when temperatures were approximately 3 to 5 degrees Celsius warmer than before the Industrial Era, which is around the projections for 2100.

The ice formed at that location later showed no traces of the previous Ice Age, suggesting that the ice sheet had completely receded and then re-formed. A senior scientist on the project explained that this significant discovery was made possible after a highly risky drilling

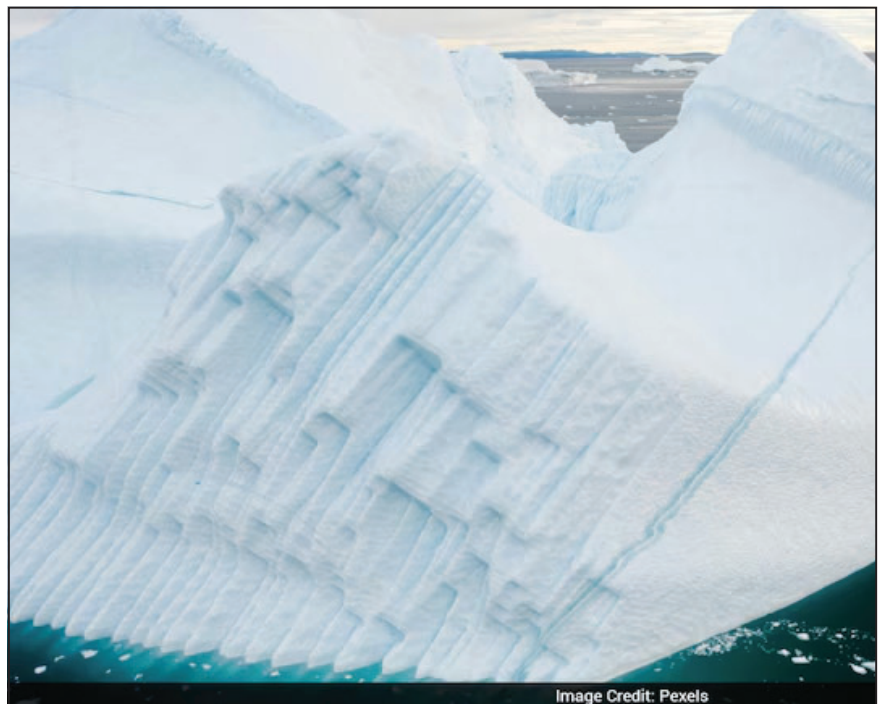


Image Credit: Pexels

operation that nearly failed. These results clearly demonstrate that large ice sheets can be completely transformed by even a small increase in temperature.

Hrithik Roshan From 2016 To 2026 Shows His Biceps Obsession Hasn't Changed



(Staff Reporter) Hrithik Roshan has long been synonymous with discipline, strength, and one of the most enviable physiques in Indian cinema. For over a decade, his sculpted arms and razor-sharp definition have continued to set benchmarks for fitness enthusiasts, proving that consistency often outshines trends.

On Wednesday, the actor gave fans a nostalgic and motivational treat by sharing a series of photographs on Instagram spanning different phases of his life. What tied them all together was unmistakable: Hrithik flexing his biceps. Among the collection, one image stood out instantly, a childhood throwback featuring a young Hrithik proudly flexing his tiny arms, hinting that

his fascination with strength started far earlier than anyone imagined. The rest of the photos showcased the actor in his element, shirtless, muscular, and effortlessly commanding attention. His defined arms and overall conditioning reinforced why he continues to be regarded as one of Bollywood's most enduring fitness icons. Adding humour and self-awareness to the post, Hrithik captioned the images with a candid note about his lifelong love for biceps. He wrote that no matter how much he evolves or how deeply he understands life, his obsession with what he calls "Bollywood biceps" refuses to fade, ending the caption with a playful request for prayers.

For those inspired by Hrithik Roshan's arms and looking to build strength of their own, here

are five effective biceps-focused exercises worth adding to a workout routine:

1. Dumbbell Bicep Curls

Stand upright with a dumbbell in each hand, elbows tucked close to your torso. Curl the weights upward while squeezing the biceps, then lower them slowly with control.

2. Barbell Curls

Grip a barbell with palms facing forward. Keep your chest lifted and elbows stable as you curl the bar towards your chest. Pause briefly at the top before lowering it steadily.

3. Hammer Curls

Hold dumbbells with palms facing each other. Curl the weights

upward without rotating your wrists. This movement works both the biceps and forearms effectively.

