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Zendaya plans to disappear after packed 2026 slate.

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The Autism Therapy Racket

How Piece by Piece Applied Behavior Center for Autism (ABCA) Billed America's Most Vulnerable Children Into a $600 Million Fraud Crisis

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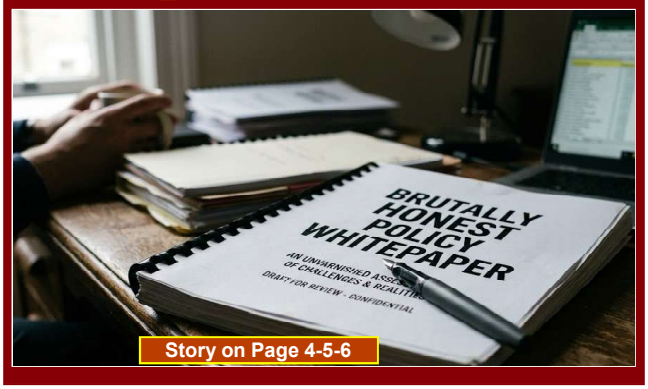
The Epstein Files Silence



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Multi Crore Kidney Racket Exposed In UP, India

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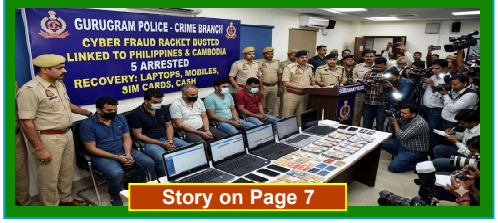
Cyber fraud racket linked to Philippines, Cambodia busted in Gurugram; 5 arrested



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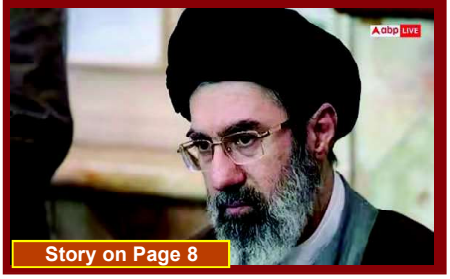
Where is Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei?



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India's tobacco trap: Can jobs and public health be balanced?

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The Autism Therapy Racket

An autism therapy firm paid $340,000 per child is closing — and the company set to take over its centers already settled federal fraud charges. Inside the upcoding epidemic pillaging Medicaid and the children it was meant to protect.

(Our Staff Reporter)

The Rise and Fall of Piece by Piece

In a beige commercial building in Lebanon, Indiana, a company called Piece by Piece Autism Centers was quietly becoming the most generously paid autism therapy provider per patient in the United States — and nobody in state government seemed to notice for years. Founded by Meghann Mitchell, the company billed Indiana's Medicaid program at rates that defied any reasonable interpretation of service delivery. In 2023, the firm collected $29 million from the state to serve just 84 children — approximately $340,000 per child, per year — according to an explosive Wall Street Journal investigation published March 10, 2026.

For context: that per-child cost exceeded what Medicaid typically spends on a full year of cancer treatment or twelve months of nursing home care. The company's hourly rate climbed as high as $640 per session for applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapy — services frequently delivered not by licensed clinicians, but by registered behavior technicians who may hold only a high school diploma and earn under $20 an hour in many states. The national average for comparable services was roughly $61 per hour.

Mitchell maintained the company followed Indiana's own rules and that no audit had conclusively found fraud, attributing the extraordinary billing to rising labor and operational costs. What she did not dispute was the mechanism: Indiana's reimbursement model allowed providers to effectively set their own list prices, with the state paying 40% of whatever that list price happened to be. It was a system designed to be gamed.

Between 2019 and 2023, the state paid Piece by Piece $58 million. During roughly that same period, founder Meghann Mitchell reportedly purchased a $2.5 million home on Florida's Sanibel Island and a $600,000 waterfront property on Indiana's Tippecanoe River, according to Wall Street Journal reporting.

$340,000 Avg. per child billed by Piece by Piece (2023)

$58M Total Indiana paid Piece by Piece, 2019–2023

$600M HHS-OIG estimated improper ABA payments

$14.6B Alleged fraud in DOJ 2025 national takedown

324 Defendants charged in 2025 healthcare fraud sweep

$640/hr Peak Piece by Piece hourly billing rate

The Closure — and the Troubling Replacement

Following the Journal's exposé and Indiana's revocation of Piece by Piece's Medicaid billing privileges across all seven of its centers in March 2026, the company announced it would cease operations by May 2026. Emails reviewed by reporters indicate its centers would not simply close — they would be absorbed by a rival autism therapy provider: Applied Behavior Center for Autism (ABCA), headquartered in Indianapolis.

The handoff raised immediate alarm bells. ABCA is not a clean-handed rescuer. In February 2023, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Indiana announced that ABCA and its owner and CEO, Sherry Michael, had agreed to pay $2 million to resolve civil allegations of Medicaid and TRICARE fraud — the largest TRICARE settlement in the district's history. Federal investigators accused ABCA of submitting false claims through multiple fraudulent billing schemes, including upcoded claims, concurrent and duplicate billing, claims for services not covered by TRICARE, and claims already paid by third-party sources. ABCA denied all liability. No criminal charges were filed.

ABCA operates 12 centers across Indiana and has continued taking Medicaid reimbursements since the 2023 settlement. Now it stands to inherit the patient population — and infrastructure — of the very firm the state just expelled. Neither ABCA, Piece by Piece, nor Indiana's FSSA had responded to press inquiries as of publication.

Upcoding: The Silent Epidemic Draining Medicaid

The Piece by Piece scandal is a dramatic case study, but it sits atop a vast and largely invisible iceberg. Upcoding — billing for services that are more complex or expensive than what was actually provided — is among the most prevalent and costly forms of healthcare fraud in the United States. It works through the bureaucratic invisibility of billing codes.

Every medical service is assigned a Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) code. A routine 15-minute check-in carries a lower-value code; a complex evaluation carries a higher one. When providers systematically bill the higher code regardless of what was delivered, the discrepancy is rarely caught in real time — claims processing systems approve millions of transactions daily against minimal clinical documentation review.

The HHS Office of Inspector General's December 2024 audit of Indiana's ABA program found that every single one of the 100 sampled Medicaid claims — 100 out of 100 — contained at least one improper or potentially improper element. Similar audits of Wisconsin, Maine, and Colorado found the same thing: a 100% deficiency rate across all sampled claims in each state. Combined, the OIG identified at least $600 million in improper or potentially improper ABA payments. These are not outliers. They are the system.

Indiana's ABA spending trajectory tells the story in numbers: approximately $21 million in 2017, ballooning to $611 million by 2023 — a nearly 30-fold increase in six years — before falling back to $445 million in 2024 after the state slashed reimbursement rates. Nine of the country's ten highest-billing ABA providers per patient in 2023 were located in Indiana.

> ***"There's no doubt that abuse happened." — Marcus Barlow, Deputy Chief of Staff, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration***

Named: Recent Indictments and Guilty Pleas

The fraud is not theoretical. Across the country, federal prosecutors and state attorneys general have brought a cascade of cases in recent years, naming names and securing convictions.

The Structural Conditions That Made This Possible

No fraud epidemic exists in a vacuum. Indiana's ABA billing catastrophe was, in a meaningful sense, designed into the system. The state's "percentage of list price" reimbursement model allowed providers to self-certify their own rates — and then receive a guaranteed percentage of whatever they claimed. There were no standardized fee schedules, no utilization caps, and for years, virtually no audits. The FSSA acknowledged that for nearly two decades it had underfunded and mismanaged Medicaid oversight.

Nationally, the ABA therapy sector exploded after all 50 states were required to provide meaningful autism coverage under Medicaid, with the last holdout — Texas — finally complying in 2022. Medicaid ABA payments surged from approximately $660 million nationally in 2019 to roughly $2.2 billion by 2023. Private equity

A company being shut down for alleged Medicaid abuse is being replaced by a company that already settled federal civil fraud charges without admitting wrongdoing.

firms acquired more than 500 autism therapy centers in recent years, and where PE entered, billing intensity often followed as investor pressure to maximize margins collided with loosely supervised CPT code selection.

The workforce structure of ABA therapy also created conditions ripe for abuse. Most direct therapy is delivered by Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs) — who require only a 40-hour training certification — but billing is often submitted under Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) codes, which command far higher reimbursement rates. When supervision is nominal or fraudulent, that credential gap becomes a profit center.

Eight Urgent Reforms to Fix the System

1. Abolish percentage-of-list-price reimbursement models nationally.

Indiana's catastrophe was directly enabled by letting providers set their own rates. CMS should mandate standardized, geographically adjusted fee schedules for all ABA services, with rates set by independent actuarial review.

2. Require real-time claims analytics with automatic outlier holds.

Every state Medicaid program should deploy AI-powered billing surveillance that flags providers billing more than two standard deviations above peer averages for pre-payment review — not post-payment audits years later.

3. Mandate independent credentialing verification at point of billing.

Claims submitted under BCBA codes should require verified proof that the supervising clinician was present for required supervision hours. Rubber-stamp supervision arrangements must be treated as fraud per se.

4. Prohibit successor provider arrangements without clean-slate audits.

When a Medicaid provider is terminated for billing abuse, any company seeking to absorb its patient population must pass an independent HHS-OIG audit before receiving a single Medicaid dollar.

5. Expand and protect whistleblowers.

Congress should increase the whistleblower share under the False Claims Act to a minimum of 25% for first-in healthcare fraud disclosures and create a dedicated federal hotline for ABA billing concerns with guaranteed 90-day response timelines.

6. Require behavioral health corporate ownership transparency.

Private equity acquisitions of ABA providers should trigger automatic disclosure to CMS, including ownership structure, profit extraction mechanisms, and prior fraud history across all portfolio entities.

7. Create lifetime utilization tracking linked to clinical outcomes.

Treatment should be tied to measurable clinical progress, not indefinite billing. A federal framework for outcome-linked authorization with annual independent clinical review would align provider incentives with patient welfare.

8. Prosecute, not just settle.

The ABCA settlement — $2 million, no admission, continued Medicaid participation — did not deter anything. When billing fraud patterns are systematic and documented, federal prosecutors must pursue criminal indictments against corporate officers, not merely civil recoveries priced in as a cost of doing business.

The Children Left Behind

In the rightful fury over taxpayer exploitation, it is easy to lose sight of who suffers most when the fraud investigations begin and providers close: the children. More than 8,000 Indiana children between ages three and eight relied on Medicaid-funded ABA therapy during the years under investigation. For children with autism, abrupt disruption of intensive therapy — particularly during critical developmental windows — can set back years of progress. Indiana's waiting list for home and community-based disability services currently stands at nearly 20,000 people.

The goal must be to design a system that genuinely serves these children: one that funds competent, credentialed, supervised care at fair rates, and one that makes the Piece by Piece model structurally impossible. That is not an impossible task. It requires only the political will to treat Medicaid oversight not as a bureaucratic burden, but as a fiduciary responsibility to the most vulnerable people in American society.

Common fraud typologies in ABA billing:

- Classic upcoding: Billing a complex office visit code for a routine brief session. Extremely common in therapy settings.
- Group-to-individual substitution: Billing individual therapy rates for group sessions, which reimburse at lower rates. Heavily documented in federal ABA audits.
- Credential laundering: Billing under a licensed clinician's name for services actually delivered by an uncredentialed technician.
- Phantom billing: Submitting claims for sessions that never occurred. The most brazen form — and often the easiest to prove.
- Unbundling: Breaking apart services normally billed as one bundled code and billing each component separately to inflate reimbursement.
- Rate self-escalation: In states with percentage-of-list-price models, providers simply raise their posted rates — driving up government payments without any change in care.

GUILTY PLEA

Asha Farhan Hassan — Smart Therapy Center, Minnesota

Hassan, 28, pleaded guilty in December 2025 to one count of wire fraud for stealing $14 million from Minnesota's Early Intensive Development and Behavior Intervention (EIDBI) autism program. Her company, Smart Therapy Center, submitted $31.8 million in total claims between 2021 and 2025 — far exceeding approved amounts. Hassan was simultaneously implicated in the massive $250 million Feeding Our Future pandemic food aid scandal. Sentencing was pending as of publication.

GUILTY PLEA

Abdinajib Hassan Yussuf — Star Autism Center LLC, Minnesota

Yussuf, 27, pleaded guilty in early 2026 to wire fraud. As president and CEO of Star Autism Center in St. Cloud, he admitted he did not personally know any individual with autism. His operation recruited Somali community children — including children without autism diagnoses — into the program, paying cash kickbacks to parents. He employed 18- and 19-year-old relatives with no relevant training as "behavioral technicians" and collected over $6 million in fraudulent Medicaid reimbursements. He faces up to five years in federal prison.

CIVIL SETTLEMENT (No Admission)

Sherry Michael / Applied Behavior Center for Autism (ABCA), Indiana

ABCA and its CEO, Sherry Michael, paid $2 million in February 2023 to resolve allegations of submitting false claims to Indiana Medicaid and TRICARE. Alleged schemes included upcoding, concurrent and duplicate billing, claims for non-covered services, and double-billing already reimbursed by third parties. ABCA denied all liability. No criminal charges filed. ABCA now stands to absorb Piece by Piece's operations.

Ï% CIVIL SETTLEMENT

Early Autism Project / ChanceLight Inc., South Carolina

South Carolina's largest ABA provider paid $8.83 million in 2018 to resolve False Claims Act allegations of billing TRICARE and state Medicaid for management costs and services not directly delivered to patients. The case was brought by whistleblower Olivia Zeigler, a former employee who received $435,000. ChanceLight entered a Corporate Integrity Agreement requiring independent annual audits.

CIVIL SETTLEMENTS

Ubuntu Autism Consultants & Autism Resources and Therapy Center, Massachusetts

The Massachusetts AG announced settlements exceeding $2.5 million with two ABA providers in 2023. Ubuntu Autism Consultants and owner Ian Gatheca settled for $1.7 million for billing for services not rendered by qualified individuals. Autism Resources and Therapy Center and owner Mary Wangari settled for $825,000 for improper billing and failure to supervise paraprofessional staff. Both were placed under three-year independent compliance monitoring programs.

FEDERAL INDICTMENT — 2025 National Healthcare Fraud Takedown

324 Defendants in All 50 Federal Districts

In June 2025, the DOJ coordinated the largest healthcare fraud enforcement action in U.S. history: 324 defendants charged in all 50 federal districts and 12 state AG offices, with over $14.6 billion in alleged fraud. Notable cases included a Grayslake, Illinois individual who submitted $17.3 million in false claims through fictitious therapy entities, and transnational criminal networks tied to Russia and Eastern Europe targeting Medicare through U.S.-based shell companies. The government seized over $245 million in cash, luxury vehicles, and cryptocurrency.

BRUTALLY HONEST POLICY WHITEPAPER

The Epstein Files Silence, The Political Noise Machine, and the Documented Record of Clinton Deceptions

An Independent Analysis of Political Accountability, Institutional Silence, and the Double Standards of American Public Life

(Our Staff Reporter)

SECTION I: PREFACE — WHY THIS DOCUMENT EXISTS

For over a decade, one of the most consequential criminal networks ever exposed in American history — the sex trafficking empire of Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell — sat largely undisturbed in the archives of federal law enforcement. Victims testified. Evidence accumulated. Names of powerful men and women appeared in flight logs, address books, and civil discovery. And yet, the political class that prides itself on protecting the vulnerable chose — consistently, across multiple administrations of both parties — to say almost nothing, do almost nothing, and release almost nothing.

Then, in 2024 and 2025, the conversation suddenly exploded. Loud voices — many of whom had been completely silent for 12 years — demanded immediate and total transparency. The media, which had largely buried Julie K. Brown's groundbreaking Miami Herald reporting for years, began wall-to-wall coverage. Politicians who sat on their hands during three presidential terms suddenly acted outraged.

This whitepaper asks the questions the mainstream narrative avoids: Why the silence then? Why the noise now? Who is making it, and what do they stand to gain? And why has President Donald Trump — a man who signed the Epstein Files Transparency Act into law, oversaw the release of 3.5 million pages of documents, and publicly committed to full disclosure — received so little credit for doing what twelve years of Democratic and Republican administrations refused to do?

This paper also takes a hard look at the documented, court-confirmed record of dishonesty by Bill and Hillary Clinton — not as a partisan attack, but as a matter of historical record that the political class has consistently chosen to

contextualize, minimize, or simply forget.

The truth is not comfortable for anyone. Let's begin.

SECTION II: THE SILENCE — 12 YEARS OF DELIBERATE INACTION

A. The Obama Years (2009–2017): A Case Study in Institutional Protection

Jeffrey Epstein completed his absurdly lenient 2008 plea deal — brokered by Trump's future Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta — and by mid-2009, he was already out of prison under house arrest, with Barack Obama having just entered the White House. For the next eight years, the Epstein matter sat in federal limbo.

What happened during those eight years? The documented record shows the following:

- The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida — under the Obama Justice Department — actively fought efforts to unseal documents related to the Epstein case.
- In 2016, a federal judge found that the FBI was not complying with Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests related to the Epstein investigation. This was not a clerical error. It was a pattern.
- Victims were left fighting a legal system that protected their abuser's connections more than their own civil rights.
- No Obama administration official — not the Attorney General, not the FBI Director, not the President himself — ever made public disclosure of the Epstein files a priority.

The standard defense offered by Obama supporters is that the Epstein investigation was 'ongoing.' But the Epstein case had been actively settled and closed at the state level in 2008.

The non-prosecution agreement had already been struck. For most of the Obama era, there was no active federal criminal case preventing disclosure. What there was, by all accounts, was institutional inertia, political caution, and a well-connected network of powerful people whose names sat in those files.

It is worth asking: Would a president of either party, knowing that the files contained the names of senators, billionaires, royalty, celebrities, and foreign dignitaries, have been in any hurry to release them? The honest answer is: almost certainly not.

B. The Biden Years (2021–2025): The 'Rule of Law' Defense

When the Biden administration took office, Ghislaine Maxwell was about to stand trial. Her conviction came in December 2021, and her appeal wound through the courts until September 2024 when the Second Circuit denied it. The Biden Justice Department, and its supporters, have argued that an open investigation and active appeal legally prevented the release of case materials.

This is a partially valid defense — and it is important to be honest about that. Investigative journalist Julie K. Brown, whose Miami Herald reporting in 2018 essentially forced Epstein's re-arrest, has stated publicly that the case involved an open grand jury during Biden's tenure, and that standard law enforcement protocol prohibits releasing active case files.

However, even accepting that framework entirely, it fails to explain the following:

- The Biden DOJ never publicly committed to releasing the files once the Maxwell appeal was resolved.
- Senior Biden officials never used their public platforms to advocate for victim transparency.
- Former Vice President Kamala Harris, when pressed in late 2025 on why the files were not released, offered the defense that the administration maintained 'separation' between the White House and DOJ. Yet she had weeks earlier called on Trump to release the files himself — directly contradicting her own stated position.
- House Speaker Mike Johnson stated bluntly: 'The Biden Department of Justice had the files the entire time, and not a single one of the people who were so loud and animated right now ever said anything about it for all those four years.'

That statement is factually accurate. The same Democratic legislators who demanded immediate release in 2025 were not introducing bills, holding press conferences, or issuing subpoenas during the Biden years. The silence was near-universal.

SECTION III: THE NOISE — WHO IS MAKING IT AND WHY

A. The Political Architecture of Outrage

Beginning in mid-2024, the Epstein files became one of the loudest issues in American political discourse. It is worth mapping who the loudest voices were, what motivated them, and what incentives drove the noise.

1. MAGA Political Base — Genuine Demand Weaponized for Electoral Gain There is a real and legitimate constituency of American citizens — across the political spectrum — who genuinely believe that powerful elites have been shielded from justice. Their anger is not manufactured. But the political apparatus that amplified that anger in 2024 did so with specific electoral goals. Trump campaign allies, including Donald Trump Jr. and JD Vance, aggressively promoted the idea that Biden was hiding an Epstein 'client list' to protect pedophiles. This was emotionally resonant, politically powerful, and — based on what the DOJ ultimately found after reviewing the files — not supported by evidence. The DOJ concluded in July 2025 that no formal 'client list' existed in the Epstein files, and that no credible evidence supported claims that Epstein had

DISCLAIMER: This whitepaper relies exclusively on documented, publicly verified, and court-confirmed facts, congressional records, and reporting from multiple politically diverse sources. It does not endorse any political party or candidate. It applies equal scrutiny to all parties. Allegations are clearly labeled as such. Where facts are disputed, both sides are presented.

blackmailed prominent individuals. This finding infuriated Trump's own base, which had been primed to expect devastating revelations about Democratic enemies.

2. Democratic Lawmakers — Late-Arriving Crusaders

Some Democratic members of Congress, including Representatives Ro Khanna and Debbie Wasserman Schultz, made genuine and documented efforts to pursue Epstein-related records going back to 2019. Their record is more credible than most. However, the broader Democratic caucus was largely silent on the Epstein files during Biden's four years in office. Once out of power, many Democrats shifted to demanding full transparency — while simultaneously accusing the Trump DOJ of covering up files that implicated Trump.

The political incentive is obvious: if the files damage Trump, release them loudly. If the files damage your own party's allies, demand process, caution, and 'proper procedures.' This is not principle. It is opportunism with a transparency label slapped on it.

3. Right-Wing Media and Influencer Economy

A vast ecosystem of podcasters, YouTube commentators, Twitter/X personalities, and conservative media figures found in the Epstein files a virtually unlimited content mine. The incentive structure is straightforward: outrage drives engagement, engagement drives advertising revenue and subscriber counts, and nothing drives outrage quite like the suggestion that a secret list of elite pedophiles is being protected by the deep state. This media class had every financial reason to keep the controversy alive, to frame every redaction as a cover-up, and to treat every delay as confirmation of conspiracy. Many of them became wealthy off this narrative.

4. Bill Clinton's Network and Democratic Establishment — Defensive Panic

The documented presence of Bill Clinton in Epstein's social circle — multiple photographs, flight logs showing 26 documented flights on Epstein's aircraft including trips to Africa, Europe, and other locations, and multiple photographs placing Clinton in Epstein's company — created significant defensive motivation within Democratic circles. The incentive was not necessarily to hide specific crimes (Clinton has denied any knowledge of or involvement in Epstein's criminal activities, and no charges have ever been brought against him), but to prevent the association itself from dominating headlines. This helps explain why prominent Democratic voices were slower to call for transparency and faster to accuse Republicans of 'weaponizing' the issue.

SECTION IV: THE TRUMP RECORD — CREDIT WHERE IT IS DUE

This section will displease many people on both sides of the political divide. But intellectual honesty requires acknowledging what the documented record actually shows about President Trump and the Epstein files.

