

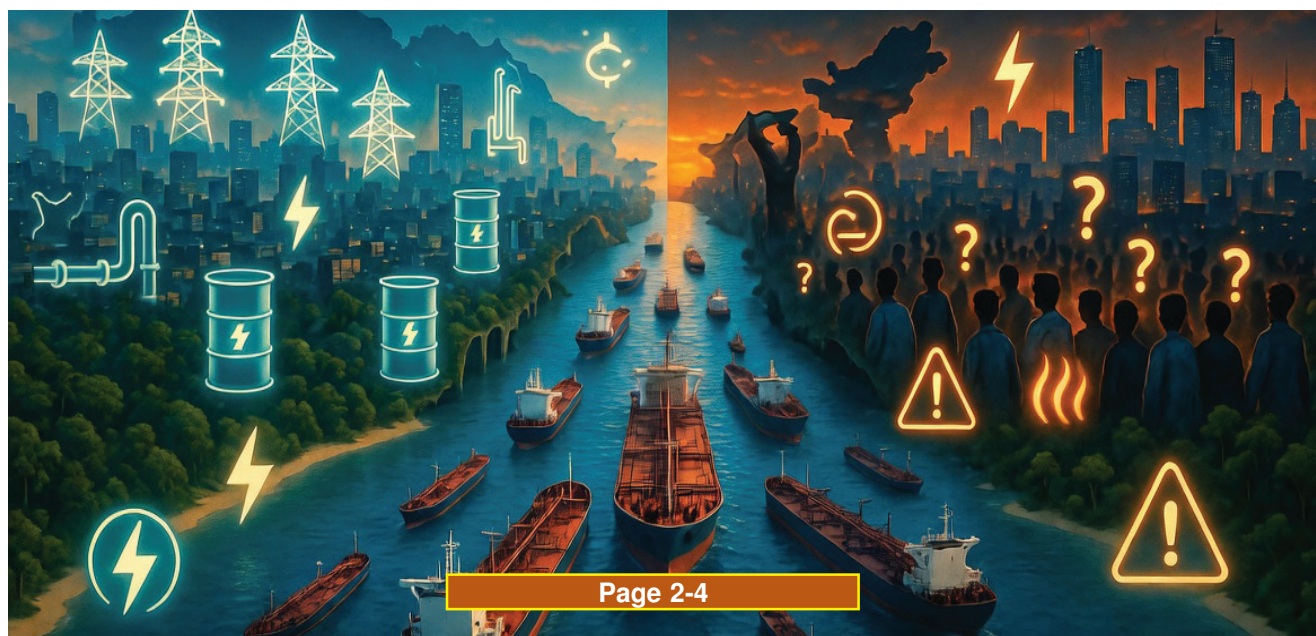
The South Asian Insider

Independent Voice of South Asians in North America

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One Narrow Strait, a Billion and a Half People

How a waterway two miles wide choked South Asia's energy lifeline — and exposed who was ready and who was not



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State of Nation



Growing Anti-Hindu Violence In Bangladesh And Its Strategic Fall-Out

Violence against religious and ethnic minorities in Bangladesh has continued well beyond the 2025–2026 political transition, indicating that the issue is no longer linked only to electoral unrest or temporary instability. The central concern is no longer simply that minorities are being attacked. The concern is that the attacks continue without sufficient political or institutional cost to prevent recurrence.



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One Narrow Strait, a Billion and a Half People

How a waterway two miles wide choked South Asia's energy lifeline — and exposed who was ready and who was not

By Staff Correspondent

KEERTHI RATHNA'S WEEK is now measured in litres. The tuk-tuk driver from the hill city of Kandy, in central Sri Lanka, is allowed twenty of them — a government ration that must carry his three-wheeler, and his family's income, from one Wednesday to the next. Two thousand kilometres to the north, in Chennai, families who once booked a cooking-gas cylinder without a second thought now wait as long as forty-five days, or pay touts four and five thousand rupees for a single canister on the black market. In Dhaka, soldiers have been posted at petrol pumps. In Islamabad, the government has shortened the working week to four days. Across a region home to nearly a quarter of humanity, daily life has been reorganised around a single fact: the oil and gas that South Asia runs on largely arrives by sea, and the sea lane it depends on has been all but shut since the last days of February.

That lane is the Strait of Hormuz, a channel between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula no wider than two navigable two-mile corridors at its narrowest point. In ordinary times roughly a fifth of the world's seaborne oil and a comparable share of its liquefied natural gas pass through it. Since the United States and Israel launched an air war on Iran on February 28 — a campaign that, among other things, killed Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei — Tehran has turned the strait into a weapon. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps warned vessels away, boarded and struck merchant ships, and laid sea mines. Traffic collapsed to a fraction of its normal volume. The International Energy Agency would later call it the largest supply disruption in the history of the oil market, and its chief described the moment as the greatest global energy-security challenge the world has faced.