4. Concentration Curls

Seated on a bench, rest your elbow against your inner thigh and curl one dumbbell at a time. Slow, controlled repetitions help enhance muscle definition and peak.

Winter Hair Care: Stop Hair Fall By Mixing These 5 Ingredients In Coconut Oil



Hair problems tend to increase sharply during the winter months. Cold air, low humidity, reduced sunlight and poor nutrition can leave hair dry, dull and brittle. As a result, hair fall increases and growth slows down. This issue is especially common among women and young adults. Without timely care, hair gradually begins to thin. In such conditions, natural and home remedies are often considered more effective than chemical-based oils and products. (Local18)

Is Applying Perfume On Your Neck Really Harmful For Your Skin? Social Media Stands Divided

(Staff Reporter) These days, even the smallest lifestyle habits can trigger widespread debates on social media.

One such discussion currently gaining traction is whether spraying perfume on the neck can be harmful to the skin. Several viral posts, particularly focusing on women, claim that applying perfume to the neck may damage the skin and even affect hormones. What was once considered a normal grooming practice is now being questioned, leaving many confused about what to believe. Why Is The Neck At The Centre Of The Controversy? On platforms such as X, users argue

that the neck is one of the worst places to apply perfume. The main concern stems from the presence of the thyroid gland just below the neck, which plays a vital role in hormone regulation. Additionally, the skin on the neck is thinner and more sensitive than many other parts of the body. Viral claims suggest that modern perfumes contain chemicals, alcohol and fixatives that can penetrate deep into the skin. Some people link symptoms such as fatigue, restlessness, mood swings, neck irritation and pigmentation directly

to perfume use. Your thyroid sits just under your skin: tiny, fragile, and insanely absorbent. So when you spray perfume on your neck,

don't realize this,... pic.twitter.com/2osg6sonRZ — Fatima habib (@faty_345) November 23, 2025

While there is no strong medical evidence to fully support these claims, repeated online discussions have fuelled confusion and concern. What Dermatologists Actually Say Doctors and dermatologists clarify that the primary concern is not hormones, but the nature of the skin on the neck. Most commercial perfumes contain high levels of alcohol, which helps disperse fragrance but can weaken the skin barrier when used

frequently. Synthetic fragrance compounds can further irritate sensitive skin.

The neck is particularly vulnerable because its skin is thin and often exposed to sunlight. Over time, repeated perfume application can lead to redness, itching, rashes and pigmentation.

Some fragrance ingredients are photosensitive, meaning that applying perfume and then going out in the sun can cause dark patches that are difficult to fade. Many people experience neck discolouration or irritation without realising perfume may be the cause.



it's not just "a nice scent." Those chemicals land directly on one of the most sensitive hormone centers in your entire body. Most people

8 Global Winter Delicacies You Must Try



Hotteok (South Korea): Hotteok are sweet Korean pancakes filled with brown sugar, cinnamon, and nuts. Crispy on the outside and gooey inside, they're a popular winter street snack, perfect for warming cold hands while enjoying the festive street-food atmosphere in Korea.



Fondue (Switzerland): Swiss fondue is melted cheese served in a communal pot, accompanied by bread cubes for dipping. Traditionally enjoyed during snowy winters, it's a social and comforting dish that brings warmth, laughter, and indulgence to family gatherings.



Champurrado (Mexico): Champurrado is a thick, chocolatey Mexican drink made with masa, milk, and spices like cinnamon. Often served during winter holidays, it's rich, warming, and perfect with sweet breads or pastries, making it a beloved treat during chilly Mexican mornings.



Gingerbread Cookies (Germany): German gingerbread, or Lebkuchen, is a fragrant spiced cookie often decorated with icing. A holiday staple, it's sweet, slightly chewy, and filled with warming spices like ginger, cloves, and nutmeg, offering both festive cheer and a comforting winter aroma.



Raclette (France): Raclette is a melted cheese dish traditionally served over potatoes, pickles, and cured meats. Popular during alpine winters, it's hearty and indulgent, perfect for gatherings where everyone melts their own cheese and enjoys a cozy, communal meal.



Miso Soup (Japan): Miso soup is a savory Japanese broth made with fermented soybean paste, tofu, and seaweed. Served hot, it warms the body and soul during cold winters, providing comfort and nourishment while complementing traditional Japanese winter meals.