A. What Trump Actually Did

- In November 2025, Trump signed the Epstein Files Transparency Act into law — legislation that passed the House 427-1 and the Senate unanimously. The signing compelled the DOJ to release all Epstein-related federal files within 30 days.
- By February 2026, the Department of Justice had released over 3.5 million pages of documents, including more than 2,000 videos and 180,000 images — the largest declassification of a single criminal case file in American history.
- The files included materials from five primary sources: the Florida and New York Epstein cases, the Maxwell case, investigations into Epstein's death, and multiple FBI investigations.
- Trump sought court approval to release Epstein-related grand jury testimony, an extraordinary step rarely taken by any administration.
- Federal judges, at the Trump DOJ's request, ordered the unsealing of grand jury transcripts from multiple related cases.

None of these facts have been prominently featured in mainstream media coverage. The dominant media narrative has been that the Trump DOJ was 'covering things up' — primarily because the files contained references to Trump himself, some of which were heavily redacted.

B. The Fair Criticisms — Acknowledging Inconsistencies

Intellectual honesty also requires noting the following documented facts that complicate the Trump transparency narrative:

- Trump's own messaging was wildly inconsistent. He promised to release the files in 2024 as a campaign pledge. Once elected, he initially dismissed the issue as a 'hoax' pushed by Democrats, before ultimately signing the Transparency Act.
- In July 2025, Trump was reportedly briefed by Attorney General Bondi that his name appeared in the files alongside 'unverified hearsay.' Following that briefing, he appeared to seek to narrow public disclosures.
- He called the Epstein files 'a distraction' and claimed they were 'made up' by Obama, Biden, and James Comey — a claim that fact-checkers across the political spectrum found unsupported, given that the files consisted of actual court documents, victim testimony, and law enforcement records predating all three.
- The DOJ's compliance with the Transparency Act was criticized by both parties as incomplete. The stated deadline was missed. Hundreds of pages remained heavily redacted. Bipartisan criticism of the rollout was legitimate.
- The announcement that no 'client list' existed — coming after Bondi had literally said on Fox News that the list was 'sitting on my desk right now' — was seen by Trump's own supporters as a profound betrayal.

The honest verdict: Trump did more to release Epstein files than any previous president. He also did more to create confusion, false expectations, and contradictory messaging around those files than any previous president. Both things are true.

SECTION V: THE CLINTON RECORD — A DOCUMENTED HISTORY OF DECEPTION

The Clinton record on honesty — particularly as it relates to sworn testimony and public statements — is among the most extensively documented in American political history. What follows relies entirely on court findings, congressional records, and verified media reporting.

A. Bill Clinton: Perjury, Impeachment, and Court-Ordered Findings

1. The Lewinsky Perjury — Documented and Court-Confirmed

In January 1998, Bill Clinton was deposed in the Paula Jones sexual harassment case. Under oath, he denied having a sexual relationship with White House intern Monica Lewinsky. He subsequently testified before a federal grand jury, again under oath, reaffirming his denials.

The documented facts:

- After being confronted with DNA evidence and witness testimony, Clinton admitted he had lied under oath. He admitted to a 'relationship' with Lewinsky that was 'not appropriate.'
- Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr identified at least three specific instances of perjury in Clinton's grand jury testimony: mischaracterizing the nature of the relationship, misrepresenting whether prior civil testimony was truthful, and making false statements about efforts to influence witness testimony.
- The House of Representatives voted on December 19, 1998 to impeach Clinton on two articles: perjury before the grand jury and obstruction of justice. Both passed with bipartisan support.
- In April 1999, following his Senate acquittal, federal District Judge Susan Webber Wright found Clinton in civil contempt of court for 'willful failure' to testify truthfully. She assessed a $90,000 fine.
- Clinton was later stripped of his Arkansas law license, which was suspended for five years by the Arkansas Supreme Court.

Clinton's most notorious defense before the grand jury — 'It depends upon what the meaning of the word "is" is' — became shorthand for lawyerly evasion under oath. It was not a misquote or distortion. It is in the congressional record verbatim.

2. Whitewater and Related Controversies

The Whitewater investigation, which initially focused on a failed Arkansas real estate investment, expanded across a decade of federal inquiry. While no criminal charges were ultimately brought against the Clintons specifically for Whitewater transactions, the investigation uncovered the obstruction and perjury that led to Clinton's impeachment. The independent counsel's investigation also led to convictions of multiple Clinton associates, including former Arkansas Governor Jim Guy Tucker and James and Susan McDougal.

Hillary Clinton's testimony regarding Whitewater — including her knowledge of billing records from the Rose Law Firm — became a significant controversy when records she claimed not to have appeared in the White House two years later. The records, which had been subpoenaed, were ultimately found in the book room of the Clinton residence. Hillary Clinton attributed this to disorganization. Critics argued it constituted obstruction.

B. Hillary Clinton: Congressional Testimony and the Documented Record

1. The Email Server — False Statements Under Oath and to the Public

Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server during her tenure as Secretary of State (2009–2013) generated one of the most extensively documented records of public misrepresentation in recent political history.

The documented false or misleading statements, confirmed by the FBI's own investigation:

- Clinton stated publicly: 'I did not email any classified material to anyone on my email. There is no classified material.' FBI Director James Comey, in his July 2016 public statement declining prosecution, directly stated that this was false. He confirmed that 110 emails in 52 chains contained classified information at the time they were sent or received, including 8 chains containing Top Secret information.
- Clinton testified before Congress in October 2015 that she 'never sent or received any information that was classified at the time.' The FBI's investigation found this to be false.
- Clinton stated she had used a private email server for 'convenience' and that it had 'one device.' Both statements were contradicted by the FBI investigation, which found she used multiple devices and that convenience was not the primary explanation.
- Clinton claimed she had 'turned over all work-related emails.' The FBI found that her lawyers had deleted approximately 33,000 emails before handing over the rest, and that some work-related emails were among those deleted. Comey called this 'extremely careless' handling of classified information.
- The Washington Post awarded Clinton four 'Pinocchios' — its worst rating — for her claim that 'Director Comey said my answers were truthful.' Comey had explicitly said he did not examine the truthfulness of her public statements, only her statements to the FBI.

The Republican chairmen of the House Oversight and Judiciary Committees formally referred Clinton to the U.S.

Attorney for the District of Columbia for investigation into whether she had lied to Congress. Ultimately, no charges were filed — but the underlying factual contradictions between her sworn testimony

and the FBI's findings remain part of the public record.

2. Benghazi — The Video Narrative

On September 11, 2012, the U.S. diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya was attacked by armed militants. Four Americans died, including Ambassador Christopher Stevens. In the immediate aftermath, the Obama administration — including Secretary of State Clinton — publicly attributed the attack to spontaneous protests over an anti-Muslim YouTube video.

The documented record:

- On the night of the attack, Clinton sent an email to her daughter Chelsea describing the attack as carried out by 'an al-Qaeda-like group' — not as a reaction to a video. This email was sent approximately the same night she issued a public statement referencing the video.
- Clinton called Egyptian Prime Minister Hisham Kandil the day after the attack and told him: 'We know that the attack in Libya had nothing to do with the film. It was a planned attack — not a protest.'
- Despite this private knowledge, Clinton and other administration officials continued to publicly emphasize the video narrative for days, including in UN Ambassador Susan Rice's infamous Sunday show appearances.
- Clinton, when pressed by family members of victims at the casket ceremony, reportedly told some families the video was responsible — statements that several family members have publicly disputed she made.
- Under congressional questioning in January 2013, when pressed about why the video narrative was maintained, Clinton famously said: 'What difference, at this point, does it make?' In context, this referred to the cause of the attack rather than the deaths themselves — but the private emails confirming her knowledge of a planned attack made the extended public video narrative difficult to defend.

3. The Bosnia Sniper Fire Fabrication

In March 2008, during her presidential campaign, Clinton told a vivid story of landing in Bosnia in 1996 under sniper fire, describing how she and her daughter Chelsea ran with their heads down to evade gunfire. The story was compelling — and completely false.

CBS News archive footage from the actual landing showed Clinton walking calmly off the plane and being greeted by an 8-year-old girl who read her a poem. There was no sniper fire, no running, no ducking. Clinton eventually admitted she 'misspoke' — a characterization most observers found inadequate given the specificity and emotional vividness of her original account.

C. The Clintons and Epstein — The 2026 Depositions

The most recent chapter of the Clinton accountability story unfolded in February 2026, when both Bill and Hillary Clinton were deposed by the House Oversight Committee in connection with the Epstein investigation.

The documented facts of that process:

- Both Clintons initially refused to comply with congressional subpoenas issued in August 2025. They declined deposition dates multiple times over six months, including one case where Bill Clinton claimed a conflict for a funeral.
- The House moved to hold both Clintons in contempt of Congress — a proceeding that could have resulted in up to 12 months in prison. Only under that direct legal threat did they agree to appear.
- In their depositions, both Clintons denied any knowledge of Epstein's crimes. Bill Clinton testified he found Epstein 'interesting' but saw nothing indicating criminal activity.
- Bill Clinton denied engaging in any sexual activity with an unidentified person visible in a photograph showing him in a hot tub — a photograph released as part of the Epstein files.
- Hillary Clinton stated she had never met Jeffrey Epstein.

Whether these denials are truthful remains to be fully established. What is not in dispute is the documented social and travel connections between Bill Clinton and Jeffrey Epstein, and the extraordinary lengths both Clintons took to avoid testifying — testifying only after facing criminal contempt proceedings.

SECTION VI: THE DOUBLE STANDARD — AN HONEST ACCOUNTING

The American political and media class applies radically different standards of scrutiny depending on political affiliation. This is not a conservative or liberal observation — it is a documented pattern that has been noted by serious analysts across the ideological spectrum. In the Epstein matter specifically:

- When Trump's name appeared in the files, it was front-page news for weeks. When Clinton's name appeared — including photographs, flight records, and financial ties — the same outlets that screamed about Trump coverage gave it measured, contextualized treatment.
- Trump was accused of a 'cover-up' for redacting portions of files he released. Obama and Biden received minimal criticism for never releasing any files at all during a combined 12 years in office.
- The 427-1 House vote to force release of the Epstein files occurred under a Republican majority. Many Democrats who voted yes had said nothing for years. The lone no vote was from a Republican. This bipartisan reversal on transparency deserves far more attention than it has received.
- The incentive structure of cable news, social media, and partisan outlets means that outrage directed at one's political enemies is always amplified, while accountability for one's own side is minimized or delayed.

This is not unique to the Epstein case. It is the operating system of contemporary American political media. But the Epstein case is unusually stark in its illustration of the pattern, because the facts are so extensively documented and the timeline is so clear.

SECTION VII: WHAT REMAINS UNKNOWN — THE HONEST LIMITS OF THIS ANALYSIS

Intellectual honesty requires acknowledging what is not yet known:

- The full scope of who used Epstein's trafficking network remains unknown. The FBI 302 witness interview summaries — which survivors' attorneys confirm exist and which describe named clients by name — have not been fully released.
- Whether any sitting or former elected officials were directly involved in Epstein's crimes, beyond social association, has not been established by the released files.
- Whether Epstein's death was genuinely a suicide — as the DOJ has concluded — or involved foul play remains a subject of legitimate forensic and investigative debate.
- The full extent of Maxwell's co-conspirators — an FBI email from 2019 mentioned 10 possible co-conspirators, none of whom have been publicly named or charged — remains unresolved.
- Whether the heavy redactions in released files conceal information that would be genuinely devastating to powerful figures, or merely protect irrelevant personal information of uninvolved people, cannot be determined from outside the classification system.

These are the honest limits of what public knowledge currently allows. Anyone claiming certainty about what the 'real' files contain — on any side — is telling you more about their political priors than about the evidence.

SECTION VIII: CONCLUSIONS

The Epstein files saga is, at its core, a case study in how American institutions protect powerful people from accountability — and how the political class leverages that protection or demands transparency based entirely on which side it benefits.

The conclusions supported by the documented record are as follows:

1. The Obama administration's silence on the Epstein matter for eight years was a failure of institutional accountability. The partial legal justifications offered retroactively do not explain eight years of zero public advocacy for victims or transparency.

2. The Biden administration's 'rule of law' defense is partially legitimate but insufficient. The DOJ could have committed publicly to post-conviction transparency. It did not.

3. The noise surrounding the Epstein files since 2024 is a mixture of legitimate public outrage, electoral cynicism, media profit motive, and defensive posturing by those with something to lose. These motivations often coexist in the same person or institution.

4. President Trump signed the Epstein Files Transparency Act, oversaw the release of 3.5 million pages of documents, and authorized extraordinary legal steps to unseal grand jury materials. These are facts. His inconsistent messaging, apparent attempts to narrow disclosures after being briefed about his own name in the files, and false claims that the files were 'made up' complicate — but do not negate — his substantive record of disclosure.

5. The documented record of Clinton dishonesty — court-confirmed perjury, contempt findings, a $90,000 fine, five-year law license suspension, demonstrably false public statements about classified emails, the Bosnia fabrication, and the Benghazi video narrative contradicted by Clinton's own private communications — is among the most thoroughly documented records of public deception by major American political figures.

6. The double standard applied by media and political actors across this entire saga — louder accountability demands for political enemies, quieter standards for political allies — is the deepest systemic problem the Epstein files reveal. Not a client list. Not a secret tape. A structural refusal by American institutions to apply equal justice under law.

FINAL WORD

Jeffrey Epstein trafficked children. He did it for decades. He did it in full view of powerful people who chose to look away, enjoy his connections, and protect their own reputations. The political fight over his files is, in one sense, completely beside the point — because the real story is what happened to those children, and whether any of the men who participated in their abuse will ever face justice.

The noise about the files, the political jousting, the competing narratives about cover-ups and transparency — all of it is a proxy war being fought over a much simpler question that no one in power seems eager to answer: Who else did this, and what are we going to do about it?

Until that question is answered with the same honesty this whitepaper has attempted to apply, the files will remain a political weapon rather than what they should be: a path to justice for survivors and accountability for predators.

SOURCES: All factual claims in this whitepaper are derived from: DOJ press releases and Epstein Library (justice.gov/epstein); Wikipedia entries on the Epstein Files and Epstein Files Transparency Act (citing primary sources); Congressional records including the House Oversight Committee subpoena proceedings; U.S. House Impeachment Report 105-830; Library of Congress impeachment research guide; PolitiFact, FactCheck.org, Poynter, ABC News, NPR, PBS, CBS News, The Hill, NewsNation, and Time Magazine reporting; and Hillary Clinton email controversy Wikipedia entry citing primary sources. All disputed claims are noted as disputed.

DISPUTE OVER RS 50,000 BLOWS OPEN MULTI-CRORE KIDNEY RACKET IN KANPUR, INTER-STATE NEXUS

(Our Staff Reporter) What began as a Rs 50,000 payment dispute has blown open a suspected multi-crore illegal kidney transplant racket in Kanpur, exposing a network that allegedly used multiple hospitals, targeted vulnerable \youth and sold organs for as high as 90 lakh.

The case centres around a private hospital in Rawatpur, where transplants are suspected to have been carried out in violation of norms. Police launched a probe on Monday after a donor approached them over unpaid dues, leading to the detention of four to five people, including a hospital operator and an alleged middleman. The donor claimed he was promised Rs 10 lakh but was paid Rs 50,000 less and faced repeated delays in receiving the remaining amount. Frustrated, he went to the police, setting off an investigation that began uncovering layers of an organised network.

DONOR LURED, KIDNEY SOLD AT MASSIVE PROFIT

Investigators found that Shivam Agarwal, a resident of Kalyanpur, allegedly lured a young man from Uttarakhand with the promise of Rs 10 lakh, telling him the kidney was needed for a relative.

Facing financial distress, he agreed.

The surgery was carried out at a private hospital in Rawatpur, where his kidney was removed. It was then allegedly sold to the family of a 35-year-old woman from Muzaffarnagar for over Rs 90 lakh.

The donor, however, received only Rs 6 lakh in cash and Rs 3.5 lakh via cheque.

THREE-HOSPITAL MODEL TO AVOID DETECTION

The operation did not end there. After surgery, both donor and recipient were kept at the same hospital for about a day before being shifted to separate facilities.

Investigators say the network used a three-hospital system, one for extraction, another for post-operative care of the donor and a third for the recipient, ensuring no single facility had complete information.Sources said the donor, who identified himself as 'Ayush', was later admitted to another hospital under a different identity, while the recipient was moved elsewhere.

STUDENTS, VULNERABLE YOUTH TARGETED

The probe has revealed a pattern of targeting financially vulnerable people, including students.The donor 'Ayush' claimed to be an MBA student and had initially agreed to donate his kidney for Rs 4 lakh. In another suspected case, a female student was allegedly made to donate a kidney for around Rs 4 lakh, which may have later been sold for Rs 45 to Rs 50 lakh.

Donors were often misled with emotional claims and false assurances before being drawn into the network.

BROKERS, DOCTORS AND HOSPITAL NEXUS

Police believe the racket involved a coordinated network of middlemen, hospital operators and medical professionals.

Brokers arranged donors, hospitals facilitated surgeries and doctors are suspected to have played a role in conducting transplants, pointing to a structured operation rather than isolated wrongdoing.

Shivam Agarwal and hospital operator Surjeet Singh Ahuja were among the first to be detained.

RAIDS ACROSS HOSPITALS, MORE DETENTIONS

Joint teams of police and the health department carried out raids at multiple locations, including Priya Hospital and Trauma Centre, Ahuja Hospital and Medlife Hospital. Records related to transplant procedures and patients are now under scrutiny. Late-night action by the crime branch led to the detention of a doctor couple and several others. Police also reached another hospital where the recipient had been shifted and took five more people in for questioning.

INTERSTATE NETWORK UNDER PROBE

During questioning, the donor initially claimed he was from Meerut but later said he was from Samastipur in Bihar and had been living in Meerut, where he met the middleman. Investigators now believe the network spans multiple states, sourcing donors from different regions while connecting them to recipients elsewhere.

MORE REVELATIONS LIKELY

Officials suspect the case may be part of a much larger illegal organ trade involving huge financial transactions. While police and the health department have not spoken on record, indications are that the network could be far wider, with more arrests and disclosures expected in the coming days.

INDIA'S TOBACCO TRAP: CAN JOBS AND PUBLIC HEALTH BE BALANCED?

(Our Staff Reporter) India's tobacco sector is a double-edged sword: it sustains 45.7 million livelihoods while fueling a public health crisis that kills prematurely and burdens the economy.

Our Civitas white paper identifies a "development trap"—a self-reinforcing cycle in which economic dependence on informal production of tobacco thwarts effective control, leaving 266.8 million users, primarily SLT (Smokeless Tobacco) and beedi consumers, without adequate cessation support while exposing workers to precarious conditions. o escape, India must transform the sector by investing in cessation, prioritising formalisation, fostering innovation, and creating alternative livelihoods that align growth with health.

THE SCALE OF INDIA'S TOBACCO DEPENDENCE

The trap is evident in the informal economy. Beedi rolling employs millions, often women and children, in exploitative conditions, which is documented in the US Department of Labour's list of goods produced by children and forced labour.

Workers earn meagre wages (Rs 100/day for 700 beedis) and are exposed to tobacco dust without protection. Workers face significant health implications, with death rates among beedi smokers 64 % higher than those of non-tobacco users (Pulitzer Centre).

Informality also characterises much of SLT production, which has historically evaded tax and regulatory oversight, undermining public revenues and control measures. Policy provisions, such as the "cottage industry" tax exemption for unbranded beedis, have facilitated tax leakage and kept cheaper, more harmful products widely accessible, particularly among low-income populations.

This informality sustains poverty, with the lowest-wealth households 2.54 times more likely to use tobacco, facing higher risks and lower quit success.

INFORMAL SECTOR, LOW WAGES AND HEALTH RISKS

Politically, the trap deepens. In beedi-dependent regions like West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, industry influence sways elections, blocking reforms.

Tobacco's economic significance to states (0.45 million hectares cultivated, US$1.45 billion in exports) has made meaningful reforms difficult to achieve.

Although India has committed internationally through the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) to reduce tobacco-related harm, policy decisions sometimes contradict this.

For instance, production limits on Flue-cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco are eased to boost exports, signalling that revenue is being prioritised over health.

POLICY GAPS AND REGULATORY CHALLENGES

Addressing this public health issue needs reforms that must simultaneously improve public health outcomes, preserve employment opportunities, and maintain or increase government revenue.

Tobacco sector transformation must therefore prioritise formalisation, modernisation, and alternative economic pathways. Formalise by shifting beedi/SLT from cottage industries to regulated factories and adopting Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP).

This protects workers from hazards, raises wages, and generates jobs: processing 1 million kg creates 500 direct and 1,500 indirect roles. Complementing this, re-skilling via vocational programmes has proven effective. Pilots in Bihar show beedi rollers transitioning to tailoring, yielding sustainable incomes.

Modernise production by adopting a "Produce less, earn more" approach. The recent FCV caps doubled farmer earnings from Rs 124/kg (2019–20) to Rs 280/kg (2023–24).

Biotechnology innovations, such as low-nitrosamine strains optimised for pharma-grade nicotine in Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRTs), could further enhance value. India exports 9 % of global leaf by volume but only 6 % by value—capturing processing could add US$150 million annually, doubling smallholder incomes to Rs 14-17 lakh.

SHIFTING TO ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS

A multisectoral Tobacco Sector Transformation Council, anchored under PMO or NITI Aayog, would ensure integrated policymaking. It should include ministries such as Agriculture, Labour, and Biotechnology, alongside key stakeholders, including farmers and manufacturers, with representation beyond the dominance of a single industry player. Its mandate should prioritise integrated policies that balance health, livelihoods, and revenue, focusing on measurable outcomes such as reduced prevalence and disease tracking, with guardrails like carcinogen limits for new products. Regulatory tools must be strengthened by extending Track-and-Trace (T&T) to all products and launching public reporting apps for violations.

This combats illicit trade, often under-represented in surveys like GATS. Supporting transitions out of tobacco is also essential. Micro-enterprise initiatives, handicraft programmes, and vocational training can protect vulnerable populations, reduce child labour (currently estimated at 1.7 million in beedi rolling), and provide sustainable incomes. Concerns about job losses are often raised during reform, yet evidence suggests that modernisation and formalisation create better employment opportunities. Reduced tobacco cultivation also frees land for food crops, contributing to food security. A 2 % tobacco prevalence could prevent 1.4 million deaths, generating significant healthcare savings. This approach is not anti-industry but pro-progress.

By guiding tobacco production through a managed transition, India can simultaneously protect livelihoods, improve public health, and promote equitable development.

Cyber fraud racket linked to Philippines, Cambodia busted in Gurugram; 5 arrested

(Our Staff Reporter) Gurugram Police have busted a major international cyber fraud network with links to the Philippines and Cambodia, arresting five key operatives accused of running a sophisticated SIM box-based racket used for "digital arrest" scams. The crackdown exposes a transnational syndicate that bypassed India's telecom systems to route fraudulent calls and extort victims.

The operation came to light following five separate complaints, which led to coordinated raids in Gurugram's U-Block and Chakarpur areas.