The chokepoint that became a front line

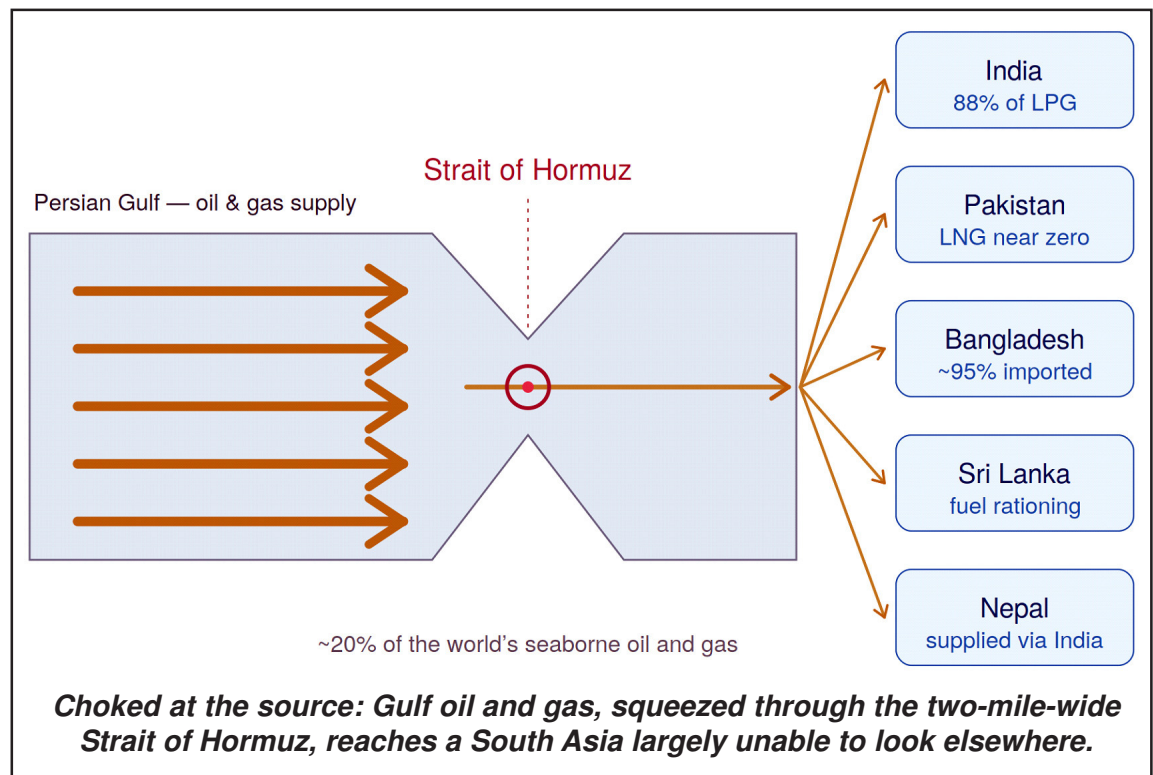
The price signal was immediate and brutal. Brent crude, which had closed near seventy-three dollars a barrel on the eve of the strikes, leapt about ten per cent in the first session of trading and

kept climbing. By mid-March it had broken one hundred dollars; at the height of the panic it traded above one hundred and fourteen as Iranian attacks on tankers and Gulf infrastructure drained inventories and fattened a "war premium" into every cargo. Prices lurched violently on each rumour of escalation or peace — crashing nearly nine per cent in a day when Washington signalled it might seize the strait by force, spiking again when Iran's new supreme leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, vowed to keep the waterway closed as a lever against his adversaries.

A ceasefire between the United States and Iran, reached on April 7 and 8 and extended to Israel, was meant to end the shooting. It did not reopen the strait. Ship traffic stayed far below pre-war levels; insurers balked, satellite-navigation jamming persisted, and Gulf refineries and pipelines damaged in the fighting could not simply be switched back on. Qatar, one of the region's critical suppliers of liquefied natural gas, declared force majeure and paused deliveries. By the close of May, oil had fallen roughly twenty per cent from its 2026 peak — Brent settling near ninety-two dollars in what was nonetheless the worst single month for the benchmark since the early pandemic — as traders bet on a durable truce. Yet the optimism was fragile. The president of the asset manager BlackRock warned that crude could still reach a hundred and fifty dollars even if a ceasefire held tomorrow, because supply chains take time to mend; officials in Washington were said to be privately modelling a two-hundred-dollar scenario. As this report went to press, Iran had reportedly stopped speaking to mediators even as President Trump insisted talks were alive, and Washington had slapped fresh sanctions on Iranian financial targets. The strait, in other words, remains the hinge on which the regional economy swings.

India: the war arrives at the kitchen stove

No country in the region had more riding on Hormuz than India, and nowhere did the disruption land more intimately.



India is the world's third-largest importer of oil and buys abroad some eighty-eight per cent of the crude it burns. During the first nine months of the current fiscal year, by industry estimates, roughly forty-one per cent of that crude, more than half of its LNG, and an extraordinary eighty-eight per cent of its imported cooking gas travelled through the Strait of Hormuz. When the lane closed, the shock did not stay confined to refineries and traders. It arrived, quite literally, at the kitchen stove.

Liquefied petroleum gas was the first and most visible casualty. India has built out some 330 million LPG connections, and for hundreds of millions of households a cylinder of cooking gas is not a convenience but a daily necessity. With about sixty per cent of the country's LPG imported and the overwhelming majority of that routed through Hormuz, booking backlogs stretched to six weeks in places, cylinders vanished from depots in several cities, and a black market bloomed where a single canister could fetch four to five thousand rupees. The government invoked the Essential Commodities Act, ordering households with piped natural-gas connections to surrender their LPG cylinders within ninety days and directing oil-marketing companies to map addresses digitally and block bookings where piped gas was available. Restaurants were

nudged toward kerosene and coal; hospitals and schools were ringfenced as priority users. The petroleum ministry stood up a committee of senior executives to ration commercial gas equitably across states, and the minister of state for petroleum, Suresh Gopi, told Parliament plainly that imported supplies had been hit by what he called geopolitical developments in West Asia.

The reserve that wasn't

If diplomacy kept a trickle of fuel moving, the deeper story India's crisis told was about preparation — and the gap between what a government says and what it holds. As panic spread, it emerged that the cushion of strategic reserves the country could actually draw on covered only a matter of days, even as far larger figures circulated in official messaging. The mismatch did its own damage: sensing a shortfall, ordinary citizens rushed to book what they could, demand spiked by more than half against normal levels, booking systems buckled, and authorities ended up seizing tens of thousands of hoarded and black-market cylinders. The contrast with Japan — which depends on the same Gulf supply lines but sits on the order of eight months of sovereign petroleum reserves, and which told its public exactly how long its stocks would last — became a recurring rebuke in the Indian commentary. Same shipping lane, same physical shock; very different outcomes,

determined less by luck than by storage and candour.

The macroeconomic bill mounted in parallel. New Delhi raised retail petrol and diesel prices and, in an unusually direct appeal, urged citizens to curb discretionary spending on gold and foreign travel to ease pressure on the rupee. The currency obliged its critics by sliding to a record low near ninety-seven to the dollar; foreign institutional investors pulled tens of thousands of crores out of Indian equities in May alone. The pain radiated through the economy along petroleum's many tributaries: aviation, where fuel accounts for around forty per cent of operating costs; tyre and petrochemical makers, whose feedstock is oil; small auto-component plants running on a week's inventory; and the millions of Indian workers in the Gulf states whose remittances — nearly two-fifths of the country's total — are exposed to a prolonged regional war. India's answer, beyond rationing and reserves, has been to scramble for alternatives, courting LPG and crude from the United States and Canada and pressing every diplomatic lever to keep cargoes moving on routes that bypass the strait.