Shahid Kapoor's Vegetarian Diet To Be Fit At 44: 'Mindful Eating Over Restriction'

Shahid Kapoor doesn't shy away from the fact that he loves a good workout and staying in shape, whether the role demands it or not. As the actor prepares for the release of his new film, O Romeo, where he plays a tattoo-covered anti-hero, he has once again had to maintain a hero's physique. In a recent interview with The Indian Express, the 44-year-old got candid about his diet and workout that help him to stay fighting fit. Shahid Kapoor has been a vegetarian for many years and has been very vocal about following a plant-based diet. In previous interviews, he has spoken about how reading Brian Hines' book Life is Fair made him realise that he didn't want animals to suffer for his food. This switch has also improved his energy levels and made him feel more vibrant.



Shahid Kapoor on his workout and diet Ask the father of two about his daily workout, and he says, "For me, fitness is about consistency rather than intensity." He goes on to add, "My routine usually includes a mix of functional training, strength work, and mobility exercises to keep me agile and injury-

free. I prefer training in the morning, which gives me a good head start to the day. I also try to add some cardio or a sport whenever possible just to keep things interesting." For Shahid Kapoor, working out is more about "maintaining a balanced routine that supports my energy, my work, and my overall well-

being" than just looking good. For Shahid Kapoor, it is not just about the gym but also eating a well-balanced diet. Not one to push himself to extremes for the sake of being fit, he says, "I try to eat clean and stay disciplined, but I am not extreme about it. I have been a vegetarian, so my

meals naturally stay balanced — plenty of greens, vegetables, and pulses. I avoid heavy, unhealthy foods and don't eat late at night, as it really affects my energy." The actor goes on to add, "Instead of weighing everything I eat, I prefer smaller, frequent meals that keep me feeling light and steady. That said, I am human — I enjoy comfort food once in a while, especially simple home-cooked meals. For me, it is about mindful eating rather than strict restriction." Shahid Kapoor on getting a good night's sleep Shahid Kapoor, who is married to entrepreneur Mira Kapoor, shares that "Sleep is honestly one of the most underrated parts of staying balanced." For the actor, having a restful sleep that can energise him is very important.

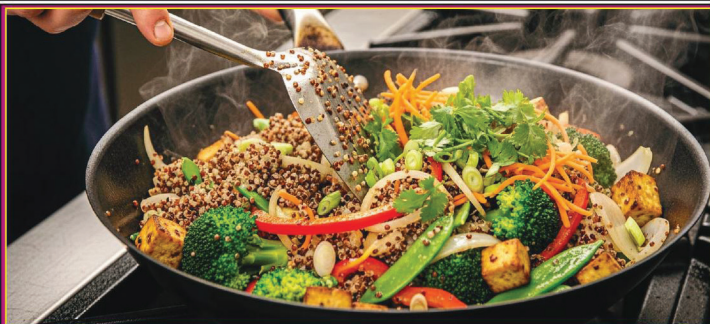
8 Healthy Quinoa Recipes For Everyday Meals



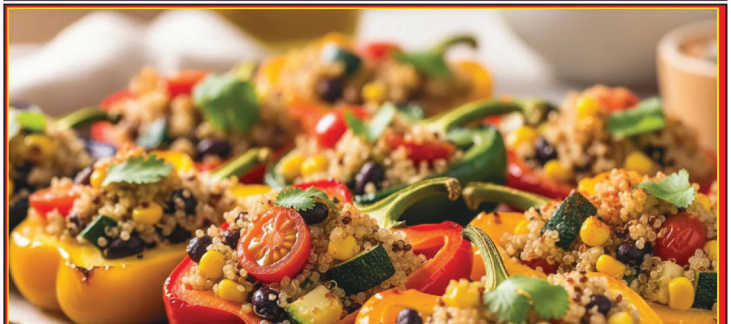
Quinoa Breakfast Bowl: Cook quinoa in almond milk and top with fresh fruits, nuts, and a drizzle of honey. This energizing breakfast is rich in protein, fiber, and antioxidants, keeping you full throughout the morning.



Quinoa Stir Fry: Sauté cooked quinoa with broccoli, carrots, peas, and tofu. Season with soy sauce, garlic, and ginger. This quick stir-fry is a flavourful, protein-packed alternative to rice or noodles.