Suspicion was first raised by local landlords who noticed unusual activity in the rented accommodations. Instead of residential use, the premises had been converted into makeshift technical hubs fitted with electronic equipment and wiring. A Special Investigation Team (SIT), led by senior cops, conducted the raids and uncovered what officials described as a "mini telecom setup". In the major bust, the police seized 13 SIM boxes used for illegal call routing, 504 active SIM cards, seven Wi-Fi cameras with human detection features, seven routers, inverters, batteries, and multiple networking devices. DCP (Cyber Crime) Gaurav Rajpurohit confirmed the arrest of five accused identified as Rahul Kumar from Uttar Pradesh, Yash Amrit Singh Dugar and Bhavika Ramesh Bhagchandani from Gujarat, and Litesh and Sagar from Maharashtra.

According to investigators, the group played distinct roles in setting up infrastructure, managing communications, and handling financial transactions.

HOW THEY OPERATED

Preliminary interrogation revealed that Rahul Kumar was in contact with handlers based in the Philippines, who guided him via video calls on setting up SIM boxes and routing calls.

These devices were installed at multiple locations in Gurugram, including DLF Phase-3, enabling the gang to mask international calls as local ones. Bhavika Bhagchandani, meanwhile, was linked to operatives in Cambodia.

Investigators said she coordinated with associates to convert fraud proceeds into cryptocurrency, primarily USDT, which was then transferred overseas. Yash Dugar allegedly assisted in facilitating these financial transactions, acting as an intermediary in the conversion of funds. Police said the syndicate used a well-established smuggling route to bring in illegal equipment: from the Philippines to Nepal, then to Bihar, and finally distributed across various Indian cities. The accused also admitted to recharging over 2,200 SIM cards used in cyber fraud operations, including "digital arrest" scams where victims are coerced into believing they are under legal scrutiny and forced to transfer money.

LINKS TO 'CYBER SLAVERY'?

Officials further revealed disturbing links to "cyber slavery," with some victims reportedly trafficked to Cambodia and forced to participate in online fraud activities under duress.

The recovered surveillance cameras were allegedly used to monitor surroundings and avoid detection during operations.

The case highlights the growing complexity and international reach of cybercrime networks targeting Indian citizens. Gurugram Police said further investigations are underway to identify additional links, trace financial flows, and apprehend other members of the syndicate operating both within India and abroad. Authorities have indicated that more arrests and disclosures are likely as the probe expands, with efforts focused on dismantling the broader network and preventing similar operations in the future.

Where Is Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei? Russian Envoy Reveals

(Our Staff Reporter) It's been nearly a month since Mojtaba Khamenei was appointed the new supreme leader of Iran, but the world is yet to see him in public. He has released several public statements since then, which were read on national television. But his absence from the public eye has fuelled rumours about his health and whereabouts.

Putting speculations to rest, a Russian ambassador has said Mojtaba Khamenei is in Iran itself.

Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei is in the country but has been avoiding public appearances "for understandable reasons", Russian ambassador to Iran Alexey Dedov told the RTVI news outlet.

Buzz Over Mojtaba Khamenei's Whereabouts

Mojtaba Khamenei replaced his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in US-Israeli strikes on February 28 at the beginning of the war. The US has said it believes the new Supreme Leader himself is wounded and likely "disfigured".

A media report also claimed that Mojtaba Khamenei was flown to Moscow for treatment on Russian President Vladimir Putin's invitation. Russia and Iran maintain close diplomatic ties, and last year both nations signed a strategic partnership treaty. Moscow's statement on Mojtaba's presence in Iran underscores its continued engagement with Tehran despite the leadership uncertainty.

Khanenei's continued absence has done little to dampen the fervour of those faithful to the Islamic regime, with thousands taking to the streets in the last month to pledge their allegiance. The pledge has become a rallying cry as Iran retaliated to US and Israeli aggression with counterstrikes against enemy targets across the Gulf.

Yet the continued absence of Iran's new leader has raised a deeper question of who is truly running the country at a time of war.

For nearly four decades, the 56-year-old cleric operated largely behind the scenes during his father's rule, wielding influence but rarely appearing in public. Now thrust into the most powerful position in Iran, his continued invisibility, according to a CNN report, underscores the changing nature of power in the Islamic Republic, where institutions and security bodies may matter more than the individual at the top.

8 Indians died, 1 missing in various incidents amid Middle East war: Govt

(Our Staff Reporter) Amid the escalating West Asia conflict, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Monday said eight Indian nationals have lost their lives while one remains missing in "various incidents" in the region.

At an inter-ministerial briefing here on the West Asia situation, Additional Secretary (Gulf), MEA, Aseem R Mahajan, also said, "Yesterday, an Indian national unfortunately lost his life in an attack in Kuwait."

However, he did not elaborate upon the circumstances of this death. "We express our deepest condolences to the family of the deceased. Our Mission in Kuwait is in touch with the family of the deceased and is coordinating closely with the local authorities to render all support and for the early return of his mortal remains to India," he said.

On March 20, at an inter-ministerial briefing on the West Asia situation, Mahajan had told reporters that six Indian nationals had lost their lives while one remained missing in "various incidents."

On Monday, he shared an update, saying, "Eight Indian nationals have unfortunately lost their lives and one Indian national remains missing in various incidents."

The Indian Embassy in Saudi Arabia recently said that an Indian national was killed in Riyadh due to the "recent events of March 18."

The ministry also shared that since February 28, around 5.5 lakh passengers have returned from the region to India.

The MEA on Monday reiterated that it continues to closely monitor the evolving situation in the Gulf and West Asia region.

"We continue to call for restraint and de-escalation, and at the same time emphasise on dialogue and diplomacy, as a means to an early end to the conflict," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

He also said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on March 28, spoke to the Crown Prince and PM of Saudi Arabia, Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and discussed with him the ongoing conflict in West Asia and agreed on the need to ensure freedom of navigation.

In his telephonic conversation, the Prime Minister also reiterated India's condemnation of attacks on regional energy infrastructure.

Mahajan said safety, security and welfare of the large Indian community in the region remains "our utmost priority." "Our dedicated special Control Room remains operational... Our Missions and Posts across the region are functioning round the clock, operating 24x7 helplines, issuing regular updated advisories and remaining actively engaged with the Indian community associations, organisations and Indian companies spread across the region," he said.

Further, the CBSE has already notified the assessment scheme for the declaration of results of Class X and Class XII in the region, following the cancellation of exams due to the ongoing conflict.

Academic concerns, particularly those related to CBSE, ICSE, Kerala boards and JEE and NEET exams, are being addressed through regular outreach to parents and students, the MEA said.

Also, particular attention is being given to the welfare of Indian seafarers. The Indian missions are in continuous contact with Indian crew members on vessels across the region to provide support, it said.

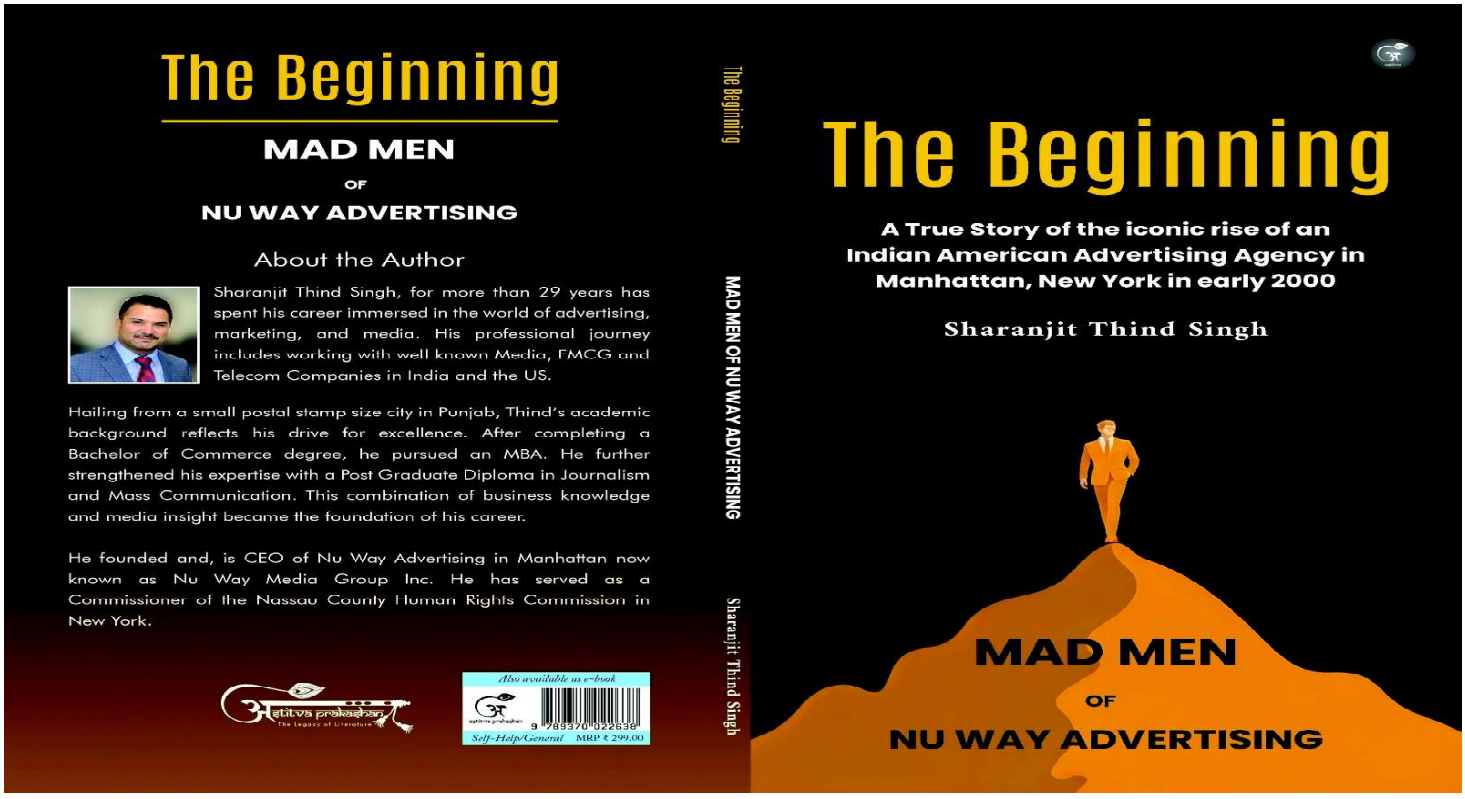
Mahajan said airlines continue to operate limited non-scheduled flights between India and the UAE.

Around 85 flights are expected to operate from the UAE to India later on Monday.

Flights are operating from various airports in Saudi Arabia and Oman to different destinations in India. With the Qatar airspace partially open, Qatar Airways is expected to operate around 10 flights to India on March 30, it said.

Kuwait and Bahrain airspace remain closed. Jazeera Airways of Kuwait and Gulf Air of Bahrain have been operating non-scheduled commercial flights from the airport of Saudi Arabia to various destinations in India, the MEA official said.

"Due to flight restrictions and airspace closure, we continue to facilitate travel of Indian nationals from Iran through Armenia and Azerbaijan, to India,... and from Israel, from Egypt and Jordan to India, from Iraq through Jordan and Saudi Arabia to India, and from Kuwait and Bahrain through Saudi Arabia to India," he said.



AIA-NY Strengthens Ties with Queensborough Community College with Scholarships and Cultural Exchange

(Our Staff Reporter) : Queens, NY: March 25 witnessed another chapter of the Association of Indians in America – New York Chapter (AIA-NY) strengthening educational ties with the Queensborough Community College (QCC) through scholarships and cultural exchanges.

AIA National Past President Dr Urmilesh Arya and Dr Yashpal Arya gifted $10,000 for ten scholarships of $1,000 each to students from low-income families enrolled in certificate and associate degree programs at QCC, which is one of the top-ranked community colleges in the CUNY system and has its campus in Bayside, NY. The Arya couple presented the scholarship check to QCC President Dr Christine Mangino thanking her and her team for the growing partnership with AI-NY. They were joined at the ceremony by AIA-NY President Beena Kothari, Past President Dr. Jagdish Gupta, and community leaders including Dr. Nirmal K. Mattoo, Chairman of the Indo American Arts Council.

This collaboration with QCC started last year with the establishment of the Student Success Scholarship Fund, initiated with the support of AIA-NY leadership, the Arya Family Foundation and Dr Jagdish Gupta. Since then, 31 QCC students have been supported with scholarships during Holi and Deepavali celebrations at the campus. It reflects AIA-NY's ongoing dedication to educational empowerment and community upliftment.

Over the past year, AIA-NY and QCC have celebrated several important cultural milestones together, including Holi - Festival of Colors and Deepavali – the Festival of Lights. These events brought together students, faculty, families, and community leaders in joyful celebrations featuring music, dance, arts, traditional hospitality, and vibrant cultural exchange.

On March 25 this year, 75 students of Indian origin exuberantly celebrated Holi with gulal. They were joined by 50 prominent members of the Indian community invited by AIA-NY, including AIA National President Nilima Madan, Past President Gobind Munjal, Dr. Raj Modi, Harsh Vyas, Anita Thakkar, newspaper editors Sunil Hali and Jasbir Jay Singh. This collaboration with QCC marks a significant milestone in AIA-NY's mission to strengthen educational access while preserving and celebrating Indian heritage through meaningful community engagement. Founded in 1967, the AIA-NY chapter is one of the oldest Indian-American community organizations in the United States. It promotes cultural heritage, education, and community service through programs, scholarships, and events. The annual Deepavali festival in the first week of October is its flagship event.

Empowering the Next Generation

- AIA-NY Announces New Scholarship Initiatives for QCC Students
- Bridging Communities: A New Era of Cultural Exchange at Queensborough Community College
- A Legacy of Support: AIA-NY Deepens Commitment to Academic Excellence

Indian American Forum Hosts Colon Cancer Awareness Session at Levittown Hall

(Our Staff Reporter) : The Indian American Forum, under the leadership of Chairperson Mrs. Indu Jaiswal, organized a Colon Cancer Awareness Session at Levittown Hall on March 26. Despite limited notice, the event attracted a substantial audience interested in learning about the significance of screening. EC Member Mrs. Jyoti Gupta introduced Mrs. Jaiswal, who extended a warm welcome to attendees and invited the newly elected President, Mr. Vimal Goyal, to address the gathering. Mr. Goyal discussed his personal experience with colonoscopy and emphasized the importance of regular screenings and proactive health measures.

Have US And Iran Already Gone Past The Point Of 'Negotation'?

The US has reportedly proposed a 15-point plan to Iran for ending the US-Iran war. Iran has made its own conditions for an agreement known. It is evident that these are maximalist positions on both sides, and any eventual agreement would involve compromises.

But if one side or the other lays out its positions in public through background briefings or in reaction to the proposals aired through the media, it raises suspicions about the seriousness of the negotiation exercise.

Serious negotiations need to be held behind the scenes with as much confidentiality as possible. If the maximalist positions are publicised for whatever reason in advance, then the text of the final agreement will be assessed by the public on the basis of how much either side was forced to make concessions on core issues of difference. The governments concerned will then have to offer explanations. This public diplomacy only complicates the search for a balanced negotiating outcome in actual negotiations.

In May 2025, the US had proposed a 15-point plan, which gives a clue to what the US might be seeking. It promised an end only to nuclear-related sanctions, not all sanctions, including human rights sanctions. The funds released could not be used to fund Iran's ballistic missile programme. All uranium stockpiles would be down-blended to 3.67 % and shipped out of Iran immediately. All enrichment facilities of Iran would be made unusable within a month, and centrifuges would be rendered inoperable. The US would help fund a new Iranian civil nuclear programme with a fuel facility located outside Iran and subject to International Atomic Energy Agency inspection. A regional enrichment consortium would be established involving Iran, the US, the UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia under external management. The US wants to ensure that Iran's nuclear programme is not revived, and for that, it would want to have oversight over it beyond that of the IAEA. It wants to carve out a role for itself in Iran's peaceful nuclear programme, as we have seen. One cannot see Iran giving any supervisory role to the US or agreeing to its participation in its nuclear programme in any form. Or agreeing to shut down its nuclear sites at Natanz, Fordow or Isfahan, as sought by the US.

A Gradual Breakdown

In the JCPOA, Iran had made a clear and firm commitment that it would not acquire nuclear weapons. In the talks mediated by Oman in Geneva, Iran seemed to have made major concessions on the nuclear front that it had not made before, but Trump chose to attack Iran nevertheless. It is most unlikely that Iran will go beyond what it was willing to concede in the talks at Geneva. So, when Trump keeps saying that the US would not allow Iran to become nuclear, it is not clear what exactly the terms are that he thinks he can force Iran to accept. Seeking curbs on Iran's missile programme, which has shown its potency in the ongoing conflict, is an old US demand. Iran has rejected this demand before and will no doubt oppose it even more forcefully today. Without a nuclear shield and also a missile shield that provides it some deterrence capability, Iran would render itself defenceless. Iran has no worthwhile air force or a robust air defence system. It is unlikely to accept any binding limits to the range of its missiles, as missiles and drones give it a credible retaliatory capability. Much has been made about Iran unveiling its missile with an IRBM range by attacking Diego Garcia. Iran has developed its missile capability independent of the G-7-initiated Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), which has 35 members today. Iran is not a member. Pakistan, too, is not. A sovereign country may have self-imposed limits on the range of its missiles, keeping in mind the source of threats to it or to avoid creating misgivings in other countries about its strategic intentions. It is most unlikely that Iran will accept any binding limits on the range or the technical capabilities of its missiles after the two US-Israeli attacks against it and the assassination of its top leadership.

The Question Of Proxies

On Iran's regional role, which means its anti-Israel policies and concomitant support for Hezbollah, Hamas or the Houthis, Iran, again, is unlikely to bind itself to any understandings with the US. It is a fact that Iran's support for its so-called proxies in the region has been diminished. That this Iranian regional role is linked to perceived US-backed Israel's expansionist policies in the region should not be ignored. So long as Israel's policies against the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, its rejection of a two-state solution, its policies in Lebanon, occupation of territory in Syria, and the Greater Israel project of the country's extremists are not revised, the region will remain unstable and conflict-ridden. On the other hand, Iran's demands would be humiliating for the US to accept. Iran wants the US to remove all its bases from the region, agree to reparations for the destruction caused, lift all sanctions, and commit itself to not reimposing sanctions. Iran would want international guarantees against any future aggression. Iran would also exercise control over the Strait of Hormuz.

The Dilemma Of The Gulf Nations

Even if the Gulf countries feel that their security alliance with the US -allowing American bases on their territory and buying arms from the US - has not given them the protection they expected, and that the US has given priority to Israel's security, the fact remains that they will become more vulnerable to Iran's power if the US withdrew from the region. Already, the Saudi Crown Prince has voiced concerns that Iran will feel more emboldened in the future if the US retreats.

(Contd. on page 14)

Don't Let Iran's Hostage-Takers Win

Stopping the war weeks short would vindicate their Hormuz strategy.

President Trump likes to administer sanity tests before he escalates. Nicolás Maduro flunked his in December by spurning every way out he was offered. The President did the same with Iran in June and again in February. We thought U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff's nuclear "term sheet" was too generous. That the Ayatollah rejected it anyway told Mr. Trump all he needed to know. The late Ali Khamenei's successors now risk making the same mistake.

Iran is being pounded by two powers whose aircraft it is powerless to stop. Each day the damage increases, its capabilities decline, and its neighbors turn further against it. From this dire position, the regime has been offered a cease-fire that reportedly includes the removal of all sanctions. All it has to do is give up the nuclear, missile and proxy capabilities to continue its "death to America" foreign policy. By scorning this offer, as Iranian officials now suggest they'll do, the regime makes the case for President Trump to give the war more time and see the mission through.

On Wednesday Adm. Brad Cooper of U.S. Central Command said two-thirds of Iran's missile, drone and naval production facilities and shipyards have been destroyed or damaged. He's on track to complete that job, he said, and the President has every reason to let him, lest Iran quickly rebuild.

On Thursday Israel killed Alireza Tangsiri, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps navy commander and a central figure in the regime leadership, along with his intelligence chief. Decapitation strikes have scrambled Iran's chain of command, and this one is important preparation for any U.S. action to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. U.S. Marines will also soon be in theater, with some 2,000 soldiers from the 82nd Airborne to follow. This could get much worse for Iran's regime.

Iran's rulers know this, but they are betting that energy-market turmoil will lead Mr. Trump to end the war before U.S. objectives are fully met. The President has shown himself to be sensitive to oil and gas prices, and his rhetoric about the war already being won encourages the belief that it will end any day now. On Thursday he extended his reprieve for Iran's energy sites again to April 6. These may be moves to calm investors, but the cost is reflected in continuing Iranian intransigence. These also aren't the only messages Mr. Trump transmits. "We have a lot of time," he said last Friday. He has explained that higher oil prices are worth paying for a period to keep Iran from a bomb, and that "we got to finish the job" because "we don't want to go back every two years." Precisely. News stories stress the President's desire to wrap up the war, which may be his attempt to reassure MAGA podcasters who fear "forever war." But the war is only four weeks old. The original timeline was four-to-six weeks, and Iran's blockage of the Strait of Hormuz may require a longer campaign. Iran's veto on global energy flows has yet to be challenged; on the contrary, toll-paying nations are deferring to it. Iran's two key nuclear targets also remain untouched. Those are the stockpiles of fissile material and the deep-underground Pickaxe Mountain site that could in time be used to enrich it to weapons-grade. Trump Administration officials tell us what the President surely knows: Four weeks of war have yielded valuable successes, but to end now would be an incomplete victory. Additional weeks can further degrade Iran's capabilities and set back the regime's threat to the region for years even if it survives. The U.S. and Israel took action because Iran's fanatical regime threatened them, the region and the world. Waiting would have increased the danger. In response Iran's regime has done what it does best: Take hostages. Tehran has tried to take hostage its neighbors, the Strait of Hormuz and the global economy with it. Seeing the mission through is a better option than chasing the regime with offers of ransom. (Courtesy WSJ)

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One Month at War With Iran — Can Washington define victory?

Wars are not defined by the tonnage of munitions expended or ships sunk. They are defined by whether military force serves a coherent political objective. One month into Operation Epic Fury, that principle remains unlearned.

On February 28, U.S. and Israeli forces launched the largest American military action in the Middle East since Iraq. Iran's navy has been gutted, its air defenses wrecked, and its missile production disrupted. The administration is tallying strikes and sunken ships the way commanders in Vietnam tallied body counts. Those metrics told then-President Lyndon B. Johnson nothing about whether he was winning. They tell us nothing now.

The Military Picture

Iran is still fighting. Despite losing over 150 naval vessels and its supreme leader in the opening strikes, the regime did not fracture. Mojtaba Khamenei was installed as the supreme leader within days. This past week, the IRGC's navy commander was killed in a U.S. strike. No succession crisis followed. U.S. intelligence assessments confirmed the regime remains "intact but largely degraded." Degraded is not defeated.