Pakistan: two fronts at once West of the border, Pakistan absorbed the energy shock while fighting a war of its own. Even as Islamabad positioned itself as a would-be mediator between Washington and

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BY THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ~20% | Share of the world's seaborne oil and LNG that normally passes through the Strait of Hormuz. |
| Feb 28, 2026 | US-Israel air war on Iran begins; Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei is killed and the strait is shut to most traffic. |
| 88% | Of India's imported cooking gas (LPG) that travelled through Hormuz in the first nine months of FY2026. |
| ~₹96.96 / \$1 | Record low for the Indian rupee reached in May 2026 amid oil-driven outflows. |
| 4-day week | Working week shortened in both Pakistan and Sri Lanka to conserve fuel and power. |
| ~95% | Of Bangladesh's energy that is imported by sea — the region's most exposed economy. |
| +33% | Cumulative rise in Sri Lankan fuel prices since the war began; petrol near ₹398 a litre. |
| \$92–150+ | Range of Brent crude scenarios analysts cite — from late-May levels to post-ceasefire warnings. |

Reporting drawn from the International Energy Agency, the U.S. Energy Information and government statements, Reuters, the Associated Press, Al Jazeera, Business Standard, S&P Global, the Press Information Bureau of India, and regional reporting from across South Asia. Figures reflect the period from late February to early June 2026 and are subject to revision as the conflict evolves.

Tehran — floating a phased ceasefire framework that Iran was said to have acknowledged — it was simultaneously managing an armed conflict on its western frontier with Afghanistan that had flared in late February after Pakistani airstrikes on militant camps in Nangarhar, Paktika and Khost. Two emergencies pressing at once compressed the state's bandwidth at precisely the moment it needed room to manoeuvre.

On the home front the measures were a patchwork of austerity. The government moved to a four-day working week to conserve power and fuel; petrol prices jumped around twenty per cent in a single week; authorities in Punjab and Islamabad offered free public transport to coax commuters off private vehicles. Liquefied-natural-gas imports, on which a slice of the national grid depends, fell to near zero, threatening thousands of megawatts of generation as the summer heat built. A proposed hard "smart lockdown" of energy use was floated and then scrapped in favour of looser, improvised restraint — a sign of how politically combustible rationing is in a country with a long memory of load-shedding. **Bangladesh: the most exposed economy in the region**

If any South Asian state was structurally defenceless against a Hormuz closure, it was Bangladesh. The country imports something close to ninety-five per cent of its energy — oil, gas and coal — by sea, much of it from or through the Persian Gulf, with no meaningful domestic substitute. Natural gas alone supplies over half its energy needs. When the strait shut and Qatar paused LNG deliveries, the spot cargoes Dhaka could still find cost two to three times their pre-war price — in the range of twenty-three to twenty-eight dollars per million British thermal units, against roughly ten before the war. Some gas-fired power stations were simply taken offline.

The social strain showed quickly. The government restricted fuel sold to vehicles, closed universities, and ordered cuts to cooling demand; markets were told to shut by early evening. As queues lengthened and supplies thinned, fuel trucks and filling stations were targeted in

robberies reported across thousands of outlets, prompting the deployment of security forces to protect distribution points in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet. The country's vital garment industry — the engine of its exports — limped along on generator power at costs forty to sixty per cent higher than grid electricity. Dhaka asked Tehran directly for safe passage for its energy-carrying vessels through the strait, a request that captured the asymmetry of the crisis: a nation of 170 million, reduced to petitioning a warring power for permission to keep its lights on.

Sri Lanka: an old nightmare returns

For Sri Lanka, the fuel queues carried the unmistakable echo of 2022, when an earlier collapse toppled a government. The island imports the bulk of its energy and holds storage equal to barely a month's consumption, leaving it acutely exposed. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake reintroduced the QR-code fuel-rationing system born of that earlier crisis — a weekly allowance of eight litres for motorbikes, twenty for three-wheelers like Keerthi Rathna's, twenty-five for cars, a hundred litres of diesel for buses and two hundred for lorries. He ordered a four-day public-sector working week, encouraged employers to revive work-from-home arrangements, and declared a weekly Wednesday holiday for officials to save fuel, warning the country to brace for a long war.

The cost of even that rationed fuel climbed sharply. Colombo raised pump prices by around eight per cent in early March, then by a further

twenty-five per cent within a fortnight, lifting regular petrol to nearly four hundred rupees a litre — a cumulative jump of roughly a third since the fighting began. Officials spoke of trying to wring a fifteen-to-twenty per cent cut in national consumption out of the increases. For an economy still convalescing from its last meltdown, with food security and a tentative recovery both riding on imported diesel, the war in a distant gulf landed as an existential threat rather than a passing inconvenience.

The landlocked and the interconnected

Even states without a coastline were not spared. Nepal, which sources virtually all its petroleum overland from India, found its supply hostage to its neighbour's rationing and price decisions — a reminder that in an integrated region, one country's shortage becomes another's. Across South Asia the same shocks converged at once: a war severing global energy supply, a punishing