Quinoa Salad with Veggies: Combine cooked quinoa with cherry tomatoes, cucumber, bell peppers, and spinach. Toss with olive oil, lemon juice, salt, and pepper for a refreshing, nutrient-dense lunch or light dinner.



Quinoa Stuffed Peppers: Fill halved bell peppers with a mixture of quinoa, black beans, corn, and spices. Bake until tender for a colourful, high-protein vegetarian main dish.

OpenAI, Anthropic set sights on enterprise customers at

(Staff Reporter) Artificial intelligence startups OpenAI and Anthropic have their sights set on enterprise customers this year as they race to win more revenue, users and market share. In separate interviews with CNBC at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland on Wednesday, Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei and OpenAI CFO Sarah Friar highlighted enterprise as a key revenue driver for their businesses. Enterprise customers account for roughly 40% of OpenAI's business as of January, but Friar said she expects that figure to grow to closer to 50% by the end of the year. OpenAI announced in November that more than 1 million business customers



around the world are using the company's technology. OpenAI was founded as a nonprofit AI lab in 2015, and its valuation has swelled to \$500 billion since the launch of its ChatGPT chatbot in 2022. "We're an incredibly

strong business today," Friar said Wednesday. "As we look forward, for us, it's eyes on the prize of, 'How do we add value to the consumer? How do we add value to enterprises? And how do we close this capability gap?'

You're going to hear us talk about this over and over again." Amodei said that while Anthropic offers consumer products, they are not the company's major focus. He attributed roughly 80% of Anthropic's business to

enterprises and 20% to consumers, adding that the startup has embraced enterprises in part because they are a relatively predictable and stable source of income. "Since the beginning, Anthropic has thought in terms of safety and reliability of AI systems, and one of the things we realized is that that was very synergistic with working with enterprises as compared to consumers," Amodei said. As of September, Anthropic had amassed more than 300,000 business customers, up from less than 1,000 two years prior. Anthropic was founded by a group of former OpenAI executives and researchers in 2021, and its valuation has since climbed to \$350 billion.

Who Is Albinder Dhindsa, The New CEO Of Eternal (Zomato's Parent)?



(Staff Reporter) Albinder Dhindsa, the co-founder and long-time leader of quick-commerce platform Blinkit, has been named the new chief executive officer of Eternal, the parent company of Zomato, marking a significant leadership change in India's on-demand delivery ecosystem. His appointment follows the resignation of Deepinder Goyal, who steps down effective February 1. Dhindsa is best known as the co-founder and CEO of Blinkit, one of India's fastest-growing quick-commerce platforms, previously known as Grofers. Born in Patiala, Punjab, he studied engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, and later earned an MBA from Columbia Business School in the United States, laying the foundation for a career in technology and logistics. From Grofers to Blinkit: The Quick-Commerce Pioneer Dhindsa's entrepreneurial journey began

with the founding of Grofers in 2013, alongside Saurabh Kumar. Initially set up as a hyperlocal delivery service connecting neighbourhood shops with customers, Grofers evolved into a full-stack online grocery platform. In 2021, the company rebranded as Blinkit, pivoting aggressively to the quick-commerce model that promised grocery and essentials delivery in as little as 10 minutes, a strategy that reshaped consumer expectations in India's fast-moving delivery space. Under Dhindsa's leadership, Blinkit established a network of micro-fulfilment centres and dark stores across major cities, positioning the company as a key player in the highly competitive instant delivery market. In 2022, Blinkit was acquired by Zomato in an all-stock deal valued at about \$568 million, making it a core part of the broader delivery ecosystem alongside food delivery and

other services. A Strategic Leadership Shift Dhindsa's elevation to CEO at Eternal reflects the increasing importance of quick commerce and hyperlocal logistics within the group's longer-term strategy. Blinkit has not only driven significant volume growth but has also become one of the most valuable verticals in the combined entity. His leadership style has been tested in the post-acquisition phase, with founder Deepinder Goyal previously acknowledging

a challenging integration period. In public remarks, Goyal revealed that he had at times considered asking Dhindsa to step down from his Blinkit role during the early years of integration, a testament to the intensity of operational expectations as the businesses converged.

Industry Standing and Vision

As CEO of Eternal, Dhindsa will now oversee not just Blinkit but the entire suite of businesses under the group, including Zomato's core food

delivery business, cloud kitchens, grocery delivery and other ventures. His deep experience in rapid delivery logistics, technology deployment and customer-centric innovation is expected to shape strategic priorities at the group level. Dhindsa's role also highlights how quick commerce has emerged from a niche segment to a mainstream pillar of India's digital economy, one where speed, operational efficiency and network scale are critical differentiators.