The escalation is accelerating. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth declared last week that Operation Epic Fury "is not an endless war" — and that same day, the Pentagon ordered 2,000 paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division to the theater, joining two Marine Expeditionary Units already en route. The 82nd is the Army's forced-entry division. Its primary mission under active planning appears to be the seizure of Kharg Island, Iran's primary oil export hub. No one has publicly articulated the exit strategy.

The munitions math is brutal. The first six days cost at least $11.3 billion in weapons alone. The U.S. builds only 96 THAAD interceptors per year; a quarter of the entire stockpile was consumed in last year's 12-day campaign. Iran produces over one hundred ballistic missiles per month. We build six or seven interceptors in the same period. Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, warned before the war that a protracted campaign would drain stockpiles critical to deterring China. A war that cannot be sustained arithmetically cannot be won strategically.

Economic Damage

The Strait of Hormuz carries 20% of the world's oil supply. Its near-closure since February 28 has produced the largest energy disruption since the 1970s. Goldman Sachs modeled that oil averaging $110 per barrel for one month raises U.S. inflation to 3.3% and trims GDP growth to 2.1%. Brent crude hit $126 at its peak.

More consequential, and less reported, helium. Iran's strikes on Qatar's Ras Laffan facility — the world's largest LNG plant — halted helium production and inflicted damage that will take years to repair.

Qatar supplies a third of the world's helium. It is an irreplaceable input in semiconductor fabrication, space systems, and medical imaging. Without it, chip production stops. There is no synthetic substitute. This war has threatened the physical supply chain that underlies every advanced technology the U.S. economy and military depend on.

And here is the fact the administration is not leading with: Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent disclosed this past week that Iran's financial system collapsed in December 2025 — the product of a maximum-pressure campaign launched a full year before Operation Epic Fury.

Iran entered this war already financially broken. It is still fighting. A regime that keeps fighting after its financial system has already collapsed will not be stopped by economic pressure alone.

The Political Failure

There is no defined end state. Secretary of State Rubio declared every military objective is "being effectuated." Those are kinetic metrics. They say nothing about what political condition the United States intends to produce or how it will know when the war is over.

Secretary Hegseth summarized U.S. strategy as "negotiating with bombs." That is Clausewitz inverted. Clausewitz said war is the continuation of politics by other means. Hegseth's formulation makes the bombs the diplomacy. That is not a strategy. That is a war without a political objective.

Tehran has rejected the U.S. 15-point ceasefire plan and issued a five-point counteroffer demanding Iranian sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz. Iran's foreign minister stated his government is not engaged in talks and does not plan on any negotiations. Before the war began, Iranian negotiators told Special Envoy Witkoff directly that "they would not give up diplomatically what we could not win militarily." They meant it.

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Radical clerics within the IRGC view their hostility toward the U.S. as preparing the conditions for the Mahdi's return — a religious obligation, not a negotiating position. A regime built on that ideology does not fold because it has been struck hard. It folds when its internal legitimacy collapses or its physical structures are dismantled. One regional analyst warned that if pushed to the brink, Iran's leadership would sooner "burn everything" than accept terms it views as surrendering God's work. Neither collapse nor dismantlement has happened. Trump appears to be making strategy up as he goes. And none of his advisors appear willing to tell him he has misread the enemy. That is the most dangerous gap in the room. One month in, the record is clear. Iran's military has been degraded. The regime endures. The Strait remains contested. The ceasefire has been rejected. Thousands more troops are moving toward the theater. Munitions are burning faster than the industrial base can replace them. Standing on the South Lawn last week, Trump declared that from a military standpoint, Iran is "finished" — while Iran was actively blocking the Strait behind him. Meanwhile, lawmakers who sat through a classified House Armed Services Committee briefing came out with a different assessment: "There was no plan, no strategy, no end game shared." That is not a strategy. That is drift with a confident tone. Sir Alex Younger, former chief of MI6, assessed this past week that Iran has seized the strategic initiative and the conflict is shifting toward a contest of endurance. Tactical success has not produced strategic clarity. Wars do not end when you run out of targets. They end when you define success.

Lt.Col.Robert Maginnis

Why 2 Gulf States Want Iran War To Continue - Even As They're Battered By It

When the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA) with Pakistan, a number of members of Iran's Strategic community had expressed optimism. Since the agreement had followed Israel's first and unprecedented attacks on Qatar - even if on Hamas members it alleged were being sheltered there - these strategic thinkers felt it would strengthen anti-Israel cooperation and alliance in the region. Some in Iran even expressed willingness to join the alliance, as just a couple of months prior to the SMDA, Iran had fought its first direct war against Israel. It had ended in a stalemate, but it put Iran on notice. No longer was the conflict between the two adversaries in the shadows, fought through proxies. Now, any confrontation would be direct.

The current war - named Operation Epic Fury and Roaring Lion by the US and Israel, respectively, has laid that optimism to rest. Since the early days of the war, American media have reported that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), the de facto power behind the throne, had been urging the US to go to war with Iran. In public posturing, though, the kingdom has struck a different note. It has called for diplomacy, for easing of tensions between the Kingdom and Iran.

A Decades-Old Problem

For Saudi Arabia, as indeed for other states of the Gulf Cooperation Council - UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar - Iran has been a threat since the Islamic Republic was born in 1979, and whose ideology and motto has been to import the Revolution.

The Gulf monarchies are one of the last absolute monarchies in the world. Regime survival is prioritised over everything else. Over the decades, Iran has been a challenge to Saudi leadership of the Muslim world, with its support for Palestinians, the import of its ideology, and by propping up proxies in neighbouring Arab countries. Even though Shiites constitute only 13-15% of the entire Muslim world, Iran, with its strategically located proxies, was able to create the Shia crescent, stretching all the way from Iran through Iraq, Lebanon and into Syria. Today, Syria is back in the Sunni fold, but the Saudis have the Houthis close to their borders, with Yemen on one hand and the Popular Mobilisation Forces of Iraq on the other - both of them Iran's proxies. Moreover, though Saudi Arabia is overwhelmingly Sunni, it has a Shia population inhabiting the very sensitive region where its oil wells are located.

Iran Can't Be Underestimated

At the same time, Iran, which has been under major sanctions for decades, has proved how battle-hardened it is, first through its eight years of war with Iraq, later with the proxy wars it fought with the US and Israel, and now in its direct confrontation with both. The Saudis and Emiratis, however, having invested billions of dollars in procuring expensive and modern weapons systems, have practically lost their military campaign against the ragtag Houthis of impoverished Yemen, who have even succeeded in targeting Saudi Aramco.

The 2023 "truce" between Iran and Saudi Arabia, brokered by China, had been a moment of great hope. In hindsight, however, it was only a camouflage for the deep-seated suspicion and the great trust deficit between the two.

The Post-Oil World

For the Saudis and the Emiratis, the prime concern now is the pursuit of development for a post-oil world. The UAE began earlier, positioning Dubai and Abu Dhabi as the cities of the future, as important trade and logistics hubs and as finance and tax havens. For the Saudis, it is Vision 2030 - moving to a non-oil economy to accommodate the large youth population, and focusing on creating an economy driven by tourism, projects like the NEOM city, IMEC connectivity and logistical hubs, AI, etc. Constant conflict and the threat of war is a major obstacle to these plans. The Hamas-Israel war, beginning from 2023 October, has been an irritant, and the non-settlement of the Palestinian issue has only played up the ineffective Arab role in the region. Instead, it was the Houthis and Hezbollah - Iran's proxies - who intervened on behalf of Palestinians and demonstrated their ability to disrupt global trade along the Red Sea by closing the Bab-el-Mandeb, a vital waterway for Saudi and Emirati shipping. It is possible that these considerations were at play when, as per the first New York Times report, the Saudi purportedly urged the US to launch an attack on Iran. Now, after the war has actually begun, the Saudis and Emiratis realise just how insecure their defence proximity to the US has rendered them. For decades, their security has been tied to the US, but there is no defence pact between them that would activate American involvement should the Arabs go to war. Neither did the US care to inform them when it went to war with Iran.

The Gulf Is The Biggest Victim

Both the Emiratis and Saudis, as well as other Gulf countries, soon found themselves the target of Iranian reprisals. In fact, on the very first day the war began, the Dubai airport, its iconic Burj Al-Arab hotel, the landmark Palm Jumeirah, and Jebel Ali port were hit by missiles from Iran or by debris from those intercepted. The Iranians say they cannot target the US, so they are targeting US bases in the region, which are spread across the six Gulf states, including in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The latest statistics show that the GCC states have been on the receiving end of 4,391 Iranian drone and missile attacks - an astonishing 83% of the total fired. Israel, on the other hand, has been the recipient of just 17% of the total fired. Of them, the UAE has suffered the maximum number of attacks - 2156 times - perhaps also because of its close relations with Israel. Saudi Arabia has dealt with 723 drones and missiles, and has suffered two deaths and several injuries. Alongside this, Iran's proxies in Iraq have also been targeting some of the Gulf countries and Jordan.

Recently, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan released a joint statement demanding that Iraq act immediately to stop attacks from its territory by armed pro-Iran groups. Earlier, they had also got the UN to pass a resolution condemning Iran's "egregious" attacks on critical infrastructure.

A Fear Of The Future

Such attacks are damning for these countries. The targeting of Saudi Arabia's Ras Tanura oil refinery, Aramco facilities and the Shaybah oil field by Iran has already resulted in losses of millions of dollars. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has also made the Saudis and Emiratis unable to export much of their oil, gas, fertilisers, and other petrochemicals. The collateral damage has further caused them reputational damage, denting their image as financial and tax havens. Safety and stability are vital for Gulf economies. In an article for Arab News, Dr Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg, GCC assistant secretary-general for political affairs and negotiation, wrote, "The most urgent priority is to stop Iran's attacks on GCC energy targets and allow the transit of oil and gas shipments through the Strait of Hormuz. The disruption of energy supplies has wreaked havoc on the global economy and caused colossal losses for many countries that are not connected with the war. Threatening the flow of trade through this passageway is a clear violation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea." Meanwhile, even as Iran bleeds and burns, it is still standing; the regime, despite numerous losses, is going strong, and it is giving as good as it gets. The US is now being seen as having openly prioritised Israel's security over that of its Gulf allies. Trump's recent statements and reports of the US seeking negotiations only point to the fact that America can withdraw from the war just as suddenly as it had begun it. And the Saudis and other Gulf countries would be left to face the music, with an angrier, fiercer, and possibly more avenging Iran, and its proxies. This may explain the more recent reports that Saudi Arabia and the UAE now want the war to continue - and that the Kingdom, along with the UAE, are willing to put boots on the ground. Time will show how things pan out for both Iran and Saudi Arabia. But one thing is certain - close alignment with the US in defence and security could not guarantee the Gulf monarchies protection from Iran's wrath.

Aditi Bhaduri

Trump's Iran War Is About To Become Someone Else's Problem Soon

Iran's stubborn resistance and its ability to withstand the US and Israel's relentless military campaign for over a month have disrupted Donald Trump's calculations. The war's increasing economic and political costs have pushed him to seek a quick exit. He now wants to leave Iran in two to three weeks, whether or not there is a deal. His comment, ahead of a national address on Wednesday evening, underlines a stark reality: even after losing its leadership and suffering significant damage to its military and economic infrastructure, Tehran has shown no signs of being as desperate as Trump to end the war.

In his latest comment at the Oval Office on Tuesday, Trump insisted again that Iran was "begging" for a deal, adding that whether it happens is irrelevant to America's timetable. Iran strongly denied that it was engaged in negotiations with the US to reach a deal, while admitting that messages had been exchanged between the two sides. Iran's president, Masoud Pezeshkian, has said his country has the "necessary will" to end the war with the United States and Israel as long as certain conditions are met.

Trump's comment came amid a growing buildup of US forces in the Gulf. Thousands of US Marines have already reached the region and many more are on their way. The US military also began flying B-52 bomber missions over Iran on Tuesday for the first time in the war, a sign that Trump is keeping the option open of escalating in the belief that it would help end the conflict swiftly.

Trump's Ever-Changing Wishlist

Trump has maintained that the US has achieved its goal of addressing Iran's nuclear programme, despite roughly 450 kg of enriched uranium still being present in Iran, believed to be hidden in Isfahan.

His previous objective of regime change also remains unfulfilled, although he says the regime has already changed. He claims that Iran's new regime is reasonable, disregarding the fact that more hardline elements now appear to be in control of the country. Some of his Gulf allies, including the UAE and Saudi Arabia, want him to carry on the military operation for that reason.

The most important strategic card Tehran has played in the war has been to block the Strait of Hormuz, through which about a fifth of the world's oil and gas passes. The near-closure of Hormuz, along with attacks on US bases and energy targets in Gulf countries, has driven global crude oil prices to $117 per barrel on Tuesday and the average petrol price in the US to exceed $4 per gallon for the first time in nearly four years. Now, Trump claims Hormuz is a problem for other countries to handle. Oil prices fell after Trump's comments about leaving Iran.

Allies No More?

Donald Trump has been angry with America's European allies for their refusal to get more involved in the Iran war, particularly for not sending their warships to protect ships at Hormuz. "Go get your own oil," from the Strait of Hormuz, Trump said on Tuesday, lashing out at his allies. But his anger at US partners in Europe is not limited to Hormuz. He wants them to join the American and Israeli military in fighting Iran, a war he started with Israel, without any consultation with his allies.

"You'll have to start learning how to fight for yourself, the USA won't be there to help you anymore, just like you weren't there for us," Trump told his European allies in a post on Truth Social on Tuesday. Two weeks ago, he had angrily declared, "We don't need anybody; we're the strongest nation in the world", adding that his request for assistance in reopening the Strait of Hormuz instead amounted to a "loyalty test of America's allies".

What Trump forgets is that unlike previous US Presidents, he went to war with Iran without building any support at home or abroad. President George HW Bush in 1991 formed a coalition of more than 40 countries when he launched Operation Desert Shield to free Kuwait from Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

Two decades later, his son, President George W Bush, also received support from his allies for launching another war against Iraq, though it was based on the false premise of getting rid of weapons of mass destruction. Europe was part of both coalitions, though the second time, France and Germany didn't join America's war.

Not Europe's War To Lose

NATO members in Europe have made clear that the current conflict in the Gulf is not their war. They do not feel obliged to join it because no NATO country has been attacked. On the other hand, Iran has been hit by the US and Israel. They have reminded Trump that the only time NATO's Article 5, which states that an attack on one member is an attack on all, was invoked was when the US suffered terror attacks on September 11, 2001, by al-Qaeda. Back then, NATO had joined America in a coalition to invade Afghanistan.

However much they loathe Iran's Islamic regime, the priority for Europeans is not the Middle East. It's the threat from Russia they want to guard themselves against. The Europeans have sent some defence equipment to protect their Gulf allies from Iran's missiles and drones, but they don't want to fight alongside the US and Israel. The war is also widely unpopular with the public, as reflected in the decisions of European governments. Spain has openly defied Trump from the beginning, calling the US and Israeli actions illegal. Although Britain has permitted American fighter planes to use its bases, after initial hesitation, it has refused to send any warships to the Gulf. On Tuesday, France angered Trump by denying the US access to its airspace for American planes carrying ammunition to Israel. Even Italy, governed by a right-wing administration, refused to allow US military planes to land at one of its bases en route to the Middle East.

Lessons From Gallipoli

For Europeans, a disastrous campaign during the First World War serves as an important reminder to exercise caution before getting militarily involved in Hormuz. Britain's late leader Winston Churchill devised a plan to force passage through the narrow strait of the Dardanelles in Turkey, which connected the Aegean Sea to the Sea of Marmara and beyond to the Black Sea, then controlled by the Ottoman Empire. The plan, known as the Gallipoli campaign, turned out to be one of the worst disasters, resulting in the deaths of 1.3 lakh men - 44,000 from Britain and its allies, and 86,000 Ottomans.

The fact remains that even US warships have not challenged Iran directly to lift its chokehold. So, why should Europeans do so and risk their soldiers' lives? They are open to joining a multinational mission in the Strait of Hormuz, but the US must be involved. Another concern for Europeans is that Trump keeps changing his narrative and objectives.

Since he began the current conflict, Trump has claimed multiple times that either the war has already been won or is about to end soon. They have observed Iran's response and are also watching US troops gathering in the Gulf for a potential ground campaign. Even if they are inclined to join the US, they would prefer not to get involved in a conflict clouded by strategic confusion.

The Deal With Those Who Want War

Trump's decision to pull out of the Iran conflict soon will be welcomed by most people in the US, as opinion polls have shown the war is not backed by a majority of Americans. Even members of his own Republican party and MAGA supporters are opposed to a ground invasion. But it will disappoint the Iran hawks. One of them, Senator Lindsey Graham, boasted last week: "We've got two Marine expeditionary area units sailing to this island. We did Iwo Jima, we can do this.

What Graham didn't say was that 7,000 US soldiers died in the Battle of Iwo Jima (in Japan), one of the bloodiest military campaigns of the Pacific theatre in the Second World War. Graham was sharply criticised by fellow Conservatives. The strongest response came from Congresswoman Nancy Mace, a military veteran. "Graham has one foreign policy: send someone else's kids to war," she posted on X. "He was wrong about Iraq. He was wrong about Afghanistan. Now he's wrong about Iran."

Desperate Calls

All the evidence from the past five weeks of the war had indicated that Iran was unlikely to capitulate to US threats or even a ground invasion. Iran's proxy, the Houthis in Yemen, had already joined the military effort with missile attacks on Israel.

The US ground invasion could lead them to obstruct shipping through the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, the Red Sea choke point equivalent to the Strait of Hormuz. That would wreak havoc on the world economy.

Trump's decision to end the war without achieving any of his previously stated objectives will be viewed by many as a cut-and-run move. Some will interpret this as an admission of defeat. Israel would be unhappy with Trump's decision, as Iran's military capabilities and its ability to make a nuclear weapon have not been destroyed.

For Europe, the challenge is even bigger, as Trump told the British newspaper, The Telegraph, that he is considering pulling the US out of the NATO alliance.

Naresh Kaushik

On April Fools' Day, A Reality Check For US, Iran And The World

As a new month dawns, the confrontation between the United States, Israel, and the Islamic Republic of Iran has transitioned from a series of shadow plays into a high-stakes war of attrition. What began as a devastating campaign of maximum destruction has evolved into a kinetic reality where the definitions of "victory" and "survival" are increasingly at odds. In evaluating where the conflict stands today, one must look past the daily skirmishes and analyse the diverging strategic goals, the resilience of the Iranian state, and the looming threat of regional devastation.

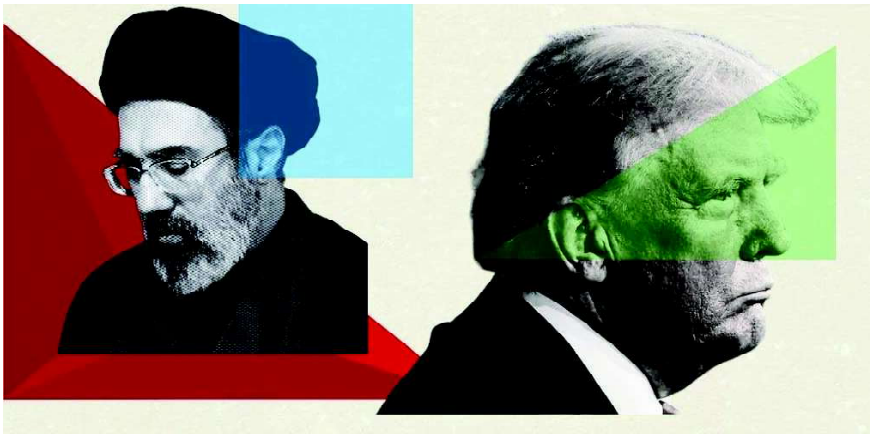
A Fundamental Mismatch

At the heart of the current deadlock is a fundamental asymmetry in what each side is fighting for. For the Iranian leadership, the conflict is existential; it reached that threshold on Day One, when the Supreme Leader and much of his family were killed. History suggests that when a regime perceives a threat as a "war of survival", it gains a grim kind of domestic strength. Despite internal dissent and economic hardship, the external pressure from the US and Israel has, for the moment, allowed the regime to consolidate its grip on the military apparatus and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The "horizontal escalation" doctrine, under which Iran dispersed its military authority in a "mosaic" pattern to independent regional commanders, allowing them to continue the fight, launching missiles and drones even when instructions were unable to reach them from Tehran, has underscored Iran's resilience in the face of severe military adversity.

This has been compounded by the Yemen-based Houthi rebels joining the war on Iran's side, firing missiles to disrupt shipping via the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb strait, "the Gate of Tears". The willingness of Iran and its allies to hit whatever targets they can, and their ability to inflict damage on the prosperous Gulf countries whose "safe haven" image is crucial to their success, has already given Tehran an upper hand and increased the costs to the rest of the world - leading many outside the region to seek a swift end to the war.

Also Read | Why This May Be The Most 'Deceptive' Phase In The US-Iran War - Yet

In contrast, for the United States, this remains a "war of choice". While the rhetoric from Washington is maximalist, the political commitment is subject to the whims of an election cycle and waning public appetite for another "forever war". This creates a paradox: Iran wins simply by surviving and maintaining its (undoubtedly degraded) effectiveness, which its critics might dismiss as "nuisance value" - specifically its ability to choke the Strait of Hormuz - while the US must achieve a far more overwhelmingly convincing result to claim success. If the month ends with the Iranian flag still flying over its primary naval assets and nuclear facilities, the strategic momentum arguably sits with Tehran.



A Divergence Between The US And Israel?

But it gets worse. While the US and Israel are aligned in their desire to see a diminished Iran, their tactical endgames have begun to diverge in a way that complicates the coalition's thus-far unified front. The Israeli doctrine is clear: For Israel, the Iranian threat is viewed through a permanent, existential lens. Their strategy is often described as "mowing the lawn" - a relentless effort to degrade Iranian proxies and nuclear capabilities to the absolute minimum. (Hence the assault on Lebanon, where Hezbollah resides, in parallel with the war on Iran.) To Jerusalem, any deal that leaves the Iranian infrastructure, and its network of allies and proxies in the region, intact is merely a stay of execution.

The American calculus is more difficult to figure out, given the extraordinary statements by President Trump, at press conferences and on Truth Social, that seem to change logic, intentions and desired outcomes with dizzying and bewildering rapidity. But inasmuch as one can glean a consistent thread in his pronouncements, it would seem that Washington appears more interested in a transactional halt to the conflict. The US strategy involves a dual track of building pressure through heavy troop deployments (estimated at 10,000 additional personnel this month) and the threat of targeted strikes on Kharg Island or other energy hubs, to force a diplomatic capitulation. Iran, in turn, accuses the US of proposing negotiations while planning military strikes - a tactic that the Americans have twice used already. (Diplomats from both countries were at the negotiating table under Omani mediation when the current war was launched on February 28.) How then, they ask, can they trust that negotiations will be sincere and not merely a cover for further attacks? This friction is most visible in the "Hit List" problem. Diplomacy requires a stable interlocutor, yet continued assassinations of high-ranking Iranian officials - the strategy favoured by Israeli intelligence - undermine the very channels the US might use to negotiate a face-saving exit for both sides. Who will you negotiate with if you kill those who have the authority to negotiate?