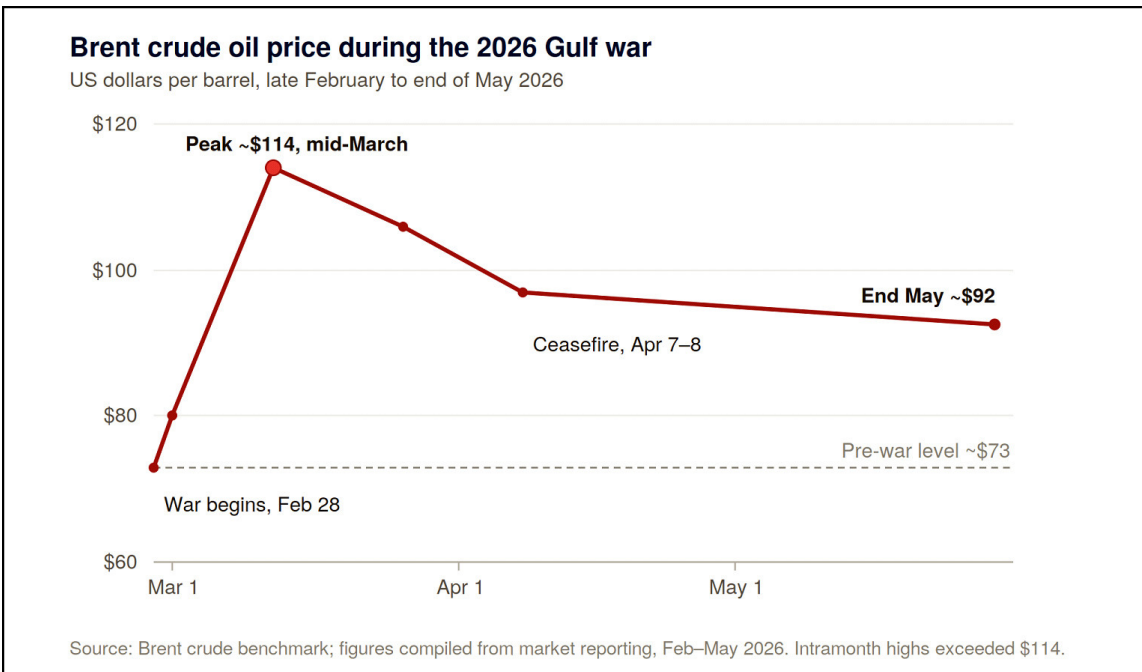
summer heatwave driving electricity demand to records, and each nation's own legacy of thin reserves and deferred reform. The IEA's crisis tracker logged emergency conservation and consumer-support measures in dozens of countries, with India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and others all appearing on the same anxious ledger.

What the strait has taught

The hard lesson of the past three months is not that South Asia imports its energy — that was always true — but how little margin it left itself against the day a single chokepoint closed. India's days of real cooking-gas reserve, Sri Lanka's month of storage, Bangladesh's ninety-five-per-cent dependence on the sea: each is a policy choice as much as a geographic fate. The crisis has accelerated a scramble for diversification — American and Canadian LPG, non-Gulf crude, faster build-out of piped gas and strategic storage — that had it been pursued in

calmer years, might have blunted the blow.

For now the region's fate is tied to a ceasefire that has quieted the guns without reopening the water, and to a diplomacy that flickers between hope and breakdown by the week. Should the truce harden and the tankers return in force, prices will ease and the queues will shorten. Should it fail — should Brent climb back toward the triple digits that analysts still warn of — the rationing routines now familiar from Kandy to Karachi could deepen into something far more dangerous. Keerthi Rathna, counting out his twenty litres, and the family in Chennai waiting six weeks for a cylinder, are watching a strait they will never see, on the far side of a sea, because someone long ago decided their stoves and engines should depend on it. Whether that dependence is ever loosened is the question the war has forced, at last, onto the region's agenda.



THE SUGAR PILL PARADOX: INSIDE THE BILLION-DOLLAR BATTLE OVER HOMEOPATHY

From Royal Patrons to Bollywood A-Listers, Celebrity Endorsements Ignite a Fierce War Between Ancient Belief and Modern Evidence-Based Science.

NEW DELHI — It is a medical system founded on the principle that “like cures like” (expressed conceptually as a philosophical inversion where a substance causing symptoms cures those same symptoms), yet its modern existence rests on an entirely different formula: high-profile validation clashing violently with hard clinical science.

The age-old war over homeopathy has erupted into the mainstream once again, triggered by a highly publicized social media storm. Bollywood superstar **Anushka Sharma** recently shared an endorsement post highlighting her long-term reliance on homeopathy, featuring a discussion between prominent homeopathic physician Rajan Sankaran and Shark Tank India entrepreneur Namita Thapar. Sharma wrote that the practice had played an “important role” in her life, asserting that “homeopathy doesn’t treat conditions, it treats people.”

The backlash from the medical establishment was swift and unsparing. Dr. Cyriac Abby Philips, an eminent hepatologist widely known online as “**The Liver Doc**,” publicly lambasted the endorsement, flatly branding homeopathy as “healthcare fraud” and equating the celebrity-driven promotion to “witchcraft” and “quackery.” This explosive digital confrontation has pulled back the curtain on a multi-billion-dollar global industry that thrives on elite patronage while being



"You are paying premium prices for fancy sugar pills containing precisely no medicine at all. Global health authorities in the UK, France, Spain, and Australia have systematically withdrawn funding or flagged a definitive lack of evidence for the practice."
- Dr. Cyriac Abby Philips ("The Liver Doc")

systematically discarded by mainstream medical science.

The Global Elite and the Dilution Doctrine

Anushka Sharma is far from the first global icon to face scrutiny for backing alternative medicine. Homeopathy has enjoyed a centuries-long love affair with the upper echelons of wealth, power, and fame:

King Charles III & The British Royal Family:

For decades, King Charles has been the world’s most powerful proponent of alternative therapies. His decision to become an official patron of the Faculty of Homeopathy drew intense fire from the UK’s scientific community, with prominent researchers labeling the stance an anti-science misuse of a public platform, and the National Health Service (NHS) systematically dismantling its funding for such treatments.

Hollywood and Pop Royalty:

Global entertainment icons like Cher, Tina Turner, and Paul McCartney have historically credited homeopathy with saving them from chronic illnesses when conventional medicine allegedly failed. Superstars like David Beckham publicly praised homeopathic remedies for accelerating the healing of a broken foot ahead of the 2002 World Cup, while A-listers ranging from Jennifer Aniston to Gwyneth Paltrow have routinely integrated it into their personal wellness branding.

The Science of Nothingness vs. The Power of Faith

At the heart of the intense controversy is a fundamental law of chemistry: Avogadro’s limit. Founded in 1796 by German physician Samuel Hahnemann, homeopathy relies entirely on the principle of extreme serial dilutions. A typical over-the-counter remedy

is labeled “30C,” which implies that the original substance has been diluted 1 part in 100, and that process repeated sequentially 30 times over.

Mathematically, this extreme dilution factor is expressed as a fraction: 10 to the power of negative 60. Because this number vastly and fundamentally exceeds Avogadro’s constant (which dictates approximately 6.022 times 10 to the power of 23 molecules per mole), the mathematical reality is stark. The probability of a single molecule of the original active medical ingredient remaining in the final distributed sugar pill is statistically zero.