Pending home sales drop sharply in December, dampening 2026

(Staff Reporter) Stagnant mortgage rates, falling housing supply and ongoing economic uncertainty weighed heavily on homebuyers in December.

Pending home sales, a measure of signed contracts on existing homes, dropped 9.3% last month from November, according to the National Association of Realtors. Analysts were expecting a slight gain.

Sales were 3% lower than December 2024.

"The housing sector is not out of the woods yet," said Lawrence Yun, chief economist for the Realtors. "After several months of encouraging signs in pending



contracts and closed sales, the December new contract figures have dampened the short-term outlook."

Sales fell month to month in all regions of U.S. and were higher annually only in the South. Homes also stayed on the market longer in

December, at an average of 39 days compared with 35 days in December 2024. Mortgage rates in December, when these deals were inked, barely moved at all. The average rate on the popular 30-year fixed loan sat around 6.25%, according to Mortgage News Daily.

Giorgio Armani's First Glimpse At New Collection At Milan Fashion Week

(Staff Reporter) Giorgio Armani on Monday showcased its maiden menswear runway collection under the sole creative direction of Leo Dell'Orco at Milan Fashion Week, following the death of the iconic designer in September last year. Leo Dell'Orco, the designer's long-time collaborator and right-hand man of nearly four decades, marked his debut at the Italian fashion house, where he now oversees the menswear collection. This was the first Giorgio Armani collection where the late designer did not have any involvement, The Guardian reported. During the show, the front row featured celebs like Ricky Martin and Hudson Williams.



"Somehow it feels more energetic, there is something about joy. It is not a new beginning but you can sense something new is happening, there is a sense of energy that is great," The Associated Press quoted Alex Badia, WWD's fashion and style director, as saying. Carlo Capasa, head of Milan's fashion chamber, dubbed the latest men's collection from Giorgio Armani as "modern," adding that he observed the "true spirit of Armani". For the special occasion, Dell'Orco was seen donning a double-breasted suit without a tie.

What's Next For Giorgio Armani?

After Giorgio Armani's demise, speculations have been doing the rounds regarding the future creative direction of the brand's biannual collections, The Guardian reported.

Giorgio Armani's New Collection:

Top Highlights The collection previewed appeared in continuity with Armani's heritage soft tailoring, with fresh signs of sharpness and modernity, The Associated Press reported. From first glance, it accompanied by white shirts and ties as looked as if Dell'Orco had embraced a well as the trademark pleated trousers. fresh colour story, featuring a loden green

Since the brand was famous for top accompanied by a textured jacket and its relaxed suiting and fluid folds in silk gray trousers. Another major highlight was and velvet under Armani, Dell'Orco tried the blouson bomber jackets and belted his best to keep it in his design, but shifted

the focus towards jewel-like tones.

During his time, Armani rarely staged a finale during the fashion events. But the latest collection from his iconic brand received a full walk-through at the Milan Fashion Week, where the crowd applauded its new vision.

Several names have reportedly been considered for the role, including former Celine and Dior Homme creative director Hedi Slimane. While Dell'Orco now looks after the brand's menswear collection, Armani's niece, Silvana, continues in her role as womenswear design director.

Maryam Nawaz's Daughter Turns Heads in Identical Silver Saree Look Inspired by Deepika Padukone

(News Agency) The wedding festivities of Junaid Safdar, grandson of former Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif and son of Pakistan's Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, have dominated social media. Maryam Nawaz's daughter, Mahnoor Safdar, turned heads at one of the festivities in Lahore that drew instant comparisons to Bollywood star Deepika Padukone. Mahnoor's outfit, which included a dazzling silver-grey saree that was identical to one Deepika wore in 2021, provoked a heated online discussion over influence and style. Her ensemble instantly became one of the most talked-about aspects of the event's fashion buzz because of its striking emerald jewels and elegant updo.