The Case Of The 'Wounded Lion'

As a new month starts and we approach the April 6 deadline set by the Trump administration, the risk of a "next stage" escalation is at its highest point since the conflict began. The deployment of US troops suggests a shift from containment to the potential seizure of strategic Iranian islands and, judging by Trump's latest blood-curdling threats on Truth Social, far worse. However, the costs of such a move are astronomical.

Iran's primary deterrent is not its conventional air force, but its ability to turn the Persian Gulf into a graveyard for global energy infrastructure. Should the US or Israel target Iranian power plants or refineries, Tehran is expected to retaliate by targeting desalination plants and oil terminals in the neighbouring Gulf states. This creates a "Wounded Lion" scenario: states like Saudi Arabia and the UAE may privately wish for the US to "finish the job" and remove the Iranian threat forever, yet they are simultaneously the most vulnerable to the resulting blowback. **Russia And China**

The conflict is no longer a regional vacuum. The reports of deepening military cooperation between Moscow and Tehran have begun to change the mathematics of the war. Russia's alleged supply of advanced drone technology and potential electronic warfare support could provide Iran with a replenished toolkit to offset US technological superiority. This turns the Persian Gulf into a secondary theatre of a much larger global friction between the West and an emerging Russian-Iranian coalition. Where would China stand in such an arrangement? It is currently taking a hands-off approach, perhaps privately chortling as America expends itself in the Gulf. But can it stand idly by while the total destruction of a major oil exporter like Iran is threatened? Negotiations at month's end remain relegated to "back-channel" whispers. While third-party intermediaries, notably Japan, Egypt, Turkey, and Pakistan, are rumoured to be active, there is a distinct lack of visible movement. The current US proposal, characterized by its 15-point maximalist demands, functions more as a real estate-style opening gambit than a viable peace treaty. In the world of high-stakes diplomacy, asking for everything usually results in getting nothing. For Iran to come to the table, they require a guarantee of regime survival and an end to sanctions; for the US to sit down, they require a visible dismantling of Iranian influence. Currently, neither side is willing to blink. As the calendar turns on April Fools' Day, the conflict sits in a volatile "grey zone". The war is likely to get worse before it gets better. Both sides are currently incentivised to escalate: the US to prove its deadlines aren't hollow, and Iran to prove that its "survival" doctrine can withstand direct kinetic pressure. If the goal of the US administration was a swift, decisive collapse of Iranian will, the past month has proven that reality is far more stubborn. The "Wounded Lion" is still in the cage, and the cage is getting smaller, but the lion still has the power to wreck the house, making April fools of us all.

Shashi Tharoor

Iran has the Trump card, Trump has the Joker

Iran was always an existential threat to Israel. Still is. The war meant to remove that threat has, with magnificent irony, sharpened it. If the objective was to make Israel safer, the mission has failed spectacularly. Tick that box.

Yes, Iran took a beating. The US Department of Defence estimated Iran's nuclear programme had been set back by two years after the June 2025 strikes. The 2026 strikes may have added a few more years to that tally. Or not. As a report from the US Defence Intelligence Agency assessed, Iran had moved much of its enriched uranium stockpile before the strikes, and the attacks set back its nuclear weapons capability by only a matter of months. Months. That's the payoff for a war that has rattled the global economy to its foundations.

Patience is not in short supply in Tehran. They have been waiting for a vanished leader for over 1,200 years. A year or two, and the uranium will be on the tip of a missile. Military force cannot eliminate Tehran's proliferation risk. At the end of the conflict, Iran will retain the nuclear expertise and likely the key materials necessary for building a nuclear bomb. What's worse, elite opinion as well as public opinion in Iran has shifted dramatically on pursuing a bomb. That shouldn't be surprising since Iran has been bombed twice in the middle of negotiations by two nuclear states. The nuclear fatwa that Khamenei once issued is dead. Killed, fittingly, alongside him.

Now consider what this means for Israel. The threat was supposed to diminish. Instead, it has metastasised. Before the war, Iran was constrained: weakened by sanctions, its proxies battered, its nuclear programme under surveillance and periodic attack. A wounded adversary behind a fence.

Now the fence is gone. The fatwa against the bomb is gone. The restraint born of fear of escalation is gone. Iran has been bombed twice while negotiating in good faith. Its Supreme Leader was assassinated. What incentive does Tehran have to remain non-nuclear? The strategic logic has inverted completely. Israel wanted to eliminate an existential threat. It has instead handed Iran every moral and strategic justification to become a nuclear-armed state. The very outcome Israel went to war to prevent is now more likely than it has ever been. That is not just a failure. That is a catastrophic self-goal.

Now the proxies. The spin was that Iran's axis of resistance was broken. Hezbollah was diminished. The Houthis were battered. The war cries would fade. And yet, Hezbollah launched rocket attacks against Israel within two days of the opening salvo. Two Iran-backed groups in Iraq readily rushed to defend Iran. On March 28, the Houthis resumed their attacks on Israel. The obituary for Iran's proxy network was premature. Embarrassingly so. The Houthis now stand as the most resilient Iranian proxy. They survived American bombing campaigns under two successive US administrations. They are still standing, still shooting. You don't run out of ideological proxies the way you run out of missiles. You run out of missiles. They run on something older and cheaper.

Now for the masterstroke. The real genius of what Iran has pulled off. Hormuz was just a waterway. Now it's a weapon. Twenty percent of the world's liquefied natural gas and 25% of seaborne oil trade passes through the Strait. Iran controls the northern coastline, the islands, the chokepoint. With the longest coastline along the northern side of the strait and strategic control over islands including Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, Abu Musa, Lark, Qeshm and Hormuz, Iran can assert both power and oversight over maritime traffic. Geography is the one advantage nobody can bomb away. And Iran has it.

Tanker traffic through the Strait dropped first by approximately 70%, and then over 150 ships anchored outside the strait to avoid risks. Soon afterwards traffic dropped to about zero. Maersk suspended crossings. Insurers charged six to 10 times their standard rates. The world's largest shipping route became a parking lot.

An estimated 84% of crude oil and condensate shipments through the Strait were destined for Asia. Mainly India, China, Japan, South Korea, the growth engines of the world. All of them watching their energy supply slowly strangle. Iran didn't just threaten Israel. It threatened Asia's entire economic trajectory. That's leverage of a different order. That's not a military move. That's economic warfare, executed with a precision that no missile could achieve.

The decades of unilateral American pressure in the name of sanctions, meant to bring Tehran to its knees, have eased suddenly. As oil prices soared, the US Treasury lifted sanctions on 140 million barrels of Iranian crude already loaded onto vessels. Here's the punchline: Iran's war effort got a boost. The Americans lifted sanctions on Iranian oil. While fighting Iran. The optics are discomfiting: as the US tries to decimate the Iranian regime militarily, it is simultaneously allowing the regime to benefit financially. Trump, who spent years attacking Obama for "sending cash to Iran", is now effectively writing Tehran a cheque with one hand while bombing it with the other. You may laugh.

What we are seeing is a flawed campaign. Not in terms of operational size, but in strategic preparation. The oil price is becoming much more important than eliminating this regime.

The economic consequences are not theoretical. They are here. Brent crude oil prices jumped about 15% in the opening days of the conflict, then surged to $120 a barrel as it deepened and the market began pricing in the risk of sustained disruption. The European Central Bank has raised its 2026 inflation forecast and cutting GDP growth projections, with economists warning that energy-intensive economies face high risks of recession if the maritime blockade persists through the summer. If global oil prices average around $140 per barrel for two months, it would be enough to push parts of the global economy into a mild recession. Mild recession is a polite word for "winter is coming". Governments fall in mild recessions. Democracies fracture.

But unlike the 2022 global inflation peak, when the global economy kept growing through the price shock, the severity of the latest disruption could tip the world into outright contraction. Oxford Economics put a number on it. World GDP growth for 2026 could slow to 1.4 per cent. The US and most major advanced economies slide into recession. The US can try to wash its hands of the crisis it created. No Iranian missile could touch the American mainland. But the economic meltdown will singe Americans too. The Americans are very sensitive to gas prices.

Iran knows this. Has known this. Which is exactly why it is not rushing to the negotiating table. It's prolonging the agony. Every week of closed Hormuz is another week of economic pain for the side that can bomb Tehran into rubble but cannot bomb geography. Iran, unable to match the US and Israel militarily, is internationalising the costs of war by targeting energy, shipping, and commercial infrastructure across the Gulf. The logic is simple: raise the price of escalation while absorbing the pressure for de-escalation. Let everything reach the breaking point.

This is Economic Warfare 101. And the professor didn't go to Harvard. He went to Qom. The original US-Israeli calculation was clean. Kill the Supreme Leader; the regime falls; the people rise. Given Iran's weakened position, the US and Israel calculated they had greater opportunity to advance their objectives through military means than by diplomatic means. That calculation, it turns out, was spectacularly wrong. The regime didn't fall. Mojtaba Khamenei, the dead leader's son, now occupies that position, a position of strength by a tragic quirk of fate. The IRGC didn't crumble. Death to Israel, Death to America; the war cries are unaltered. What is altered is everything else. The crucial Trucial states of the Gulf, the rich finance and trade hubs, are caught between American firepower and Iranian obstinacy. Abu Dhabi or Riyadh no longer care who rules Iran. They care about oil revenues, trade routes, and not getting hit by drones Hormuz was once a pass. Now it's a passport to regional power, stamped with the seal of American strategic miscalculation. As for the claim that this war was really about weakening a surging China, consider what has actually happened. Iran is authorising tankers to pass through the Strait, provided their oil cargo is traded in Chinese yuan. A yuan-denominated transit regime at the world's most critical energy chokepoint. That is the exact opposite of weakening China. That is handing China the keys to the region's financial architecture. The Petrodollar is Washington's jugular vein. Iran has a chokehold on it. They said Trump had a plan. Well. The plan has gone for a toss. Iran has the Trump card. Trump has no card.

Kamlesh Singh

Who's losing the war in Iran?

There is a simple way to know who is losing a war. Look for who is asking for peace.

Wars have casualties. Truth is usually the first. Dignity follows shortly after, limping behind with a new medal pinned to its chest.

In May 2025, India launched precision strikes on locations linked to proscribed terrorist groups operating from Pakistani soil. Clean. Declared. Done and dusted in a few hours. Concluded on India's terms. Pakistan retaliated. A surprise, because India had made it abundantly clear it had no interest in a war. Pakistan opened fire nonetheless. India responded. Within days, Pakistan's air defence grid had been reduced to a memory. The Indian Air Force was picking its targets the way you pick a balloon at the air rifle stall at Nauchandi mela. Leisurely. At will. That is when Pakistan picked up the phone and called Washington. It needed someone to make the pain stop.

India's position was, as it had been from Day 1, that it did not desire a conflict. So thank you, Washington, but ask the generals to request the same. When Pakistan's DGMO called India's DGMO and asked for an end to hostilities, India agreed. A ceasefire was in place. Donald Trump announced it to the world before either country's defence establishment could clear their throats. He said he had done it. He said he deserved the Nobel Peace Prize.

On cue, Asim Munir declared victory. He took a medal. He awarded himself the designation of Field Marshal, for life. A remarkable achievement for a man whose air defences had turned to rubble and air fields had curious craters. Pakistan's PR machine went into full swing. PM Shahbaz Sharif beamed and thanked Munir. The Pakistani media was on the megaphone. Everyone was winning. It was the most victorious defeat in subcontinental military history. India did no such drama. It did not need to. The satellite images were public. The craters did not lie. The radar installations that were supposed to protect Pakistan's skies were not protecting anything anymore. India simply let the evidence sit there in full view and got on with its day. There is a quiet confidence that comes from knowing you do not need to say a word. India had it. Pakistan had a Field Marshal.

What is now unfolding in the Middle East is Operation Sindoor, the Hollywood version. Recast on a global stage, with a bigger budget, more combustible geography, and a cast of characters that makes Apocalypse Now Redux less dramatic.

On February 28, Israel and the US struck the entire top leadership of Iran in one strike. Eliminated. Gone. Washington believed this would shatter Tehran's will, break the regime's back, scatter its command, and bring the matter to a swift and satisfying conclusion. Shock and awe. It had worked in Iraq. It would work in Iran. Well, the script had a change.

Iran struck back. With a vengeance.

It hit Israel. It hit American bases across the Middle East. It hit Arab states, nearly all of them, the nations that had quietly aligned themselves with Washington and assumed their geography would protect them.

Iran has lived under American sanctions for decades. Sanctions are supposed to starve a country into submission. What they actually did was teach Iran to be extraordinarily patient, moderately creative, and entirely unimpressed by American threats. When you have absorbed punishment for 40 years, more punishment is simply Tuesday.

The Strait of Hormuz is closed. The rich American-aligned Gulf states are discovering what it means to have that door shut from the inside by the one neighbour they never managed to befriend. Their security guarantor hasn't been able to secure its bases, and is brag-begging for it all to stop. Iran is not begging. Iran is charging a toll. And the toll is steep.

Guess who is asking for peace.

Trump called Pakistan in March 2026, just as Pakistan had called Trump in May 2025. The roles have simply switched. The desperation has not. The world's most powerful nation is now requesting a sanctioned, cash-strapped, structurally fragile country to please have a word with Tehran on its behalf. The irony was rich enough to serve at a state dinner. Pakistan said yes, because Pakistan finds itself to be useful to someone. Iran said no. Not to America, not even to Pakistan. Iran was not interested in talking. It had other things to do, like hitting the Arabs where it hurts.

Steve Witkoff flew to Islamabad. Don's own Damad, Jared Kushner, flew too. Tehran told them to bring someone senior. America then sent Tehran a 15-point proposal, passed through Pakistan like a note in a school test. All rejected as not worth discussing.

Instead, Iran sent some points of its own. Permanent control over Hormuz traffic. Full withdrawal of American military bases from the region. Compensation for damages suffered. A binding guarantee of no future attacks. These are not the demands of a nation on its knees. These are the demands of a nation that has looked at the other side's hand, examined each card carefully, and found the whole lot empty.

This is the same Trump who told Zelenskyy he had no cards to play. Today, Saudi Arabia has signed a defence deal with Ukraine. The world noticed. Trump's cards are seen.

Meanwhile, Trump goes in front of cameras and tells America and the world that he is winning too much, that Iran is begging, that the military might of the United States has obliterated Tehran's capacity to resist. The vocabulary is familiar. The cadence is familiar. It is the same speech Asim Munir gave, translated from Punjabi Urdu into American English and delivered with considerably more production value. Munir had epaulettes and a ceremonial baton. Trump has Truth Social and Caps Lock. The medium differs. The message is identical. We are winning. Please ignore the craters.

The Pakistani PR operation during Sindoor was a masterclass in the genre. Multiple anchors, multiple platforms, multiple claims of Rafales falling from the sky, Pakistani drones hovering over India Gate, Indian cities trembling, great victory being achieved in real time. The wreckage of Pakistani air defence was visible from space.

The claims were visible only on Pakistani television. Trump was adding numbers to the fallen jets, 11 as per the last trump count. Trump has studied this playbook carefully, or perhaps arrived at it independently, because certain instincts transcend borders, languages, and basic military reality. A broke Pakistan is now presenting itself as a broker in the current conflict. Islamabad is discovering that there is excellent diplomatic mileage and dollars to be extracted from being the only country on speaking terms with both the US and Iran.

Iran has not spoken to America. It says so, repeatedly and publicly, with the particular satisfaction of a nation that has nothing to apologise for and no reason to pretend otherwise. Deterrence requires the other side to be deterred. Iran is not deterred. Iran is inconvenienced. There is a considerable difference between the two.

For America, expensive radars have gone. AWACS planes have gone. Fuel tankers and fighter jets have gone. The bases that were supposed to project deterrence are now projecting vulnerability.

Washington is now considering putting boots on the ground. This is a thought so strategically reckless that it must have taken considerable effort to arrive at. There are murmurs of something darker still, a nuclear even, as though the prospect of annihilation might accomplish what months of bombing, sanctions, shuttle diplomacy, and Damad Kushner have not. The truth is simpler. Everything has failed. The leverage is spent. The strategy is in ruins. Iran has conceded nothing, and it shows no signs of beginning. Karl Marx said history repeats itself, first as tragedy, then as farce. Operation Sindoor repeats itself. First in Pindi. Now in Pars.

The fog of war is generous to the losing side. It permits them to paint pictures. It allows them to schedule victory parades. It lets them hand out medals and designations and Nobel Prize nominations. But fog is temporary. It lifts. And when it does, the craters are still there. The Strait is still closed. Iran has still not picked up the phone. Donald Trump is looking for an exit, or offramp, as people call it now. Iran is determined to not make it convenient for him. It will extract its pound of flesh, and toll from Hormuz traffic. Trump has not won this war. He is losing it. Convincingly.

Kamlesh Singh

In the age of AI, the best bartenders may matter even more

Iran has rejected the US ceasefire proposal as "excessive," saying it will end the war only on its own terms and not allow Donald Trump to dictate the timeline.

(News Agency) Right now, it's not a question if Artificial Intelligence (AI) will slowly take over everything; it's turning into a reality as we speak. Spaces that we thought couldn't blend in AI are slowly soaking in the current atmosphere for the fear of being left behind in the race. But for something as tactile, as intuitive, and as deeply human as bartending, can the arrival of AI feel contradictory? After all, can an algorithm understand the right balance of things like a seasoned bartender does?

While we are still in contemplation, some of the world's most progressive bars today have AI integration, quietly working in the background, shaping what you drink, how it's made, and sometimes, even what you're likely to order next. The rules are slowly being rewritten, and not exactly the way we thought it would be.

Not behind the bar, but behind the scenes Having said that, AI is slowly entering the world of mixology and helping bartenders, but by this, we do not mean robot bartenders shaking up Negronis. What we meant was far more gradual and smarter.

"AI is becoming part of the backend of bars rather than the front," says Rehan Guha, founder of Oxymorons. "The shift isn't about robots behind the counter; it's about smarter decision-making behind the scenes." Globally, AI is being used to understand what sells, predict inventory, reduce waste, and streamline operations, tasks that once required weeks of manual analysis. "Operators now have access to insights that earlier took weeks," he adds.

Ajay Nayyar, National Advocacy Lead at Diageo India, breaks it down further: "AI is emerging in three key areas—menu intelligence, operational efficiency, and guest experience." From designing cocktails based on flavour pairings and consumer data to forecasting demand and personalising recommendations, bars are becoming sharper, faster, and far more intuitive. For Nitin Tewari, bartender and beverage consultant, this evolution has been gradual but unmistakable. "Yes, it's true that initially, AI was mainly used for inventory management and tracking liquor. Now, it is also helping in creating cocktail ideas and designing menus to make them more consumer-friendly."

The speed of a good idea

A lot of you will agree that with the use of AI in crucial spaces, the dialogue that has shifted is not what it can do but how fast it can. "Developing a cocktail menu once required weeks of research and iteration," says Nayyar. "Today, AI can

suggest flavour combinations, analyse global trends, and assist in building structured recipes within minutes."

Guha calls AI a "thinking partner" and rightly so.

But even here, there's a quiet consensus: speed doesn't replace sensibility. "It's a matter of taste, and that is subjective," Nayyar points out. Which means the human palate still has the final say.

Precision vs instinct Yes, they do work quicker and know how to play around with flavours, but can machines make better cocktails? "Against an untrained or inexperienced bartender: yes, an automated machine can absolutely outperform," says Simone Caporale, co-owner of Barcelona's celebrated SIPS, who was invited to India in collaboration with Cashmir Vodka and Camikara Rum. "The consistency is there. The precision is there. Every pour measured, every recipe executed identically, every single time."

But again, the instinct is missing.

Tewari agrees, up to a point. "Machines can make drinks, but they cannot replace the human touch. Bartending is about hospitality and how you make people feel." Because consistency, while impressive, is only one part of the equation. "A machine can make a drink, a great bartender makes a memory," Caporale says. It's the kind of line that lingers, and lands, because it speaks to what technology still cannot replicate: intuition, adaptability, and emotional intelligence. "Bartending has always been a craft built on human instinct," he adds.

"If bartenders begin to rely on technology to do the thinking for them, they risk losing those natural instincts."

US report flags Pakistan-based terror groups targeting India

(News Agency) A report by the US Congressional Research Service has reinforced India's longstanding concerns over militant groups operating from Pakistan, particularly those focused on Jammu and Kashmir. The report identifies several India- and Kashmir-oriented groups—including Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Harakat-ul Jihad Islami, Harakat ul-Mujahidin and Hizbul Mujahideen—as continuing to operate from Pakistani territory, posing enduring security challenges.

According to the analysis, Pakistan remains both a hub and a target for a wide range of armed non-state actors, many of which have been active since the 1980s. Despite repeated military operations and policy measures, networks designated as terrorist organisations by the United States and the United Nations have not been fully dismantled.

The report, intended to brief US lawmakers and prepared by South Asia specialist K Alan Kronstadt, categorises these groups into five types: globally oriented, Afghanistan-focused, India- and Kashmir-oriented, domestically focused, and sectarian, particularly anti-Shia outfits. It notes that 12 of the 15 groups listed are designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations under US law, with most driven by Islamist extremist ideologies.

Among globally oriented groups, the report names Al Qaeda, Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent and Islamic State Khorasan Province, while Afghanistan-focused groups include the Taliban and the Haqqani Network. Domestically focused outfits include Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, Balochistan Liberation Army and Jaysh al-Adl, while sectarian groups include Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. The report notes that a 2014 National Action Plan aimed to ensure that no armed militias operate in the country, but adds that multiple large-scale military offensives, including airstrikes and intelligence-based operations, have failed to eliminate these groups. "Several major military offensives, including airstrikes, and hundreds of thousands of 'intelligence-based operations' have failed to defeat the numerous U.S.- and United Nations-designated terrorist groups that continue to operate on Pakistani soil," it said.At the same time, the report notes that Pakistan itself has suffered heavily from terrorism since 2003 and is currently among the countries most impacted by militant violence.

American stripper reveals all US deployment for Iran

(News Agency) A viral TikTok video by San Diego-based stripper and an exotic dancer Charm Daze has exploded online after she claimed young US troops are casually spilling details about their upcoming deployments to the Middle East, with many reportedly heading straight into action against Iran.

In the emotional clip, which has racked up millions of views, Daze described a sudden wave of "depressed" soldiers flooding her strip club near major military bases and blowing through their cash.

"Something I've noticed lately is all the military guys are coming in, and they're spending all of their money. They're kind of depressed," she said. She added that several troops told her outright, "We deploy next week." She added, "To see these young guys and then being like, 'bye,' it's actually making me emotional." She referred to some of the soldiers as "baby-faced" and "foetuses," highlighting the human toll just days before they ship out.