To the modern scientific community, this remains an open-and-shut case. “It is physically and chemically impossible for these remedies to exert a direct pharmacological effect,” say evidence-based advocates. They issue stark warnings that when highly influential global figures promote these remedies to millions of impressionable followers, it drives vulnerable patients away from verified, life-saving conventional treatments for severe pathologies like cancer, liver failure, and acute chronic infections.

Yet, practitioners and millions of loyal consumers fiercely push back against this narrative. Supporters argue that rigid Western clinical trials fundamentally fail to capture the deeply personalized, holistic nature of alternative practice. In countries like India, homeopathy is legally

institutionalized and integrated under the Ministry of AYUSH, providing widely accessible, low-cost care to a massive, diverse population. For many, the long, empathetic consultations provided by practitioners offer a psychological comfort and care that modern, fast-paced hospital corridors severely lack.

The Future: Regulation or Radical Rejection?

As the rapid digital age continues to amplify the reach and weight of celebrity influencers, regulatory bodies worldwide are steadily tightening enforcement parameters. While India continues to actively fund, institutionalize, and integrate the practice into its public healthcare framework, Western nations are increasingly moving toward severe restriction, mandating explicit warning labels on alternative packages stating clearly that they lack any form of scientific backing or modern clinical validation. The battle lines remain rigidly drawn. To its detractors, homeopathy is a stubborn relic of pre-scientific thought, kept alive by corporate profit margins and elite naivety. To its defenders, it represents a gentle, holistic alternative to the aggressive, profit-driven interventions of modern pharmaceuticals. What is certain is that as long as the world’s most famous individuals continue to champion the perceived power of the sugar pill, the global scientific community will continue its fight to dismantle it.

| High-Profile Advocate | Claimed Remedy/ Use Case | Scientific Counter-Response |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anushka Sharma | Mindful, holistic integrated healing and lifestyle wellness. | Categorized purely as an unscientific placebo effect with zero clinical backing. |
| King Charles III | Institutional patronage, integrated alternative healthcare frameworks. | Deemed an anti-science misuse of public platform contradicting evidence-based medicine. |
| David Beckham | Accelerated bone-fracture healing and soft-tissue injury recovery. | No clinical data supports ultra-diluted remedies affecting structural bone tissue repair. |
| Cher | Targeted alternative treatments for viral chronic fatigue syndromes. | Dismissed by medical boards as a dangerous delay of necessary evidence-based medical care. |

Growing Anti-Hindu Violence In Bangladesh And Its Strategic Fall-Out

The persistence of attacks under the newly elected BNP government suggests that communal violence is increasingly rooted in local impunity networks, ideological mobilisation, demographic competition, and weakening state deterrence.

Hindu communities remain the principal targets of temple attacks, land grabbing, intimidation, assaults, economic coercion and religious desecration. Delayed investigations, inconsistent policing, and weak prosecutions are gradually normalising communal intimidation at the local level. For India, the crisis directly intersects with Northeast security, border management, refugee pressure, Bay of Bengal geopolitics, and the long-term ideological balance of eastern South Asia.

The data on minority targeting in Bangladesh during 2026 indicates a persistent and worsening pattern of violence against minority communities, particularly Hindus. In January 2026, at least 124 attacks on minorities were recorded, of which more than 95 directly affected Hindus. The dominant forms of violence included temple attacks, idol desecration, land-related intimidation, and physical assaults.

In February, the total number of recorded attacks stood at 118, with more than 80 incidents targeting Hindus. The primary patterns included temple arson, coercive occupation of land, and intimidation during religious activities.

March witnessed 117 recorded attacks on minorities, including more than 75 incidents affecting Hindus. During this period, property attacks, economic coercion, and assaults on Hindu-owned assets emerged as the most common forms of targeting.

The situation deteriorated further in April, when the number of recorded attacks rose sharply to 146. More than 100 of these incidents directly affected Hindus. The month was marked by an escalation in assaults, kidnappings, temple attacks, and acts of intimidation. The rise in violence after the political transition is strategically significant because it suggests that communal violence is not merely a by-product of electoral instability but reflects deeper and more persistent structural pressures within Bangladeshi society.

The April escalation is strategically important. Instead of stabilisation after political transition, the violence intensified. That weakens the argument

that the attacks are merely election-linked disturbances.

From Communal Incidents to Structural Pressure

For years, communal violence in Bangladesh was often interpreted as a by-product of elections, local disputes, or temporary political mobilisation. That explanation is becoming increasingly insufficient.

The current pattern is geographically dispersed, repetitive, and tied to land, demographic pressure, local power competition, and ideological intimidation.

Across multiple districts, Hindu communities are facing a sustained mix of temple desecration, land occupation, threats, economic targeting, and social coercion.

Individually, many incidents appear localised. Collectively, they indicate an environment where minority insecurity is slowly becoming embedded within local political and administrative structures.

The strategic significance lies in the cumulative effect as repeated low-intensity attacks over time results in migration, demographic contraction, economic withdrawal and psychological retreat from vulnerable areas.

That process matters because demographic shifts eventually alter local political equations, land control patterns, and communal balances. In parts of rural Bangladesh, this transition is already visible.

The issue therefore extends beyond immediate violence. It concerns whether sections of the minority population are gradually losing confidence in the long-term viability of remaining in strategically sensitive districts.

Chattogram and the Emerging Eastern Security Theatre

The concentration of these attacks in Chattogram carries implications far beyond internal Bangladeshi politics. The region sits at the intersection of the Bangladesh–Myanmar frontier, Rohingya movement corridors, Bay of Bengal maritime routes and India's Northeast security architecture.

These 'Hill Tracts' remain especially sensitive due to recurring tensions involving indigenous communities, weak state penetration, and difficult terrain.

Historically, instability in this belt has rarely remained contained. Once communal tensions intensify, secondary effects tend to follow — illegal arms movement, trafficking, undocumented migration, insurgent shelter networks, localised

radicalisation.

The current regional environment makes the situation more volatile than previous cycles. Myanmar remains unstable. Rohingya armed fragmentation continues. Informal cross-border networks are expanding. Simultaneously, maritime competition in the Bay of Bengal is intensifying. Taken together, these developments are gradually merging into a single eastern security theatre stretching from Myanmar's western frontier through southeastern Bangladesh into India's Northeast.