Mahnoor Safdar's Show-Stopping Silver Saree

Mahnoor Safdar looked absolutely breathtaking in an exquisite silver-grey embroidered saree by Dubai-based Pakistani designer Faraz Manan during the high-profile

reception in Lahore. The beautiful scallop-edged border of the saree with heavy, intricate embroidery was paired with a matching blouse that completed the look. Indeed, with her spectacular emeralds and diamonds and elegant hairstyle, she created an air of regal elegance that immediately reminded one of a former star moment. A Nod to Deepika Padukone's Iconic Look Social media users quickly pointed out that Mahnoor's saree and overall style were almost exactly the same as what Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone had once worn. In 2021, Deepika used the same Faraz Manan saree, accessorising it with bright jewellery and simple makeup for a style that was widely praised in fashion circles. Comparisons between the two looks were prompted not just by the saree itself but also by the entire style, including the elegant bun and subtle makeup.

How Did Social Media React?



A lively discussion developed when pictures from the event appeared on Instagram and Twitter. Mahnoor's elegance and grace in carrying the glitzy costume at a significant family

gathering were praised by certain followers. Some engaged in light-hearted arguments about "who wore it better," with some claiming Deepika's version was the best. However, supporters of

Mahnoor's aesthetic highlighted that prominent personalities in South Asian fashion scenes favour Faraz Manan's designs, making such cross-cultural sartorial parallels unavoidable.

Neha Kakkar: I Am Not Getting Divorced



(Staff Reporter) MUMBAI—Bollywood singer Neha Kakkar's recent post announcing a break from everything sparked rumors of her possible divorce from husband Rohanpreet Singh.

However, now she has shared another social media post clearing the air around her marriage. Neha has urged not to drag her husband or family into the matter. She revealed that she is unhappy with some other people in the system.

Neha penned on her Insta Stories, "Guys plz don't drag my

Innocent Husband or my Sweetest Family in all this plz! They are the purest people I know and whatever I am today, it's because of their support (sic)." "It's a few other people and the system that I'm upset with. I hope you get it and let my husband and my family stay out of all this and yes, I agree I shouldn't be so emotional when it comes to posting on social media coz (because) media people know very well ke 'Rai ka pahaad kaise banaya jaata hai' (mountain out of a molehill). Lesson learnt," she went on to add. Calling herself too

emotional for this world, she concluded, "Ab se (now) I'm Not going to talk about my personal life bhai sahab!!!! Bechari (helpless) Emotional Nehu is too Emotional for This World! Sorry and Thank you My NeHearts. Don't worry, I'll be back soon with a BANG! Much love." In her

previous post which has been deleted now, Neha announced that she is taking a break from "responsibilities, relationships, and work".

She shared, "Time to take a break from responsibilities, relationships, work and everything I can think of right now. Not sure

if I'll be back or not.

Thank you." The 'Lollipop' singer added, "I request paparazzi and fans not to film me at all. I hope you respect my privacy and let me live freely in this world. No cameras plz! I request! This is the least you all can give me for my peace." (IANS)

Ahan Shetty Says Debut Failure Tested Him Deeply

(Staff Reporter) MUMBAI—Actor Ahan Shetty has rarely come without pain, and every moment shaped reflected on the difficult period he faced at the start of his journey. Looking ahead, Ahan said he was ready

his second Bollywood film 'Border 2.' Sharing stills from 'Border 2' on social media, Ahan spoke about the uncertainty and struggles that followed his first film. "December 3, 2021.

3 'Tadap,' my first film. The beginning of a dream I stepped into with hope, fear, and everything in between," he wrote. He added that what followed "tested me deeply," bringing "periods of uncertainty, quiet struggles, and lessons that only time and patience can teach."

Calling the phase transformative, the actor said every experience helped shape him. "Growth



support the film. Earlier, at the song launch of 'Border 2,' his father and actor Suniel Shetty became emotional while speaking about the challenging phase Ahan went through after his debut. He noted that finding one's place in the film industry is difficult even for star kids. (IANS)

to turn the page with 'Border 2,' which releases on January 23, 2026. "A new chapter born from patience, perseverance, and belief.

With a fuller heart, steadier faith, and the same dream, now stronger than ever," he wrote, urging audiences to

Happy Patel Review: Vir Das, Mona Singh Headline This Absurdly Extraordinary Rollercoaster Ride With

(Staff Reporter) Happy Patel Movie Review: Finally, there's a comedy film that doesn't rattle or pack a slapstick punch! More often than not, our sequel and threequel comic capers reinforce garish gags laced with sexism, sexual innuendoes and punchlines on women's bodies. But thankfully, after Go Goa Gone and Delhi Belly, here we've Vir Das once again taking clichés and flipping the narrative and creating an absurd world.