San Diego sits next to one of America's largest military hubs, including Naval Base San Diego, Naval Base Coronado, and Camp Pendleton. The timing of the claims has fuelled intense speculation that the US is preparing a major escalation in the ongoing conflict with Iran.

The video comes as President Donald Trump is ramping up military pressure on Tehran, with thousands of additional US troops, including Marine Expeditionary Units and elements of the elite 82nd Airborne, already repositioned to the region alongside naval assets.

In the US, the mood is far from supportive. Across the United States, families of service members are increasingly voicing anger and anxiety over what many see as an unnecessary war triggered by Trump's aggressive Middle East strategy.

The deaths of 13 American soldiers have already intensified public unease, with fears that a full-scale ground offensive against Iran could lead to significantly higher casualties. On social media, videos of tearful farewells are going viral — parents hugging sons, partners breaking down, children clinging to uniforms — offering a stark, emotional counterpoint to official rhetoric.

For families, the prospect of deployment is about the very real possibility of loss. While Daze did not disclose specific units or exact targets, her account has been interpreted by many as a glimpse into the scale of America's looming deployment to Iran. Military veterans and commentators have slammed the apparent Operational Security breach, warning that loose talk in public venues like strip clubs can hand critical intelligence to adversaries.

Marine officer and social media influencer Kagan Dunlap issued a blunt PSA on X. He wrote, "PSA: Don't tell your adult entertainer you're deploying. You've got to remind your folks: Don't talk to your barber about when you're deploying.

Don't talk to your adult entertainer about deploying or when you're leaving, or what you're doing or dates and times and locations. Because they don't know any better, they're going to post a TikTok video about it."

There has been no official Pentagon confirmation of any specific breach, and Daze framed her post as personal observation rather than insider intel.

Still, the episode has spotlighted both the emotional strain on young troops facing deployment to Iran and the difficulty of keeping secrets in a world of smartphones and social media.

Are the Houthis about to slam shut the world's last working oil exit?

(News Agency) One month into America's war on Iran, the conflict just acquired a dangerous new dimension. The Houthis of Yemen fired their third barrage of ballistic missiles at Israel, struck a QatarEnergy oil tanker in a coordinated operation with Iran and Hezbollah, and served notice to the world that this war would not stay contained. It never does.

The Houthis are not newcomers to chaos. Formally known as Ansar Allah, or Partisans of God, they draw from the Zaidi branch of Shia Islam and have controlled Yemen's capital Sanaa and most of its Red Sea coastline since the Arab Spring collapsed the country into civil war. They survived two American bombing campaigns, one under Biden in 2024 and another under Trump between March and May 2025. Trump eventually negotiated a deal with them and conceded, with characteristic candour, "You could say there's a lot of bravery there." He was not wrong. These are battle-hardened fighters with drones, anti-ship missiles and an established record of disrupting global shipping.

Between late 2023 and early 2025, the Houthis attacked over 100 merchant vessels in the Red Sea in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza. They are part of Iran's Axis of Resistance, a network of regional armed groups that Tehran arms, funds and coordinates.

When Iran goes to war, the network activates. That is precisely what happened last Saturday. The Houthis called their missile attack on Israel a joint military operation with Iran and Hezbollah.

They also threatened further escalation if attacks on Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, the West Bank and Gaza continued.

US Troops Shift To Hotels As Iranian Drone Strikes Leave Bases 'All But Uninhabitable'

(News Agency)Repeated Iranian missile and drone strikes have forced the US military to disperse personnel from several of its own bases across the Gulf, with troops and support staff increasingly operating from hotels, office buildings and temporary facilities, according to multiple reports. The shift marks one of the clearest signs yet of how sustained Iranian attacks are disrupting Washington's military footprint in the region as Tehran claims all US bases have become 'all but uninhabitable'.

Several American installations in the Gulf have reportedly suffered enough damage to become difficult to use for routine operations. Instead of relying solely on large, fixed military bases, US forces are now spreading command, logistics and support functions across more dispersed locations in an attempt to remain operational while reducing vulnerability to further strikes.

Why fixed US bases are becoming a liability

For decades, America's regional posture depended on a network of large, highly visible bases in countries such as Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

From Arvind Kejriwal's blue-eyed boy to no entry: Raghav Chadha's journey

From the India Against Corruption days, Raghav Chadha stood out as a young, articulate and charismatic anti-graft activist — and a fierce defender of Arvind Kejriwal's mission. As the AAP rose to power in Delhi and Punjab, Kejriwal's blue-eyed boy seemed unstoppable. Many envied his meteoric rise. His fall within the party may appear dramatic, but it is hardly surprising.

(News Agency) Very few politicians have witnessed a meteoric rise like Raghav Chadha in the Aam Aadmi Party and India's Parliament. He was AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal's blue-eyed boy. After losing the 2019 Lok Sabha election from South Delhi in May, Chadha returned within nine months, walking alongside the party's top brass as an MLA in the Delhi Assembly.

During the 2022 Punjab campaign, he was part of the core team that called the shots and was soon rewarded for his role in the party's victory, earning a nomination to the Rajya Sabha. By 2024, Chadha, along with Sanjay Singh, was involved in negotiating alliance terms and seat-sharing arrangements with INDIA bloc partners.

As someone who has closely tracked the AAP, I can say without an ounce of doubt that Chadha didn't need an appointment to meet the party chief at his peak. He was Kejriwal's Man Friday for Punjab and effectively served as Delhi's "eyes and ears" in the state. While the AAP chose Bhagwant Mann as Chief Minister, Chadha's influence and political acumen remained unmatched compared to any other minister in Punjab.By then, Lutyens' Delhi knew that one of the direct lines to Arvind Kejriwal was through Raghav Chadha.

Cut to the Delhi excise policy case. The AAP top brass was in deep trouble. Former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia was the first to be arrested, followed by then Health Minister Satyendar Jain in a separate case. Eventually, the Enforcement Directorate reached Arvind Kejriwal. While there were growing murmurs within the party about Chadha's rising equations with colleagues, no AAP leader spoke openly against him, largely due to his proximity to the party chief.When the former Delhi Chief Minister was in jail, Chadha – along with party leader Sandeep Pathak and Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal – was among the limited number of individuals permitted to meet him in Tihar Jail.

It was Chadha's prolonged absence from India during the AAP chief's arrest that added fuel to the fire. "Where is Raghav Chadha when the party is in deep crisis?" even staunch AAP supporters began asking on social media.

He tried to salvage the situation with a photo or two after Kejriwal's release from jail. But by 2025, dissatisfaction against him within the AAP cadre had become glaringly obvious. The Rajya Sabha MP's last significant assignment from 5 Ferozeshah Road was to scrutinise Delhi's electoral rolls. The party, however, lost its Delhi fortress to the BJP in February 2025. What followed was an organisational rejig: former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia was given charge of Punjab affairs, while responsibilities in Goa, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh were redistributed. Chadha's name, however, did not feature on any of the lists. That did not come as a surprise to me. Rather, it felt like my reading of the party's internal rumblings had finally been publicly validated.

Iran charging toll to let Indian ships transit Hormuz? What government said

The MEA's clarification came after Iranian state media reported three days ago that a parliamentary commission had approved a proposal to impose tolls on vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz.

(News Agency) The Centre on Thursday clarified that there have been no discussions with Iran on imposing tolls on Indian ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz, pushing back against recent reports amid heightened tensions in West Asia. Responding to queries in Delhi, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "There has been no such discussion," firmly dismissing speculation of any such arrangement.

The MEA's clarification comes days after Iranian state media reported that a parliamentary commission had approved a proposal to introduce tolls on vessels transiting the strategic waterway. The reported plan includes "financial arrangements and rial-based toll systems" aimed at asserting Iran's sovereign role, along with possible coordination with Oman, which shares control of the strait. It also flagged potential restrictions on the United States and Israel, and provisions targeting countries imposing sanctions on Iran.

INDIA ENGAGED AS GLOBAL TALKS GATHER PACE

Even as it ruled out any toll-related talks, government said it remains closely engaged with stakeholders to safeguard its shipping interests. Jaiswal said New Delhi remains engaged with Iran and other countries in the region to ensure safe and uninterrupted movement of its vessels. "We are in touch with Iran and other countries there to see how best we can ensure unimpeded and safe transit for our ships carrying LPG, LNG and other products," he said.

He added that six Indian ships have safely crossed the Strait of Hormuz in recent days. "We continue to remain engaged with relevant parties," he said.

The MEA also said the United Kingdom has invited multiple countries, including India, for discussions on the situation in the Strait, with the Foreign Secretary attending the meeting.

The developments come against severe disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical energy corridors that typically handles nearly a fifth of global crude oil and liquefied natural gas shipments.

Since the escalation of the conflict in West Asia, traffic through the route has plunged sharply, with maritime intelligence firm Kpler estimating a drop of around 95%. The disruption has raised concerns over global energy supplies and price volatility.

INDIA FLAGS SAFETY OF UN PEACEKEEPERS

At the same briefing, Jaiswal also underlined India's long-standing role in United Nations peacekeeping operations, noting that around 600 Indian personnel are currently deployed with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

"Our peacekeeping operations go back several decades. We are also the largest troop-contributing country to UN missions," he said.

Referring to recent attacks on UNIFIL personnel, he added that India has condemned the incidents and stressed that "the invulnerability of UN missions must be ensured, and the safety and security of our peacekeepers must be guaranteed."

India gets third nuclear submarine with INS Aridhaman

In a major boost to India's strategic deterrence capabilities, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday commissioned the indigenously built nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) INS Aridhaman into the Indian Navy.

The submarine, also known as S4, is the third in India's indigenous SSBN programme and follows the earlier induction of INS Arihant (2016) and INS Arighaat (August 2024). Its commissioning marks a significant step in strengthening the naval leg of India's nuclear triad — the ability to launch nuclear weapons from land, air and sea. INS Aridhaman has completed its final phase of sea trials and is expected to join the Strategic Forces Command, which oversees India's nuclear arsenal. The programme remains one of the country's most closely guarded defence projects.

BIGGER, QUIETER, MORE LETHAL

At around 7,000 tonnes, INS Aridhaman is slightly larger than its predecessors and features a more streamlined hull designed to improve stealth and acoustic performance — a critical factor for underwater survivability. The submarine is powered by an upgraded 83 MW pressurised water reactor (PWR) developed by the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), underscoring India's growing indigenous technological capability in nuclear propulsion. A key upgrade lies in its firepower. Unlike earlier boats, INS Aridhaman is equipped with eight vertical launch tubes, doubling the missile capacity of INS Arihant. This allows it to carry either: Up to 8 K-4 ballistic missiles with a range of about 3,500 km, or As many as 24 K-15 missiles with a range of around 750 km

STRENGTHENING NUCLEAR DETERRENCE The induction of INS Aridhaman is

expected to significantly enhance India's ability to maintain a "continuous at-sea deterrence" — ensuring that at least one nuclear-armed submarine remains on patrol at all times, a key element of credible nuclear deterrence. India is among a select group of countries — including the US, Russia, the UK, France and China — that operate nuclear-powered submarines. While India has already demonstrated land- and air-based nuclear capabilities, the expansion of its submarine fleet signals a clear focus on strengthening its underwater nuclear posture.

WHAT LIES AHEAD

The Navy is already working on the next submarine in the series, referred to as S4*, as well as the more advanced S5-class submarines, which are expected to be significantly larger, with an estimated displacement of around 14,000 tonnes. The commissioning of INS Aridhaman comes amid a broader push towards defence self-reliance and indigenous military capability, reinforcing India's position as an emerging maritime power in an increasingly complex security environment.

Seventh Indian LPG tanker Green Sanvi heads home

Another India-bound LPG tanker, Green Sanvi, is now crossing the Strait of Hormuz, according to ship-tracking platform VesselFinder. Its passage makes it the seventh India-bound LPG carrier to transit the chokepoint since the West Asia war began.

Earlier, India Today had reported that six LPG tankers — Shivalik, Nanda Devi, Jag Vasant, BW Tyr, BW Elm, and Pine Gas — had reached the Indian coast. Green Sanvi, with a deadweight of 58,811 metric tonnes, is comparable in capacity to the large LPG carriers that had earlier made it to India.

At least 15 Indian oil and gas vessels remain stranded west of the Strait of Hormuz, including two India-bound LPG carriers, Green Asha and Jag Vikram. Both were earlier seen operating close to Green Sanvi, but while Green Sanvi has since switched on its AIS and begun moving towards Qeshm-Larak crossing, the other two appear to have held position, indicating they are still stuck near the chokepoint. Its final Indian discharge port is still unknown. In its destination signal, the vessel is displaying "India Ship India Crew" message that appears to reflect a tactic increasingly used by Indian-linked vessels in recent days to reduce the risk of being targeted by IRGC forces.

Oracle's layoffs explained: Why the IT giant suddenly fired 30,000 employees

(News Agency) Oracle has laid off thousands of employees globally, with reports suggesting that job cuts could be as high as 30,000, even as the company posted strong revenue growth. While there is no official confirmation on the total number, the layoffs are being seen as part of a larger shift in the company's strategy, especially its growing focus on artificial intelligence and data centres.

The layoffs have impacted multiple regions, including India and Mexico. India appears to be among the worst-hit markets, with reports indicating that nearly 12,000 employees may have been laid off out of a workforce of around 30,000, according to ANI.

WHY ORACLE LAID OFF EMPLOYEES?

One of the key reasons behind the layoffs is Oracle's aggressive push into artificial intelligence infrastructure. The company has reportedly signed a $156 billion deal to build AI data centres over five years, largely for OpenAI.

This expansion requires massive spending. Oracle is expected to buy around 3 million specialised chips to support these data centres. Its spending on such infrastructure has increased sharply, from about $6.9 billion annually two years ago to nearly $50 billion this year.

To support this scale of investment, the company appears to be cutting costs in other areas, including its workforce.

DEBT PRESSURE AND CASH FLOW NEEDS

Oracle is also carrying significant debt, estimated at over $108 billion. This has added pressure on the company to manage its finances carefully. According to estimates by investment bank TD Cowen, the layoffs could help Oracle free up between $8 billion and $10 billion in cash flow. This money is expected to be redirected towards funding its AI and data centre expansion.

The company had also filed a restructuring plan worth $2.1 billion in March, with nearly $1 billion already spent before the layoffs were carried out. Another factor behind the layoffs is growing concern among lenders. The cost of insuring Oracle's debt has risen sharply, reaching levels last seen during the 2009 financial crisis.

Barclays had earlier downgraded Oracle's debt, warning that the company was close to "junk" status, which indicates a higher risk of default. Some banks have reportedly stopped lending to Oracle for these projects, adding to the financial strain.

UNCERTAINTY AROUND KEY CUSTOMER

There are also concerns around demand for Oracle's new infrastructure. OpenAI, one of the key customers for these data centre projects, is reportedly exploring newer and faster chips from Nvidia. This creates a risk that Oracle's large investments in current-generation infrastructure may not be fully utilised. The company has already spent billions on building facilities, including a major project in Texas. Rapid changes in technology mean that chips can become outdated quickly, even before data centres are fully operational.

Despite the layoffs, Oracle's stock rose about 6% on the day the news emerged. The company had reported quarterly revenue of $17.2 billion, its highest in 15 years. However, the stock has seen a sharp decline over a longer period. It had touched a high of $346 in September 2025 but is now trading around $146. This decline has also impacted the net worth of Oracle founder Larry Ellison, whose wealth has reportedly dropped significantly over the past few months.

The layoffs are being seen as part of a broader shift within Oracle, as it moves towards capital-intensive AI infrastructure and cloud services. While the company is investing heavily in future growth areas, the move has come at the cost of job cuts across its existing business.

With high debt levels, rising costs, and uncertainty around demand, Oracle appears to be restructuring its operations to manage risks and fund its long-term plans.

Will rupee slide to 100 against the US dollar as Iran war drags on?

(News Agency) Rupee could weaken further and may even touch the 100 mark against the US dollar if the ongoing Iran war continues, according to a Bloomberg report citing global analysts and market data. The currency has already been under pressure and any prolonged rise in crude oil prices could add to the stress.

Rupee has declined by around 10% over the past year and is among the worst-performing currencies in Asia this year. Analysts say that while authorities are trying to slow the fall, these steps may only provide short-term support.

PRESSURE FROM OIL PRICES AND GLOBAL UNCERTAINTY

According to Bloomberg, analysts at Wells Fargo and VanEck have warned that higher oil prices could speed up the rupee's fall. India depends heavily on oil imports, and rising crude prices increase the country's import bill. This leads to higher inflation and a wider current account deficit, both of which put pressure on the currency.

Brent crude has already risen sharply since the conflict began, jumping about 44% and touching a high of $119.50 per barrel. Some analysts believe prices could rise further to $150 or even $200 if supply disruptions continue, especially around key routes like the Strait of Hormuz.

RBI STEPS IN, BUT IMPACT LIMITED

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has taken steps to control volatility in the currency market. It recently capped banks' end-of-day positions in the onshore currency market at $100 million. This move is aimed at reducing speculative bets against the rupee. However, market movements suggest that such steps may have limited impact. The rupee initially rose by as much as 1.4% after the new rules were announced but

later reversed direction and hit a fresh low of 95.125 on the same day. Analysts believe this shows that deeper economic factors are driving the currency's movement. "100 per dollar is no longer a tail risk — it is a credible stress scenario if current conditions persist," Ahmed Azzam, head of financial market research at Equiti Group, was quoted as saying by Bloomberg. He added that the measures taken so far appear to be short-term tools rather than a long-term solution.

MARKETS SEE FURTHER WEAKNESS

Market signals also point to expectations of further weakness in the rupee. Options pricing shows that traders are preparing for a possible move towards 100.

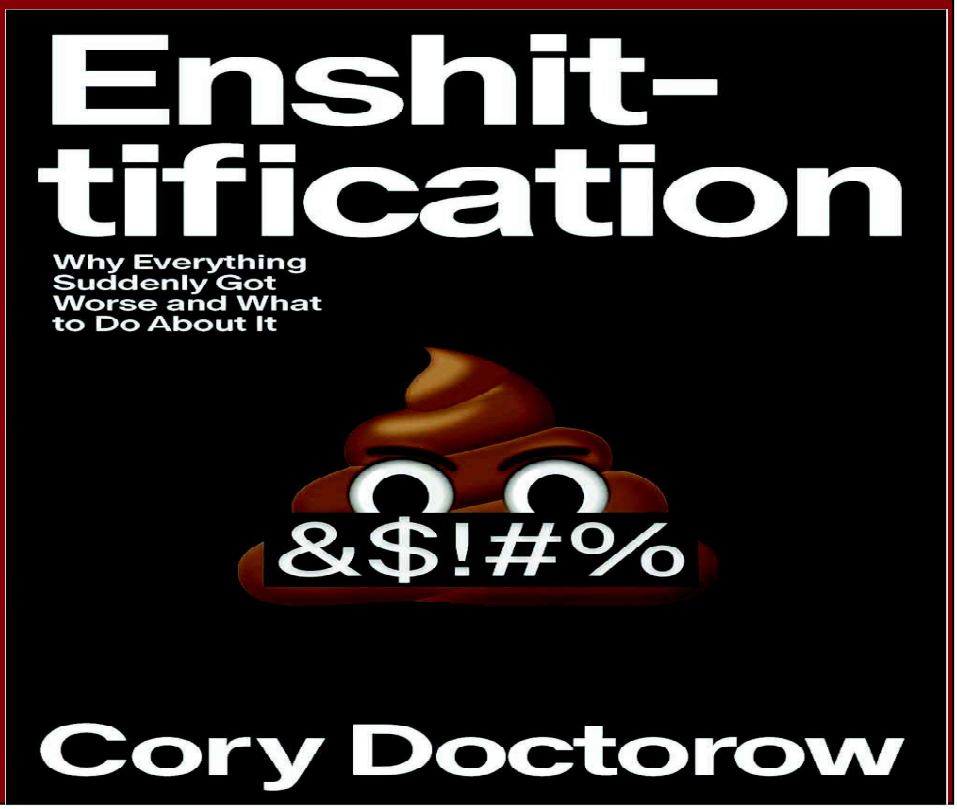
Enshittification: Why Everything Suddenly Got Worse and What to Do About It

(News Agency) Enshittification: It's not just you?the internet sucks now. It's been enshittified. That was no accident, and it's not gonna fix itself. Here's how we'll disenshittify it so we can have a new, good internet.

We are all living through the Enshittocene?the Great Enshittening?a time in which the services that matter to us, that we rely on, are being turned into giant piles of shit. It's frustrating. Demoralizing. Even terrifying.

The once-glorious internet has degenerated into "platforms" that rose to dominance because they delivered convenient and delightful services efficiently and reliably. But once we were locked in to those services, the tech bosses turned on us, relying on our dependency to keep us using the services even as they got worse and worse. The platform bosses did the same to the companies that had flocked to their services to sell stuff to us. Once we were all locked in?businesses and users?the tech companies stripped out all utility, save the bare minimum needed to stave off total collapse.

In Enshittification, Cory Doctorow shows us where it comes from: not the iron laws of economics, or the great forces of history, but specific policy choices made by powerful people who ignored every warning about the consequences of those choices. These are choices that can be undone. Enshittification is a Big Tech disassembly manual, a road map for the seizure of the means of computation. It is a diagnosis, and it is a cure.



One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This

(News Agency) From award-winning novelist and journalist Omar El Akkad comes a powerful reckoning with what it means to live in the heart of an Empire which doesn't consider you fully human.

On Oct 25th, after just three weeks of the bombardment of Gaza, Omar El Akkad put out a tweet: "One day, when it's safe, when there's no personal downside to calling a thing what it is, when it's too late to hold anyone accountable, everyone will have always been against this." This tweet was viewed over 10 million times.

One Day Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This chronicles the deep fracture which has occurred for Black, brown, indigenous Americans, as well as the upcoming generation, many of whom had clung to a thread of faith in western ideals, in the idea that their countries, or the countries of their adoption, actually attempted to live up to the values they espouse.

This book is a reckoning with what it means to live in the west, and what it means to live in a world run by a small group of countries—America, the UK, France and Germany.? It will be The Fire Next Time for a generation that understands we're undergoing a shift in the so-called 'rules-based order,' a generation that understands the west can no longer be trusted to police and guide the world, or its own cities and campuses. It draws on intimate details of Omar's own story as an emigrant who grew up believing in the western project, who was catapulted into journalism by the rupture of 9/11. This book is his heartsick breakup letter with the west. It is a breakup we are watching all over the U.S., on college campuses, on city streets, and the consequences of this rupture will be felt by all of us. His book is for all the people who want something better than what the west has served up. This is the book for our time.

Ancient Carbon Is Flooding Arctic Rivers As Permafrost Melts Faster

Scientists have taken a detailed new look at what happens when Arctic permafrost begins to thaw, revealing major changes to water flow and carbon movement across northern Alaska. The research, led by geoscientist Michael Rawlins at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, provides one of the most precise views yet of how this rapidly warming region is evolving.