For India, this convergence is strategically consequential because instability along one segment of the arc increasingly affects the others.

Institutional Drift and the Normalisation of Impunity

The deeper problem is not only the attacks themselves, but the weakening credibility of deterrence. Recurring patterns include delayed police response, weak investigations, inconsistent arrests, intimidation of complainants and extremely prolonged judicial process.

The issue is not total institutional collapse. The issue is selective and inconsistent enforcement. Over time, that creates permissive conditions where communal actors begin treating intimidation as politically manageable and operationally low-risk.

Historically across South Asia, communal ecosystems rarely expand through one large rupture. They expand gradually through repeated low-level incidents, weak accountability, local silence and demographic retreat.

Once that process matures, reversal becomes politically expensive. The larger danger therefore lies in the slow institutionalisation of insecurity itself. A more serious long-term concern is whether portions of the Bangladeshi state are gradually losing effective monopoly over local communal control in certain districts. If ideological actors become politically untouchable at the grassroots level, periodic violence may evolve into semi-permanent communal pressure systems.

That would fundamentally alter Bangladesh's internal security environment.

Strategic Interest

India's strategic dilemma with Bangladesh lies in balancing geopolitical cooperation with domestic sensitivities over minority insecurity. Bangladesh is central to India's Northeast connectivity, BIMSTEC integration, coastal security, counter-

insurgency coordination, and Bay of Bengal strategy. However, recurring attacks on Hindus generate domestic political pressure, refugee concerns, and fears of ideological radicalisation along India's eastern frontier. New Delhi's approach is therefore calibrated, combining quiet diplomacy, tighter border surveillance, intelligence cooperation, and selective signalling through regional and global platforms, while maintaining strategic ties with Dhaka.

Within Indian strategic circles, the debate is shifting from 'whether incidents are isolated' to 'whether Bangladesh's ideological centre is changing', a development that could reshape eastern South Asia's security architecture. This intersects with broader geopolitics, particularly China's expanding footprint in Bangladesh through infrastructure, ports, defence ties, logistics corridors, and digital systems. Prolonged instability may weaken internal cohesion in Bangladesh, increase external balancing, and create greater strategic space for Beijing. For India, the issue is therefore both humanitarian and a critical question about Bangladesh's long-term strategic orientation in the eastern maritime theatre.

Future Outlook

The central takeaway from recent developments is straightforward: regime change did not stop the attacks. The violence has continued. In fact, in several regions, it has intensified. That alone changes the strategic reading of the crisis.

What was once viewed as periodic communal unrest increasingly resembles a sustained pattern of demographic and ideological pressure against vulnerable minority populations. If current trajectories continue, Bangladesh is likely to face: continued minority migration, sharper communal geography, deeper ideological polarisation, expansion of local radical ecosystems and growing international scrutiny.

The larger question is whether Bangladesh can preserve its secular and plural political centre while institutional weakness, ideological mobilisation, and regional instability rise simultaneously. For India, this is no longer a peripheral humanitarian concern. It is increasingly becoming part of the broader strategic question shaping the future stability of eastern South Asia.

THE \$12 BILLION GOLD RUMOR

INSIDE THE FOREX MARKET MYSTERY AND THE RBI'S OFFICIAL DENIAL

NEW DELHI - On June 3, 2026, sudden tremors rippled through India's financial markets. A jarring question rapidly dominated newsrooms and algorithmic trading feeds across the nation: "RBI? \$12??" (Did the RBI sell \$12 billion worth of sovereign gold reserves?) The controversy ignited after a highly complex analytical model published by Bloomberg Economics, authored by Senior India Economist Abhishek Gupta, suggested that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had quietly offloaded a staggering \$12 billion in physical bullion reserves over the two weeks ending May 22. According to the analysis, the central bank allegedly liquidated gold to aggressively buy \$7.5 billion in foreign currency assets, aiming to defend a heavily pressured Indian Rupee amidst escalating geopolitical tensions in West Asia and a widening current account deficit. The reaction from the state infrastructure was swift and absolute. Within hours of the narrative trending, both the RBI and the government's Press Information Bureau (PIB) Fact Check wing issued flat rejections, branding the report entirely "fake, malicious, and mathematically incorrect." Yet, the official clarification has triggered a secondary wave of scrutiny, with seasoned macroeconomic analysts pointing out clear data alignment gaps in the central bank's public timeline. This investigative report tears down the complex mechanics behind the data illusion, examines the historical friction points of India's gold management, and traces the future course of action planned

within the high walls of Mint Street. Verifying the Details: Did the Sale Actually Happen? According to extensive cross-referencing of official data streams, international commodities benchmarks, and physical asset logs, the report that the RBI sold its physical gold is fundamentally false. The primary confusion stems from a basic structural misunderstanding of how sovereign forex reserves are marked-to-market versus actual physical market interventions. 1. The Revaluation Illusion: The external Bloomberg model noticed that the net dollar value of the RBI's gold reserves experienced a steep drop of roughly \$6 billion-sliding from \$120.85 billion on May 8 to \$114.79 billion by May 22. Commodities experts quickly pointed out that the weekly statistical supplements report gold value strictly in currency terms, which fluctuates based on international market prices. During those exact two weeks in May, global gold benchmarks from the London Bullion Market Association (LBMA) plummeted by roughly 4%, sliding from around \$4,724 an ounce to the \$4,540 region. When applied to India's vast holdings, this global price correction accounted entirely for the multi-billion-dollar paper drop. The shift was a standard accounting revaluation entry, not a physical disposal. Furthermore, India's recent domestic gold import duty hike (from 6% to 15% on May 13) only lifted domestic spot values; the RBI benchmarks its sovereign reserves exclusively to international prices, leaving it completely exposed to global dips. 2. The Physical Stock Audit: The definitive proof debunking