In his directorial debut Happy Patel: Khatarnak Jasoos, his humour operates as satire, couching politics in wit. Happy Patel is an eccentric, quirky, preposterous film. And yet, it's not frivolous.

The film opens with a hilarious fight sequence between two parties—a local don from Goa and two special agents from the UK. The result? Sakhubai, a maid, loses her life while trying to protect a vase amid this pandemonium.



The local gangster also gets shot. He somehow manages to reach home only to be reprimanded by his wife for spilling blood on the floor that she has just cleaned with phenyl.

Happy Patel Movie Review: Finally, there's a comedy film that doesn't rattle or pack a slapstick punch! More often than not, our sequel and threequel comic capers reinforce garish gags laced with sexism, sexual innuendoes and punchlines on women's bodies. But thankfully, after Go Goa Gone and Delhi Belly,

here we've Vir Das once again taking clichés and flipping the narrative and creating an absurd world. In his directorial debut Happy Patel: Khatarnak Jasoos, his humour operates as satire, couching politics in wit. Happy Patel is an eccentric, quirky, preposterous film. And yet, it's not frivolous.

The film opens with a hilarious fight sequence between two parties—a local don from Goa and two special agents from the UK. The result? Sakhubai, a maid, loses her life while trying to protect

a vase amid this pandemonium. The local gangster also gets shot. He somehow manages to reach home only to be reprimanded by his wife for spilling blood on the floor that she has just cleaned with phenyl. MI7 enters the picture and they decide to send Happy to fight Mama in Goa and rescue Beatrice. Thus begins his Indian-fication. Happy is taught to speak Hindi, bargain with vegetable sellers, fight like Rohit Shetty's heroes, romance Indian women like Shah Rukh Khan and eat without a spoon. Once in Goa, he befriends Geet and Roxy, falls in love with a dancer named Rupa and begins his mission to crush Mama. Yes, this is a chaotic plot.

So, don't try to find any meaning and logic here. And sometimes, there's no method to this madness. But it's the solid screenplay by Vir and Amogh Ranadive that keeps it all together. Kudos to them and co-director Kavi Shastri for creating and

executing a 1-hour-59-minute long crisp film just on Indians, their quirks and their obsession with light skin! Here and there, the makers nonchalantly reference the socio-politics of the country, colonialism and Rishi Sunak's rule, leaving you cackling and chuckling. Much like his stand-ups, Vir's voice—wry, reflective and politically aware—remains intact in his directorial outing too. The jokes simply change form, not intent. He pokes fun at the country's social fabric and cultural contradictions without delivering overt commentary. In that sense, Happy Patel feels like a natural extension of his comic voice.

And the best part? Here, we've a man who understands women and their agency. Be it Mama or Rupa, they seem to be characters penned and lived by women.

Speaking of defying norms, Happy Patel deserves brownie points for spinning gender roles too.

Taskaree Review: Emraan Hashmi Opts For Intensity Over Swagger, Neeraj Pandey Almost Finds His Footing Again

(Staff Reporter) Taskaree Web Series Review: There exists a stark contrast between thrillers in streaming and on celluloid. Those that make it to the big screen – more often than not – are slick, cool, visually stunning and spiffy. Those in the OTT space can best be described as the former's less fortunate cousins.

They're rough, rugged, grimy. But Neeraj Pandey and Raghav M Jairath's Netflix series, Taskaree: The Smuggler's Web, set against the backdrop of high-end airports, global metropolises and high-profile smugglers, is polished, sanitised, slick to quite an extent and smart in an urban way.

Mounted on a massive budget and some picturesque locales, Taskaree is the story of Superintendent Arjun Meena, a sharp customs officer at Mumbai Airport. His mission: tackling global smuggling rings and cleansing corruption once and for all. The series begins with a chase sequence between a woman named Swati and a couple of nefarious Afro delinquents.

Arjun arrives right on time to nab Swati. He hands her over to her boss and takes Rs 50 lakhs in cash from him as a bribe. The righteous man in him suddenly awakens when he gets a call from the customs department that wants to revoke his suspension. ACP Prakash Kumar gets inducted into the customs team at Mumbai airport. He takes charge and wants Arjun and his suspended teammates Ravinder Gujar and Mitali Kamat back so that they can curb smuggling, which is led by kingpin Bada Choudhary, the leader of the infamous Choudhary Syndicate. This syndicate is responsible for bringing the maximum contraband to Mumbai airport. Swati is a 'popat', a colloquial term for a courier, and works with Bada. Bada, who resides in Italy, has offices in Bangkok, Addis Ababa and Al Dera. They smuggle luxury watches, cocaine and gold plates. Pilots, airhostesses and customs officials are also in cahoots with Bada. So, emasculating Bada and his ring is no cakewalk. The result? Honest seniors and subordinates constantly try to one-up each other amid red-tapism and bureaucracy.