The team focused on a region of Alaska's North Slope about the size of Wisconsin, where hundreds of rivers and streams drain into the Beaufort Sea. Using 44 years of model data at a fine one-kilometer resolution, they found that runoff is increasing significantly, more previously frozen carbon is entering rivers, and the thawing season now stretches later into the year, reaching late summer and fall. These findings were recently published in Global Biogeochemical Cycles. Why Arctic Rivers Matter for the Global Climate Arctic rivers play an outsized role in Earth's systems. They carry about 11% of the world's river water into an ocean that holds only 1% of global ocean volume. This makes the Arctic Ocean highly sensitive to changes happening upstream. While snowmelt is a major contributor to river flow, thawing permafrost is becoming increasingly important. Beneath the surface lies a layer of soil that freezes and thaws each year, known as the "active layer." As temperatures rise, this layer is getting deeper, allowing more groundwater to feed into rivers.

Ancient Carbon Is Entering Arctic Waters

The deepening active layer contains large amounts of organic carbon that have been frozen for thousands of years. As the soil thaws, more of this material is released into rivers as dissolved organic carbon (DOC), eventually reaching the ocean.

The Arctic Ocean already receives a disproportionate share of this carbon compared to other regions. Each year, more than 275 million tons of it are converted into carbon dioxide, contributing to additional warming and creating a feedback loop that can further accelerate climate change.

Modeling Arctic Rivers at Unprecedented Detail

Understanding how individual rivers respond to warming has been difficult due to limited direct measurements in northern Alaska.

"What makes this question so hard to answer is that direct observations are very sparse in northern Alaska," says Rawlins, extension associate professor of Earth, Geographic, and Climate Sciences at UMass Amherst. "There are nowhere near enough river sample measurements to quantify inputs to estuaries along the entire Alaskan North Slope."

To overcome this, Rawlins and his team relied on a sophisticated model developed over 25 years. Known as the Permafrost Water Balance Model, it simulates snow, soil, water flow, and changes in the active layer to estimate real-world conditions. The model was expanded in 2021 to include dissolved organic carbon, and later applied across 22.45 million square kilometers of Arctic land.

Previous results suggest that over the next 80 years, the Arctic could see up to 25% more total runoff, 30% more subsurface flow, and increasing dryness in southern regions.

A New Level of Precision in Arctic Research

Earlier versions of the model used 25-kilometer grid cells, but this study achieved much greater detail.

"We've typically run the model on 25-kilometer grid cells," says Rawlins. "This new study is the first time anyone has captured such a wide area of the Arctic—about the size of Wisconsin—down to the kilometer scale, and over such a long period of time: our model simulates daily river flows and coastal exports over 44 years from 1980 to 2023."

Running the simulations required significant computing power. Each model run took 10 continuous days on a supercomputer at the Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center.

"Our freshwater and DOC inputs to coastal estuaries will be useful to a broad range of stakeholders interested in these unique ecosystems in coastal northern Alaska," says Rawlins, "including the Beaufort Lagoon Ecosystems project, which is helping to quantify exactly what's coming through these coastal estuaries."

Where Carbon Release Is Increasing the Most

The study shows that while thawing and runoff are rising across the region, the largest increases in carbon export are occurring in northwest Alaska.

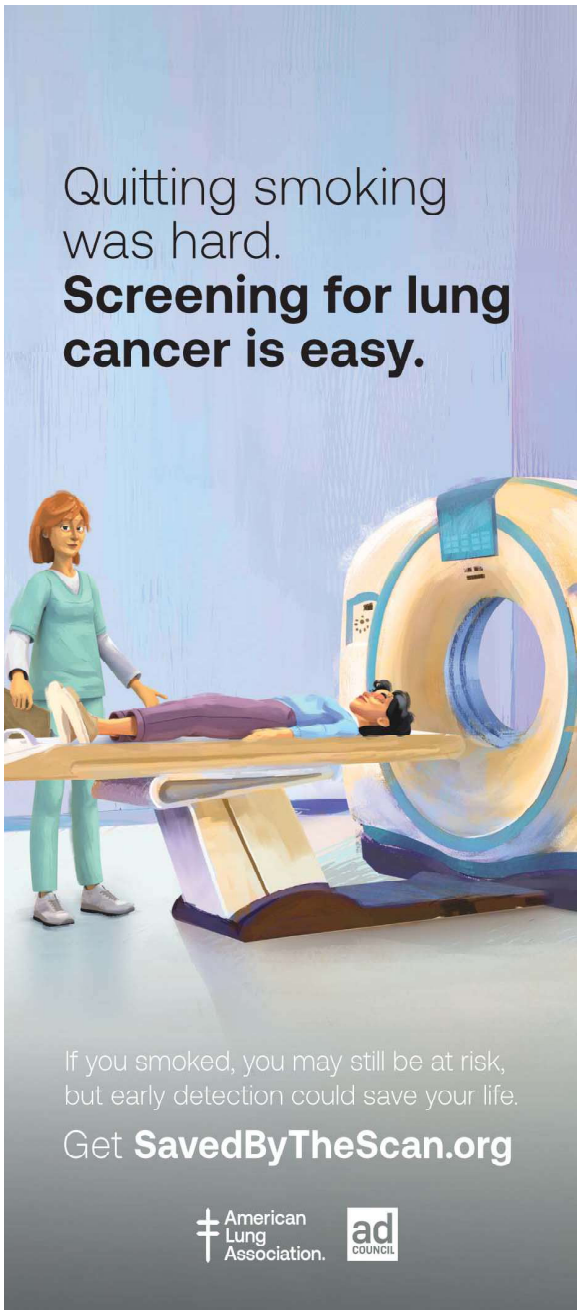
"It's flatter over there," says Rawlins, "which means there's much more carbon from decaying matter in the permafrost that has been accumulating for tens of thousands of years. This is ancient carbon. The further east you go, the more mountainous it becomes. The soil is rockier and sandier, and so far less DOC is mobilized as the permafrost thaws."

A Longer Thaw Season Is Driving Change

One of the most unexpected findings is how much of the change is being driven directly by permafrost thaw. The thaw season itself is now lasting longer, extending into September and even October, several weeks beyond what was typical in the past.

These shifts are likely affecting salinity, nutrient cycles, and food webs in the Beaufort Sea. Researchers are now examining how features known as ice wedge polygons, common across the Arctic, influence the movement of water and carbon toward coastal areas. A Critical Gap in Climate Understanding "How much DOC finds its way to the ocean via rivers and streams is a part of the carbon cycle we don't know much about," says Rawlins. "We desperately need more of these land-to-ocean connection studies if we're to fully grapple with the problem of global warming and the effects it will have on coastal ecosystems."

Reference: "Hydrological Cycle Intensification and Permafrost 2 Thaw Drive Increased Freshwater and Organic Carbon 3 Inputs to Northern Alaska Estuaries" 1 April 2026, Global Biogeochemical Cycles.



US Troops Shift To Hotels As Iranian Drone Strikes Leave Bases 'All But Uninhabitable'

(News Agency) Repeated Iranian missile and drone strikes have forced the US military to disperse personnel from several of its own bases across the Gulf, with troops and support staff increasingly operating from hotels, office buildings and temporary facilities, according to multiple reports. The shift marks one of the clearest signs yet of how sustained Iranian attacks are disrupting Washington's military footprint in the region as Tehran claims all US bases have become 'all but uninhabitable'.

Several American installations in the Gulf have reportedly suffered enough damage to become difficult to use for routine operations. Instead of relying solely on large, fixed military bases, US forces are now spreading command, logistics and support functions across more dispersed locations in an attempt to remain operational while reducing vulnerability to further strikes.

Why fixed US bases are becoming a liability

For decades, America's regional posture depended on a network of large, highly visible bases in countries such as Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Those facilities offered air power, logistics, surveillance and command-and-control capabilities close to Iran. But the current conflict has exposed the downside of that model: once their locations are known, these bases become predictable targets for ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and one-way attack drones. Iran and allied militias have increasingly relied on exactly that kind of warfare, aiming not always to destroy a base outright, but to make it difficult and costly to use. Military analysts say even limited but repeated damage to runways, radar systems, fuel infrastructure, housing and communications nodes can degrade combat readiness. The result is not necessarily a dramatic collapse, but a gradual erosion of the ability to operate normally from these sites.

A shift to a more dispersed war footing

The move into civilian and temporary infrastructure appears to reflect a broader "dispersed operations" approach — a model in which troops, planners, and support elements are spread across multiple locations rather than concentrated at a single major base.

That approach can complicate targeting for an adversary and help preserve continuity if one installation is hit. But it also comes with trade-offs. Running operations from hotels or improvised workspaces can strain communications, logistics, security and command structures, especially during a high-intensity regional conflict. The US has not publicly indicated that it is abandoning its Gulf posture, and officials continue to insist that military operations remain intact. But the fact that personnel are being pushed into temporary accommodations underscores the pressure Iranian strikes have placed on the region's military infrastructure.

Iran's strategy: cheaper attacks, expensive defence

One reason the pressure has grown is the economics of the battlefield. Iran has relied heavily on relatively inexpensive drones and missile salvos to force the US and its partners to spend heavily on interception and protection. Intercepting a low-cost drone or missile can require advanced and expensive air-defence systems such as Patriot or THAAD, creating a lopsided cost equation. Even when many incoming threats are intercepted, some still get through — and repeated attacks can steadily wear down defensive systems, crews and supply chains. That has made survivability and dispersal increasingly important for American forces in the Gulf, especially as Iran continues to show it retains the capacity to launch attacks despite heavy US and Israeli strikes on its military infrastructure.

A sign of a changing battlefield

The emerging picture suggests the conflict is no longer being fought only through airstrikes and missile exchanges over fixed military targets. It is also becoming a contest over which side can keep operating under pressure for longer. For the US, that means adapting to a battlefield where permanent bases are no longer guaranteed sanctuaries. For Iran, it means proving that even without matching Washington conventionally, it can still impose disruption, raise costs and complicate military planning across the region. In that sense, the image of American troops and staff working from temporary civilian spaces is more than just a logistical adjustment — it reflects a deeper shift in how war in the Gulf is being fought.

Scientists Debunk Rattlesnake Myth That Fooled Hikers and Doctors for Decades

(News Agency) A new study from Loma Linda University found that bites from baby rattlesnakes are less dangerous than bites from adults, challenging a long-standing myth that says the opposite. The research also traces where that belief came from, how it spread, and how common it remains.

The study rejects the idea that baby rattlesnakes cannot control their venom and always inject all of it when they bite. Researchers said this false belief has led "to negative consequences, including misinformed risk-taking by those encountering snakes, unwarranted fear among snakebite victims, and inappropriate care delivered by misinformed or patient/family-pressured medical professionals." "This is an easily defanged myth that has generated dread, panic, and real-life consequences," said William Hayes, professor of biology at Loma Linda University School of Medicine and the study's lead researcher. "Ample evidence demonstrates that baby rattlers, like adults, can control their venom expulsion, the adults possess and deliver far more venom when biting, and the adults cause substantially more severe symptoms in snakebite victims."

A Persistent Myth With Real-World ConsequencesHayes said a bite from a baby rattlesnake is still a medical emergency and requires immediate treatment. He added that antivenom is the only effective treatment. **The study was published in the journal Toxins.**

"Misconceptions about rattlesnakes create unnecessary fear and frequently result in people harming or killing them," the study stated. "Rattlesnakes occupy an important role in the ecosystems they dwell in and in recent years their populations have dropped significantly in many parts of the United States."

The researchers found that the myth was already appearing in news coverage by 1967. California media played a major role in spreading it from the 1970s through the 1990s, and from 2000 through 2014 it was repeated by news outlets across North America. Although the myth still appears today, including in some well-respected sources cited in the study, the researchers said news coverage has become more accurate since 2015, suggesting that better messaging has helped counter the false claim.

Survey Results Show the Myth Remains Widespread

The researchers said much of the misinformation came from inaccurate quotes in news stories attributed to health care workers and emergency responders, including firefighters, police officers, and other rescue personnel. By comparison, quotes from subject experts, especially university professors, were more likely to be accurate. Hayes said the false belief remains widespread. At the time of data collection, 53% of surveyed students in Southern California believed it was true, along with 73% of emergency responders and health professionals. "We're hoping to get the word out so that we can get this myth corrected," Hayes said.

The 'Thailand tattoo' isn't a real tattoo, it's a travel warning

(News Agency) Everyone wants in on the Thailand vibe. Those beaches, the nightlife, the food, bohemian elephant pants, the (in) famous green balm, tuk-tuk rides, and more. All of that is fine.

And now, somehow everyone is talking about the "Thailand tattoo." It's not a traditional tattoo. In fact, it's not a tattoo at all. It's a scar. It's simply misjudged driving, and maybe too much partying as well. But somehow, several tourists are getting it.

The real story behind the tattoos

It's not a happy one. Recently, a digital nomad couple shared a video where they noticed people in bandages. It wasn't just a coincidence. It was an alarmingly significant number of people, strolling around town in what can only be called "bandage fashion." Why? It all comes down to two-wheeler-related injuries — a burn from an exhaust pipe or a scooter crash. And these injuries are being labelled as the "Thailand tattoo."

The video has amassed 43 million views and counting. Renting your own vehicle to explore a new destination is pretty much what people are doing these days. Much like Goa or Puducherry in India, renting a moped in Thailand is now extremely common, along with taking tuk-tuks. Well, what's a better way to explore the lanes of a new place than actually meandering through them yourself?

We get it. It's the vacation sun, the soft breeze of a new land brushing past you, moving through traffic like you belong. It doesn't feel like a decision so much as a rite of passage. So, planning an itinerary, picking a beach, deciding to rent a scooter, because how hard can it be? Of course you'll figure it out. Because in that moment, it doesn't look like a risk. Until it does.

The scooter crashes in Thailand

They're pretty common, apparently. The moment you Google it, there are several videos, articles, and Reddit threads where tourists talk about their experiences. That one wrong turn. That one overspeeding bike coming out of nowhere. That one drunken night ride.

The most common scooter injury tourists experience in Thailand is an exhaust burn — often referred to as a 'Thai Tattoo'. The second most common is road rash — what happens when skin meets gravel at speed. The islands Koh Samui and Koh Tao are particularly notorious for their steep turns. Koh Tao has steep hills, sandy corners, and uneven roads, and many travellers rent scooters without prior experience. Sometimes people call it the 'Koh Tao Tattoo' also. Different name, same road rash. The Thai Health Promotion Foundation reports that about 70 people die each day as a result of road accidents in Thailand, of which 74 per cent are motorbike riders and passengers.

Scenic and Emerald offer sight-seeing helicopter tour in new trade incentive

(News Agency) Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours and Emerald Cruises & Tours have launched a new trade incentive, offering travel agents the chance to win a sight-seeing helicopter tour.

Running until April 9, 2026, the prize will see one lucky agent awarded a helicopter tour over London, to coincide with the arrival of the 228-guest Scenic Eclipse II into the capital on July 31, 2026. It will be the first time the ultra-luxury Scenic discovery yacht enters UK waters. To be in with a chance of winning, agents must make any Scenic or Emerald cruise booking during the campaign period, including sailings featured in the brands' Easter Flash Sale.

Jonathan Davies, head of sales at Scenic Group, said: "We wanted to do something a bit different for our agent partners this spring – something that's genuinely exciting and easy to get involved with. Every booking made during the Easter Flash Sale is a chance to win, and a helicopter tour over London felt like a fitting way to celebrate the arrival of our ultra-luxury Scenic Eclipse II into the capital.

"With strong savings available across both Scenic and Emerald, it gives agents a compelling reason to drive conversations now, with the chance to win a truly memorable experience."

The Easter Flash Sale offers river sailings across Europe, with savings of up to 40% plus up to an additional £200pp, with flights included across both brands. Cruises start from £1745pp. The incentive applies to new bookings, which will then be automatically entered into a prize draw. The winners will be chosen at random.For more information, agents should contact their local sales manager or email agencysales@scenic.co.uk.

4 Comfort Foods That Help You Recover Faster From Seasonal Infections

Chicken Soup: A classic remedy, chicken soup hydrates and provides essential nutrients. The warm broth clears nasal passages, while protein supports immune function. Adding vegetables like carrots and celery boosts vitamins, making it a comforting, restorative meal when fighting colds or flu.

Ginger Tea: Ginger has natural anti-inflammatory and antiviral properties. Steeping fresh ginger in hot water eases sore throats, reduces nausea, and warms the body. Sipping ginger tea several times a day can help soothe congestion and support faster recovery from seasonal infections.

Garlic: Garlic contains compounds that strengthen immunity and fight infection. Adding raw or cooked garlic to meals can help combat viruses and bacteria. Its pungent flavour enhances soups, stir-fries, and stews, making it both a flavourful and functional ingredient during illness.

Citrus Fruits: Oranges, lemons, and grapefruits are packed with vitamin C, crucial for immune defense. Consuming citrus fruits helps reduce the duration and severity of colds. They can be eaten fresh, juiced, or added to teas for a refreshing, immunity-boosting treat.

Skip The Stove: 8 Foods To Keep Handy For Quick, No-Cook Meals

(News Agency) As kitchens across India adapt to challenges like LPG shortages and increasingly busy lifestyles, many households are turning to smarter, low-effort ways of eating. But this shift highlights an important idea, having a well-stocked kitchen can be just as important as having a well-equipped one.

"If gas isn't available, or you simply want to avoid cooking, having the right ingredients at home can keep you comfortably fed, healthy, and on track with your diet," says Chef Shivani, Chefpreneur & Founder, Gourmestan. According to her, no-cooking days don't have to mean compromising on nutrition or taste, just a little planning goes a long way.

1. Seasonal Fruits

"Your first line of nourishment should always be fresh, seasonal fruits," says Chef Shivani. Papaya, bananas, apples, and melons are light, hydrating, and rich in fibre. A simple fruit bowl can be both refreshing and filling, perfect for hot days or when you don't feel like cooking.

2. Cold Soups

A chef's shortcut to quick nourishment. "Think chilled tomato, cucumber-mint, or a gazpacho-style blend," suggests Chef Shivani. "Raw vegetables can be transformed into something fresh and flavourful with minimal effort."

3. Nuts and Seeds

Walnuts, almonds, flaxseeds, and chia seeds are small but powerful additions to your pantry. "They're packed with healthy fats and provide instant energy," she says. "You can add them to salads, fruit bowls, or simply enjoy them as a snack."

4. Nut Butters

Peanut, almond, or cashew butter can instantly turn into a wholesome meal. "Pair them with fruits or whole-grain bread for something quick yet nourishing," recommends Chef Shivani. "They add both richness and nutrition."

5. Pre-Cooked or Canned Legumes

Chickpeas, kidney beans, and black-eyed peas are excellent plant-based protein options. "With a drizzle of olive oil, lemon juice, and a pinch of seasoning, you can create a quick, no-cook salad," she explains.

6. Whole-Grain Bread or Crackers

A versatile base for easy meals. "This is where you can get creative, top them with nut butters, fruits, or even simple spreads for a satisfying bite," says Chef Shivani.

7. Raw Vegetables

Cucumbers, carrots, and tomatoes are simple yet nutrient-rich. "Keep them washed and cut so they're easy to grab," she advises. "They're refreshing, crunchy, and great for quick snacking."

8. Coconut Water or Buttermilk

Hydration is essential, especially during Indian summers. "Buttermilk and coconut water are natural coolants that help replenish electrolytes and keep the body hydrated," says Chef Shivani. "They're a must-have for no-cooking days." Traditional cooking isn't the only way to nourish your body. "With the right ingredients stocked at home, you can create meals that are clean, balanced, and accessible without the need for flame or fuss," concludes Chef Shivani.

5 Ayurvedic Herbs That Help Strengthen Immunity Against Viral Infections

(News Agency) In today's fast-paced world, it's very important to keep your immune system strong. Pollution, stress, poor diet, and frequent changes in the weather can all damage the body's natural defense system, making us more prone to viral infections.

Ayurveda, an ancient science of natural treatment, has proven ways to become stronger from the inside out. You may naturally and successfully boost your immune system by adding some strong herbs to your regular regimen.

Dr Mandeep Singh Basu, Director Jagat Pharma shares all you need to know:

Giloy

Giloy (Guduchi), also known as "Amrita," which means "the root of immortality," is a very useful herb. Giloy is well-known for its ability to enhance the immune system and get rid of toxins. It helps the body get rid of impurities, speeds up metabolism, and helps the body fight infection. It is especially helpful as the seasons change because that's when viral infections are most likely to happen.

Ashwagandha

Ashwagandha is a strong adaptogenic herb that helps boost the immune system indirectly. One of the main things that weakens the immune system is long-term stress. Ashwagandha can help you feel better overall, lower your stress levels, and give you more energy. It boosts the body's natural defenses and helps keep people from getting sick by harmonizing the body and mind.

Tulsi

Tulsi (Holy Basil) is one of the most respected plants in Ayurveda. Often referred to as the "Queen of Herbs," Tulsi possesses excellent properties for fighting off influenza, viruses, and inflammation (among other things). In addition, it is beneficial for fighting infections in the body. This herb can also help maintain healthy lung function as well. Drinking Tulsi tea regularly may decrease your risk of viral infection (including colds and flu).

Turmeric

The Ayurvedic plant, which is commonly utilized in Indian homes, is turmeric (haldi). Curcumin, the main ingredient in turmeric, is known for its potent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects. Turmeric helps the body fight off harmful germs and lowers inflammation,

which is typically a sign of an infection. Taking turmeric with warm milk or in meals will help your immune system a lot and speed up your recuperation.

Amla

Finally, Amla (Indian Gooseberry) is a great source of antioxidants and vitamin C. It makes the immune system stronger and helps the body fight off illnesses. Amla also helps with digestion and getting nutrients into the body, which is important for good health. Taking Amla on a regular basis, whether in juice, powder, or raw form, can help your immune system for a long time.

Adding these Ayurvedic herbs to your regular regimen will undoubtedly help your immune system. You need to start taking natural supplements, drinking herbal teas, and adding spices to your meals to make these herbs a part of your life. If you eat these five herbs on a regular basis, your immune system will slowly and steadily get stronger. Tulsi, giloy, ashwagandha, turmeric, and amla are five herbs that provide you a lot of strength to combat viral infections and live a better, more balanced life.

Why 20-Year-Olds Are Developing Wrist Pain And 'Text Neck', And How To Prevent It

(News Agency) From morning alarms on smartphones to late-night scrolling on social media, an average day now involves eight to 10 hours of screen time. With this comes musculoskeletal issues among people in their early 20s. Orthopaedic specialists report that the complaints are no longer limited to occasional discomfort. Doctors are seeing early signs of chronic conditions that were traditionally associated with middle-aged or older individuals.

"We are increasingly seeing younger individuals present with neck pain, back pain, and knee pain, conditions once associated with older age groups. The primary reason is a sedentary lifestyle combined with prolonged screen exposure, whether for work, studies, or leisure. Poor posture, minimal physical activity, and inadequate muscle conditioning further aggravate the issue. Additionally, many tend to ignore early warning signs, allowing minor discomfort to progress into chronic pain conditions. The body is simply not designed for long, uninterrupted hours of static positioning," said Dr. Atul Shrivastava , Consultant (Orthopaedic Surgeon), Narayana Hospital, Howrah, Kolkata.