the rumor lies within the absolute stability of the physical stock volume. The RBI officially confirmed that its physical gold holdings stand completely unchanged at 880.52 metric tonnes-the exact same figure recorded at the audited close of the financial year on March 31. Not a single gram of physical bullion left the vaults. The Data Lag Dilemma: Why the Official Defense Faced Criticism Despite the concrete mathematical explanations, the RBI's official press statements faced immediate pushback and skepticism across online retail trading networks. Critics accused the central bank of using mismatched timelines to obfuscate real-time market operations, highlighting a notable lag in standard reporting transparency. The core issue lay in the timeline gap: The Bloomberg allegation specifically accused the RBI of dumping gold during the late-May cycle ending May 22. However, the fully itemized, transaction-level ledger table attached to the RBI's public bulletin at that time only provided verified asset splits up to April 24. While the high-level weekly aggregate figures were updated, the multi-week lag in detailed ledger transparency allowed skeptics to question whether the central bank was completely bridging the data loop. Historical Milestones: Sovereign Gold Trajectories The intense public anxiety and quick escalation surrounding the rumor are deeply rooted in real economic trauma from India's financial history. Over the last few decades, India's strategy has undergone an absolute transformation from

survival-driven mortgage to aggressive accumulation: The Macroeconomic Reality: Why Central Banks Liquidate Gold Because the late-May reports are provably false, neither the Government of India nor the RBI has initiated any program to offload sovereign gold. However, from a broader macroeconomic perspective, central banks globally only resort to physical gold liquidations under highly specific, compounding crises: Defending a Collapsing Currency: When liquid foreign currency reserves (such as US Dollar or Euro liquid accounts) dry up entirely during speculative global runs, a central bank may liquidate physical bullion to source foreign fiat currency, creating an immediate buffer to stabilize their domestic exchange rates. Severe Balance of Payment (BoP) Crises: To guarantee payment structures for essential, completely inelastic national imports-such as crude oil and vital defense components-when standard commercial global credit lines are entirely frozen or blocked due to international sanctions. Future Course of Action: The Path Forward Because no physical gold was sold during the market fluctuation, there is no requirement, necessity, or ongoing plan for an active "recovery" or "repurchase" program to bring back missing

"The market panic was entirely built on a fundamental misunderstanding of asset revaluation metrics. A drop in currency valuation due to international spot prices does not equate to physical disposal by a sovereign repository."

bullion. The gold remains securely inside the central bank's designated vaults. Moving forward, the RBI's actual documented strategy is the exact polar opposite of liquidation. Far from selling off core defensive assets, gold's total share within India's overall foreign exchange reserves has actually risen aggressively, climbing from 13.92% in September 2025 to 16.85% as of late May 2026. To permanently neutralize flash rumors and soothe anxious retail market participants in the future, institutional analysts note that the RBI will likely work to expedite its comprehensive monthly detailed auditing cycles. Transitioning the itemized ledger reporting mechanism to match the real-time tempo of weekly aggregate releases remains the most effective way for Mint Street to fully bridge the information gap and prevent reporting lags from turning into market panics.

| Era / Event | Reserve Strategy Shift | Macroeconomic Context & Impact |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1991 Airlift Crisis | Pledged 46.91 metric tonnes to Bank of England and Bank of Japan. | Secured an immediate \$405 million loan to survive a catastrophic Balance of Payments crash. |
| 2009 Pivot | Purchased 200 metric tonnes outright from the IMF. | A major diversifying shift out of US Dollar dependency, investing \$6.7B in hard bullion reserves. |
| 2024-2026 Reshoring | Shifted massive physical volume back onto domestic soil. | Successfully raised the domestic vault safety ratio from 66% to 77%, mitigating geopolitical custody risks. |



Shrey Parikh Secures the 2026 Scripps National Spelling Bee

In a thrilling finale, 14-year-old Shrey Parikh from Rancho Cucamonga, California, won the 2026 Scripps National Spelling Bee. Parikh triumphed over fellow Indian-origin competitor Ishaan Gupta in a dramatic 90-second rapid-fire “spell-off,” correctly spelling an astonishing 32 words to claim the Scripps Cup and \$52,500 in prizes.

High-Skilled Immigration: India Per-Country Limits Hit for EB-2 Visas

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that all available Employment-Based Second Preference (EB-2) visas for applicants from India have been completely exhausted for fiscal year 2026. Embassies and consulates will pause issuing these visas to Indian applicants until the annual limits reset at the start of the next fiscal year on October 1, 2026.

“H Res 1322” Introduced to Combat Anti-Asian and Anti-South Asian Racism

Led by Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi alongside other Indian American lawmakers—including Pramila Jayapal,

Ami Bera, Suhas Subramanyam, and Shri Thanedar—a major resolution was introduced to condemn xenophobic and racist rhetoric targeting Indian and Chinese Americans. The bill formally highlights an alarming 75% spike in online slurs and hate messages targeting South Asian immigrants over recent months.

Expansion of the EB-5 “Immigrant Investor” Route

With employment-backed backlogs gridlocked, the community has seen a massive surge in applications for the EB-5 Investor Visa. Recent industry data notes record numbers of affluent Indian families utilizing this program to secure Green Cards through direct commercial investments and job creation in the US, bypassing standard multi-decade H-1B to EB-2 pathways.

Corporate Shifts: American Airlines Doubles India Tech Footprint

In major corporate diaspora news, American Airlines finalized plans to double its technology hub workforce in India. The decision highlights how heavily major US airlines and Fortune 500 corporations continue to rely on interconnected engineering hubs bridging

the US and India.

Advancing the \$500 Billion US-India Bilateral Trade Goal

Following the SelectUSA Investment Summit, community business leaders and organizations like the Hindu American Foundation celebrated a record \$20.5 billion in direct investments by Indian companies into the US economy. Officials confirmed that both nations are moving aggressively to scale up overall bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030, anchored by the newly signed Critical Minerals Framework Agreement.

Global Indian Diaspora Alliance Hosts “Icons of Impact” Gala

The Global Indian Diaspora Alliance (GLO-INDIA) hosted its inaugural “Icons of Impact Gala,” honoring exceptional leaders across technology, medicine, and public policy. The national gathering highlighted the growing philanthropic footprint of second- and third-generation Indian Americans.

Local Fraud Awareness Campaigns Safeguard Seniors

In regions with dense Indian American populations, such as Middlesex County,

New Jersey, local governments partnered with community leaders to launch the “Be a Hero Against Fraud” campaign. The initiative targets an uptick in sophisticated international “elder fraud” and gold-purchasing scams that have heavily impacted South Asian seniors in recent weeks.