Till the very end, you'll not know who's an informer and who's working silently with Bada in exchange for crores of money as rewards. For the most part, this unpredictability is what keeps Taskaree going. This seven-episode series is packed with a lot of action, strategising, cross-cutting, ticking clocks, dual timelines, split narratives and conspiracies. The screenplay by Neeraj and Vipul K Rawal is taut. The show thrives on a sense of unease. The tension is slow-building, steeped in moral ambiguity. The world feels lived-in and alert to danger.

Taskaree is ambitious but doesn't quite crumble under that pressure. It understands that a thriller doesn't need constant twists. Maybe that's why episodes don't end with spectacles or cliffhangers, but with revelations.

Some stretches may feel indulgent, but the makers immediately make up for it. What's refreshing here is that it doesn't treat crime as completely inhuman. It explores wrongdoings as economy and survival. Case in point: there are ample instances that reinforce that crime isn't always born out

of a twisted mind, but that bribes often become the last resort to pay medical bills and facilitate higher education. Cinematographers Parth Navle, Sudhir Palsane and Arvind Singh also deserve credit for rendering this narrative its chic look.

And thankfully, the women also impart some substance to this story. No time is wasted in showcasing the challenges of Mitali's single motherhood. She's a woman with a voice and agency. She gets to do as much action as her male counterparts – Arjun and Ravinder. But who truly drives the

narrative ahead is Priya, an airhostess turned informer. As for performances by the cast, Emraan Hashmi as Arjun Meena shoulders this narrative about the underbelly of smuggling with ease and restraint.

His performance relies less on bravado – typical of uniformed heroes in the world of thrillers – and more on contained intensity. He's a man who seems permanently caught between instinct and consequence. His charm and swagger are muted, replaced by calculation. Yes, he's fearless, but he doesn't rely on his testosterone, baring his biceps every time a criminal arrives at the scene.

Having said that, unlike most other characters here, he has a rather straight arc. But thanks to the morally dark and ambiguous characters that Emraan hasn't shied away from playing in the past, till the very end, you'll keep wondering if he's the bad guy. Needless to say, some troughs and crests in his arcs wouldn't have harmed the narrative. Amruta Khanvilkar as Mitali and Nandish Singh Sandhu as Ravinder do a good job, and so does Zoya Afroz as Priya. Priya, perhaps, has the most interesting character graph, and she understands the assignment well.

Jana Nayagan makers cite Dhurandhar 2 in Madras High Court amid censor row

(Staff Reporter) The makers of Vijay's Jana Nayagan on Tuesday cited Dhurandhar 2 as an example during proceedings at the Madras High Court, after the court pulled them up for announcing the film's release date without waiting for a censor certificate.

Senior Advocate Satish Parasaran, appearing for KVN Productions, argued that it is common practice for producers to announce release dates before receiving certification, pointing to Dhurandhar 2, which is already scheduled for release on March 19.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava and Justice G Arul Murugan reiterated concerns over such announcements being made without certification. Parasaran informed the court that KVN Productions had already received

approval to release the film in 22 other countries. He further argued that the CBFC



chairperson could not go back on an earlier decision to grant certification after informing the producers that the film would receive a U/A rating subject to certain modifications. Common to announce release date first "In 22 countries, we have received approval. It's not a practice to wait for certificate to announce money. If you

see Bollywood, they have already announced Dhurandhar 2," he said, adding, "A unanimous decision was taken, and even if one member later takes a different view, the majority decision should prevail. At present, a minority opinion is governing the process," reported Live Law India.

During the argument, Parasaran also informed the court that Prime Video, the official streaming partner for the film, on December 31, threatened to sue the producers if there was no clarity on the release date. The High Court also questioned the makers on why they did not allow the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) sufficient time to file a counter affidavit in the case. The bench further asked why the producers did not object to the board's January 6 communication seeking a review of the film's certification by the Revising Committee.

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