Why Are Young People Reporting A Surge In Pain-Related Conditions?

Clinics are seeing an increasing number of young patients reporting wrist pain, finger stiffness, reduced grip strength, and persistent neck discomfort. Conditions like carpal tunnel syndrome, caused by pressure on a nerve in the wrist, are now being diagnosed in individuals as young as 22 or 23.

"Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) is a condition that occurs when the median nerve, which passes through a narrow tunnel in the wrist, becomes compressed. This nerve is responsible for sensation and movement in parts of the hand. With increasing screen time, especially prolonged typing, scrolling, or using handheld devices without proper wrist support, there is repetitive strain on the wrist. Over time, this leads to inflammation and pressure within the carpal tunnel, resulting in symptoms such as numbness, tingling, pain, and even weakness in the hands and fingers," said Dr Simon Thomas, Senior Director, Robotic Joint Replacements & Orthopaedics at Max Super Speciality Hospital, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi. Another common issue is "text neck", a condition caused by prolonged neck bending while using smartphones. Over time, this posture puts excessive strain on the cervical spine, leading to pain, stiffness, and even long-term structural changes.

What makes this trend particularly concerning is its scale. Doctors say the rise is not isolated but widespread, reflecting a broader behavioural shift among urban youth. The combination of academic work, professional demands, and digital entertainment has created a near-constant cycle of screen use.

How Screen Time Is Taking A Toll On The Body

Unlike traditional desk work, most young people these days use smartphones to consume every bit of information, whether it is emails, messages, podcasts, reels, news, shopping, or browsing. This leads to many reporting issues related to poor posture—slouching, bending the neck forward — and holding devices at awkward angles for extended periods. "Extended screen time affects multiple systems. Musculoskeletally, it leads to poor posture: forward head, rounded shoulders, and spinal strain resulting in neck and back pain. Repetitive hand movements can strain tendons and nerves.

Coffee and Blood Pressure: What You Need To Know Before Your Next Cup

(News Agency) Coffee has been part of human life for more than 600 years, evolving from a regional drink into one of the most widely consumed beverages in the world.

Today, people drink close to two kilograms of coffee per person each year on average, often with strong preferences for specific beans, brewing styles, and preparation methods. How much someone consumes is partly shaped by genetics, particularly those that influence how the brain responds to rewards and how quickly the body processes caffeine. Caffeine can cause a temporary rise in blood pressure, especially in people who do not drink coffee regularly or who already have elevated levels.

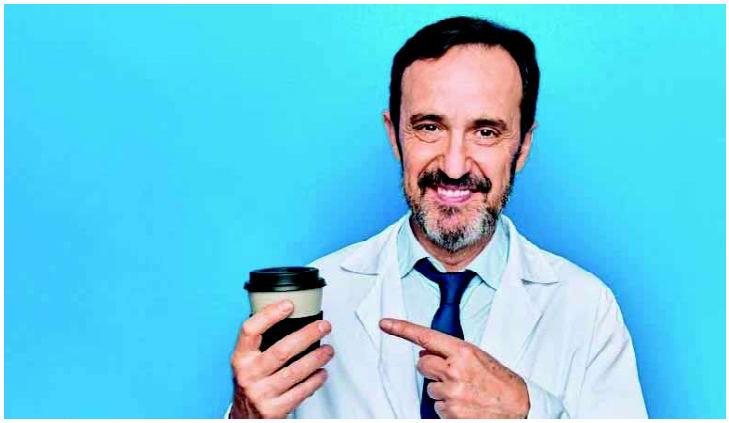
However, this short-term effect does not necessarily mean coffee needs to be avoided if you have high blood pressure or are concerned about cardiovascular health. Moderation is key. So how exactly does coffee influence blood pressure, and how much is considered safe for those with higher readings?

Understanding what counts as high blood pressure Blood pressure is the force blood exerts on artery walls when your heart pumps. It's measured by two numbers:

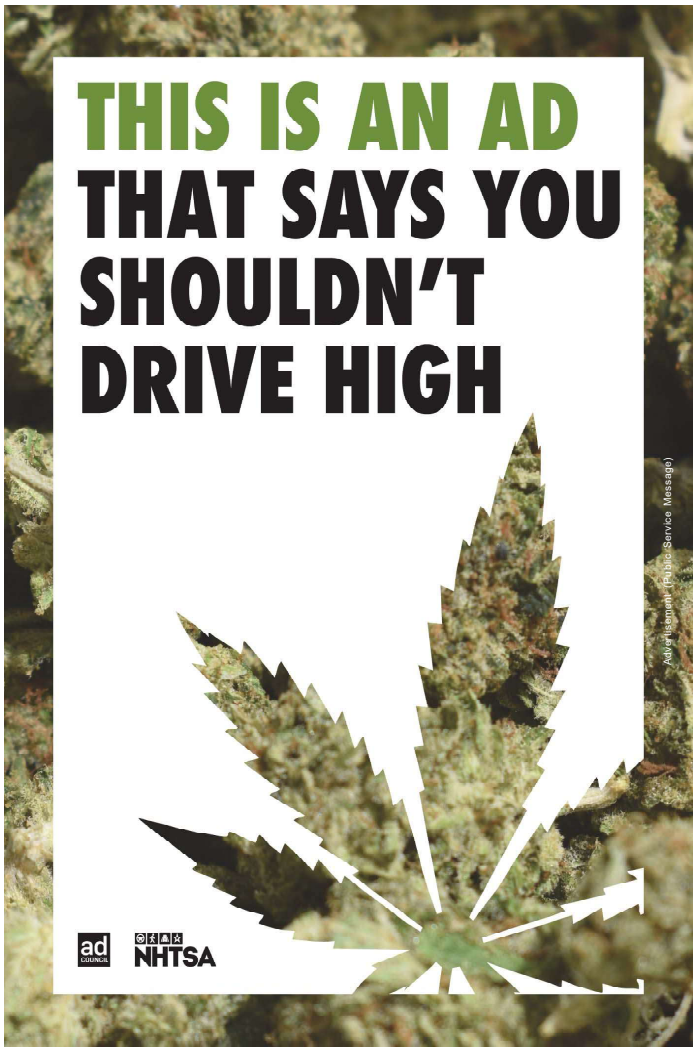
Systolic blood pressure, the higher of the two numbers, reflects the pressure created when the heart contracts and pushes blood through the arteries to the rest of the body.

Diastolic blood pressure, the lower number, measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart relaxes and fills again with blood between beats.

Normal blood pressure is defined as systolic blood pressure of less than 120 millimeters of mercury (mm Hg) and diastolic blood pressure of less than 80 mm Hg. Once your numbers consistently reach 140/90 or more, blood pressure is considered high. This is also called hypertension. Knowing your blood pressure numbers is important because hypertension doesn't have any symptoms. When it goes untreated, or isn't well-controlled, your risk of heart



attacks and strokes increases, and existing kidney and heart disease worsens. About 31% of adults have hypertension with half unaware they have it. Of those taking medication for hypertension, about 47% don't have it well-controlled. How does coffee affect blood pressure? Caffeine in coffee is a muscle stimulant that increases the heart rate in some people. This can potentially contribute to an irregular heartbeat, known as arrhythmia.Caffeine also stimulates adrenal glands to release adrenaline. This makes your heart beat faster and your blood vessels to constrict, which increases blood pressure. Blood caffeine levels peak between 30 minutes and two hours after a cup of coffee. Caffeine's half-life is 3–6 hours, meaning blood levels will reduce by about half during this time.



Zendaya plans to disappear after packed 2026 slate, fears fans may get sick of her

Hollywood star Zendaya is set to dominate 2026 with a series of thrilling projects. After this bustling year, she plans to take a brief break from the limelight, promising a return in 2027.

(News Agency) If 2026 belongs to anyone in Hollywood, it might just be Hollywood star Zendaya. With a packed slate spanning blockbuster films and a major television return, The Drama star fears her fans may get 'sick of her'. In a new interview, she also said that she plans to 'go into hiding' after this. While speaking with Fandango, Zendaya revealed that she plans to "disappear for a little bit" once her hectic release calendar wraps up.

Expressing gratitude to her fans, she said, "I really appreciate everyone who supports any of the movies or supports my career in any kind of way. I'm deeply appreciative. I just hope you guys don't get sick of me this year because, I'll tell you what, I'm disappearing for a little bit. I'm going to have to go into hiding for just a little bit."

What's on Zendaya's 2026 slate?

The Emmy-winning actor headlines an impressive line-up of projects in 2026. She kicks off the year with The Drama, directed by Kristoffer Borgli, releasing on April 3. In the film, she plays Emma Harwood, a bookstore clerk engaged to a British museum director, played by Robert Pattinson. Their relationship takes a complicated turn as unsettling truths surface ahead of their wedding. Just days later, Zendaya will reprise her role as Rue in the third season of Euphoria, premiering on April 12, a comeback fans have been eagerly waiting for. After a brief pause, she moves into blockbuster territory with Christopher Nolan's The Odyssey, set to release on July 17. Later that month, she reunites with partner Tom Holland for Spider-Man: Brand New Day, slated for July 31. The year wraps up on a grand note with Dune: Part Three, arriving on December 18. There is also speculation about her involvement in Avengers: Doomsday, which could further add to her already stacked schedule. Following this whirlwind year, Zendaya plans to take a step back from public life. However, her absence may be brief. The actor is expected to return in mid-2027 to promote Shrek 5, where she lends her voice to Felicia, alongside returning stars Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, and Cameron Diaz.

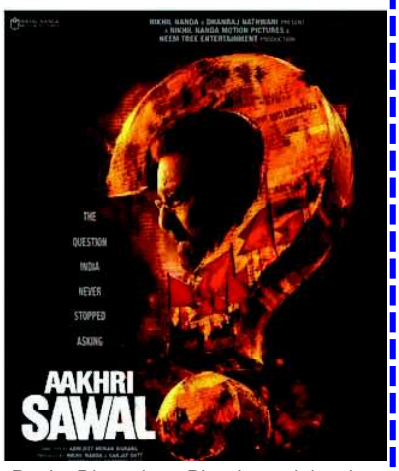
Iran war hits Indian bedrooms: How the conflict triggered a condom shortage

(News Agency) The ripples of the escalating conflict in West Asia have reached Indian bedrooms. India's Rs 8,170 crore condom manufacturing industry is currently grappling with a severe supply chain crisis, leading to widespread shortages and an anticipated 50 per cent surge in retail prices. The shortage is not a result of a sudden spike in demand, but a direct consequence of disrupted maritime trade routes and the choking of petrochemical supplies and lubricants essential for production and increased production costs for the sector.India produces over 400 crore condoms annually, with major manufacturers like state-run HLL Lifecare Ltd, Mankind Pharma Ltd, and Cupid Ltd facing supply chain challenges. HLL Lifecare alone produces approximately 221 crore condoms each year. Condom production depends heavily on silicone oil and ammonia. Silicone oil, a crucial lubricant, is currently in short supply, leading to market uncertainty. Ammonia, vital for stabilising raw latex, is expected to see price hikes of 40-50 per cent and rising packaging material costs have further increased production expenses. According to an official from a condom manufacturing firm, the supply constraints and price volatility in materials such as PVC foil, aluminium foil, and packaging have impacted production and order fulfilment, Indian Express reported.

Aakhri Sawal: First look of Sanjay Dutt's film about RSS out on Hanuman Jayanti

The teaser of Sanjay Dutt's upcoming film Aakhri Sawal will be released nationwide on April 2, on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti. The film is based on the 100-year journey of RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh).

(News Agency) The teaser of Aakhri Sawal, starring Sanjay Dutt, is set to be released on April 2, on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti. Directed by Abhijeet Mohan Warang, the film is based on the 100-year journey of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh). The cast includes Amit Sadh, Namashi Chakraborty, Sameera Reddy, Tridha Choudhury, and Neetu Chandra in key roles. The teaser will be unveiled across PVR INOX screens. The film explores the aspirations of today's youth and their quest for truth, set against the backdrop of historical facts and events. Aakhri Sawal aims to depict the 100 years of RSS, founded in 1925 by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar.



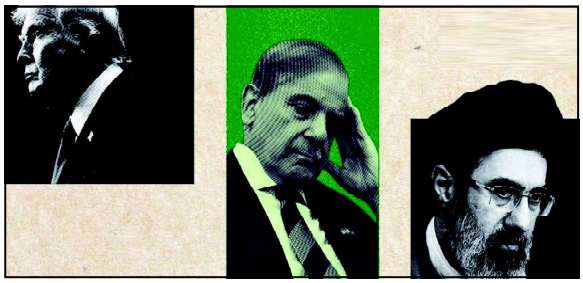
The 2026 period drama Shatak was based on the origins of RSS. The film was directed by Ashish Mall and depicted how an organisation started as a volunteer movement and expanded across India over the years. The director of Aakhri Sawal, Abhijeet Mohan Warang, made his directorial debut with the Marathi-language drama Picasso in 2021 and won a Special Mention at the 67th National Film Awards. His previous works include Deja Vu, Prem Pratha Dhumshan, Piccolo, and the short film Virtual Reality. Aakhri Sawal is co-produced by Nikhil Nanda, Sanjay Dutt, Puneet Nanda, Dr Deepak Singh, Gaurav Dubey, and Ujjwal Anand. The story, screenplay, and dialogues are written by Utkarsh Naithani. Monty Sharma has composed the film's music and the Kumar Vishwas has contributed to the lyrics.

What A 'New Middle East' Could Look Like After Iran War

(News Agency) This isn't just the worst ever energy crisis in history. What we are witnessing is nothing less than the First Energy World War. No country - well, almost - is left unaffected. Energy superpower Saudi Arabia is in the deepest economic and geopolitical pain ever. Even Norway - far away, super rich and the key supplier of energy to Western Europe - is in crisis. Because soaring petrol and electricity prices are hurting the ordinary people in the scenic kingdom. In the Global South, the poor are being told to go back to kerosene for cooking. In India, too, kerosene is re-entering many kitchens.

Israel is relentless in its long-cherished plan to demolish Iran, which it has deemed an existential threat for decades. The United States has long refrained from being militarily involved in any such Israeli adventure. However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, after two decades of persistent scheming, finally had his way in dragging the US into his biggest ever war project. The US is now not only trapped but is forced to lead one of the fiercest external aggressions against one of the oldest living civilisations on the planet, Iran. America's vulnerabilities and weaknesses are for the entire world to see. Qatar's Ras Laffan LNG got bombed by Iran. The US, despite its big military base there, could not protect the tiny kingdom's economic lifeline. The stories from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other hydrocarbon-rich kingdoms in the Gulf are similar. They depended on the US for their defence. But they have never felt more defenceless. There is now a growing realisation that the United States may no longer be the force it used to be, that it is now a rapidly declining power, and that they need to rework the way they have looked at its defence frameworks all these years. Hence, hush-hush parleys have begun all across the Gulf Kingdoms to rethink their security architecture. Many have begun to look at India, China, Europe and Japan with a fresh lens. The Middle East, or West Asia as we prefer to call it, will never be the same again. The UAE, Qatar, or, for that matter, even Saudi Arabia, have begun to play the role of new catalysts - ones with the potential to transform and modernise the entire region and, even beyond - for all Muslim societies across the world. A New Middle East in this scenario would be less dependent on the US and would actively seek deeper energy and security engagements with emerging powers like India. China would also be there, probably bigger and deeper than ever before, but to believe that it would replace the US in the region is a misplaced belief. Most Arab countries do not trust China enough to engage with it exclusively in matters like security. The New Middle East will most likely follow an India-like policy of multi-alignment and multipolarity. Would the New Middle East also open up new opportunities for India in terms of securing oil and gas and reconstruction opportunities? Absolutely, yes. However, our approach should be building interdependence, not just buying oil and gas from there. India must insist on buying stakes in producing oil and gas assets in the region, including in post-war Iran. India should also insist on higher FDI by energy-exporting Gulf countries in the country, especially in oil and gas exploration and production, oil and gas strategic and commercial storage, and oil, LNG and LPG shipbuildings in the country. This would also be the time for India to push ahead with the India-Middle East Economic Corridor (IMEC) and look at it in the context of the inevitable new security architecture of the region. Such a framework would be more multinational and collaborative, with the US still playing a big role but also vacating space for other powers, including the likes of France and Germany. India should support any such new architecture that does not let China mushroom in the region. However, the immediate challenge is how to deal with the escalating energy war. We should be prepared for a $150-per-barrel scenario if the US moves into Iran's oil export hub, the Kharg Island.

Pakistan, And The One Big Difference Between 'Broker' And 'Mediator'



(News Agency) In the shifting geopolitics of West Asia, crises often produce unlikely intermediaries. The latest round of confrontation - sparked by US and Israeli strikes on Iran last month - has once again underscored this pattern. As the conflict stretches into its second month, raising the spectre of a wider regional conflagration, Pakistan has emerged as an improbable diplomatic conduit between Washington and Tehran. This development is neither accidental nor entirely surprising; it reflects a convergence of geography, necessity, and ambition that has long shaped Islamabad's external engagements. Acting as a back-channel facilitator, Islamabad has transmitted messages between the United States and Iran, reportedly conveying a detailed American proposal aimed at de-escalation. Simultaneously, its leadership - Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir - has engaged in calibrated shuttle diplomacy, maintaining parallel lines of communication with US President Donald Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar's public acknowledgement of Pakistan's intermediary role, alongside coordination with key regional actors such as Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, signals a deliberate attempt to position the country at the centre of ongoing diplomatic efforts.

Shadow Wars: The 'Inside Networks' Helping Israel Target Iran And Its Leaders

The assassination of the all-powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) Navy chief, Alireza Tangsiri, is the latest addition to Iran's leadership falling prey to Israeli and American military campaigns. Tangsiri was reportedly killed in an Israeli airstrike on the port city of Bandar Abbas, on the coast of the contested Strait of Hormuz, and nearly 1,300 km from the besieged capital city of Tehran.

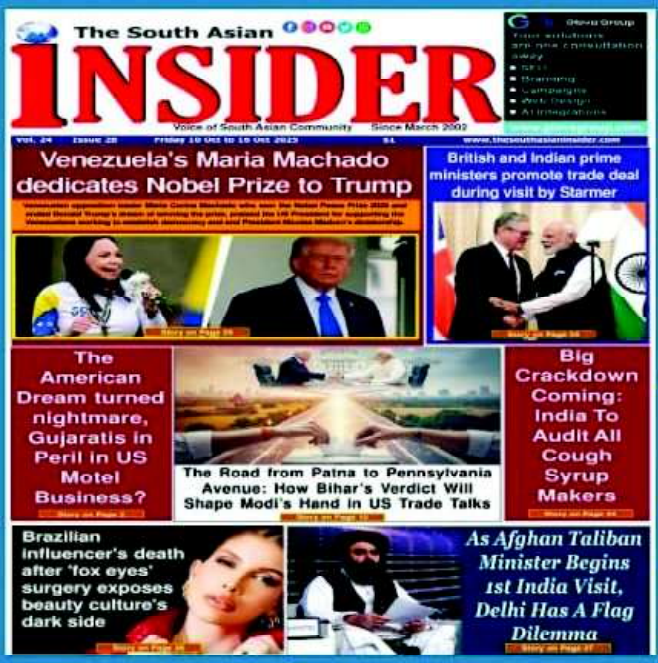
Targeting Tangsiri was to highlight that the centrality of the Hormuz Strait, now largely blocked and controlled by the IRGC, is core to the campaign's aims, while the larger clarity of the intended strategic focus of the war remains murky. Meanwhile, President Donald Trump, who continues to shift goal posts on the end game for the military campaign and is now dabbling with the idea of an on-ground incursion targeting critical islands peppered across the Persian Gulf, is looking for a final gut punch against Tehran, which can be used to exit the war.

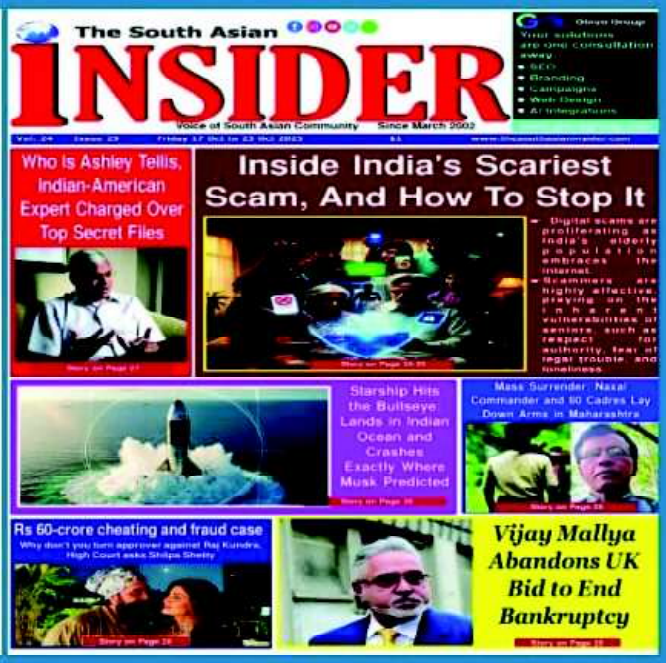
`Over the past four weeks, with Tangsiri being the latest example, Israel has showcased that its war with Iran was being waged over the years in the shadows of espionage, intelligence, and covert operations.

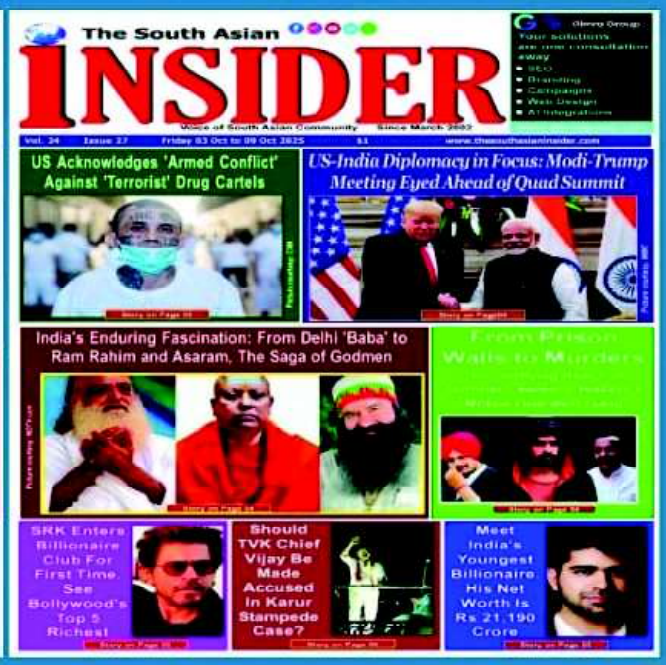
Fearless Voice of the Community

The South Asian Insider

23 Glorious Years, Always a Step Ahead







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