Memorial Day Visibility: Sikh American Veterans Honored

Sikh American communities across the midwest, particularly in Illinois, drew widespread recognition for organizing heavy participation in local Memorial Day Parades. The events served as vital cultural education opportunities, honoring the historical contributions of South Asian soldiers in global peacekeeping and defense forces.

The Passing of Playback Legend Suman Kalyanpur

The global Indian community is mourning the loss of legendary playback singer Suman Kalyanpur, who passed away at the age of 89. Across the United States, cultural organizations and classical music societies held remote tributes over the weekend to honor her immense contribution to India’s golden age of music.

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Kavankumar Patel, An Illegal, Receives 10-Year Sentence For Sex Trafficking

OMAHA, NE – Kavankumar Patel, a 27-year-old Indian national living in the US illegally, was sentenced to 10 years in federal prison on two counts of sex trafficking of a minor, federal prosecutors announced.

Upon completing his prison term, Patel will serve a five-year term of supervised release and faces deportation.

Senior U.S. District Judge Joseph F. Bataillon imposed the sentence following an investigation by the Homeland Security Task Force and the Omaha Police Department that led to the rescue of two teenage victims. The case began in January 2025, when officers responding to a theft report at the AmericInn hotel in Omaha uncovered signs of human trafficking. Authorities recovered two girls, aged 15 and 16, who had been brought



to the hotel from out of state to be sold for commercial sex. The victims told investigators they were instructed to engage in sex acts with hotel employees

in exchange for reduced room rates, with the threat that they would be removed from the hotel if they refused. Multiple hotel employees were implicated: investigators stated that two paid the traffickers for sex with one of the victims, while a third employee had sex with the other. Patel, a hotel employee, admitted to using money from the hotel cash register to pay the traffickers for access to one of the minors. The victims reported having little food and feeling they had no choice but to comply with the demands of their traffickers, who arranged commercial sex acts and posted advertisements for the victims online. Get the latest local crime news, public safety updates, law enforcement reports, and community alerts followed by readers across cities and communities in Canada.

Groom Dies In Georgia Helicopter Crash Hours After Wedding

ATLANTA, GA – A wedding celebration turned tragic on May 29 when Indian-American pilot Dave Fiji was killed in a helicopter crash just hours after marrying his wife, Jesni, in north Georgia.

Fiji, a first officer with Endeavor Air, and the helicopter pilot died when their Robinson R66 crashed near Dawsonville shortly after departing from the wedding venue. Jesni survived and is recovering at a metro Atlanta hospital.

Nearly 400 guests attended the couple's wedding at The Revere in Dawsonville earlier that day.

"My son was so happy," Dave Fiji's father, George Fiji, told Atlanta News First.

The couple met through church connections between Georgia and South Carolina, according to Fiji.

Following the reception, the newlyweds boarded a helicopter bound for DeKalb-Peachtree Airport. The helicopter crashed in a heavily wooded area not far from the wedding venue and never reached its destination. "It took them a while to locate the helicopter itself," Fiji said. According to Fiji, Jesni remained trapped in the wreckage for several hours before rescuers found her. He said she suffered cuts and bruises but no broken bones. "She's devastated, but she's recovering," he said. Fiji said his son, who had dreamed of becoming a pilot since childhood, raised concerns about weather conditions before takeoff. "Since my son was a pilot, he told the pilot that

there is zero visibility and when there is zero visibility like this, we never fly," Fiji said. According to Fiji, Jesni later said the pilot responded that the helicopter would fly at a higher altitude.

The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating the crash and has not determined what caused the helicopter to go down.

As the family mourns the loss, Fiji said



their Christian faith has helped them cope with the tragedy.

"God granted us a perfect wedding, and within a few hours everything changed into tragedy," Fiji said. "The only place we can find answers and peace is in God."

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DHS Clarifies Green Card Applicants Can Remain In U.S. Amid Policy Confusion

WASHINGTON, D.C. -The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has clarified that people applying for green cards do not have to leave the United States while their applications are being processed, following confusion caused by a recent government announcement.

Last week, a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services news release was widely interpreted as suggesting that applicants seeking permanent residency could be required to return to their home countries and wait for approval unless they qualified for limited exceptions.

In a statement issued May 29, the Department of Homeland Security said there has been no major policy change. The department said immigration officers have long had the authority to decide, on a case-by-case basis, whether an applicant should complete the green card process outside the United States.

"This was just a reminder to officers of their discretionary authority, which has always existed on a case-by-case basis," a DHS spokesperson said. The DHS spokesperson added that people who overstay visas or come from countries whose citizens frequently use public assistance could face closer review. A senior White House official clarified that the announcement was intended as a routine update and not a new immigration policy. The clarification came after immigration lawyers, employers, and immigrants raised concerns that the longstanding process allowing eligible applicants to seek permanent residency while remaining in the United States could be restricted. Lawyers said some

applicants were already being asked during interviews why they were applying for green cards while living in the United States and whether they could instead complete the process from their home countries. Many green card applicants use a process that allows eligible immigrants already in the country to apply for permanent residency without leaving the United States. In 2024, about 820,000 green cards were issued through that pathway, out of roughly 1.4 million green



cards granted overall. Immigration lawyers also warned that workers on H-1B and similar visas could face lengthy delays if they were required to complete processing abroad, where visa appointment backlogs remain a challenge at many U.S. consulates.

Despite the clarification, immigration attorneys say questions remain about how immigration officers may apply that authority in individual cases.

Stay informed with the latest US Immigration News, covering visa policies, green card updates, citizenship developments, border issues, and immigration law changes. Get timely coverage and expert insights on the policies and decisions affecting immigrants and communities across the United States.

Indian Man Gets 15 Years In \$6 Million Elder Fraud Case



CHICAGO, IL -An Indian citizen living in Illinois has been sentenced to 15½ years in federal prison without parole for his role in an elder fraud conspiracy that caused millions of dollars in losses to older Americans.

Syed M. Makki, 38, worked as a courier in the scheme, which involved victims liquidating savings and retirement accounts to purchase gold bars, coins and cash, according to federal prosecutors.

U.S. District Judge Greg Kays ordered Makki to serve the prison sentence, pay \$4,754,000 in restitution, and forfeit seized gold and related proceeds.

According to court records, the conspiracy operated from 2023 through March 2024 and targeted victims between the ages of 61 and 80.

Prosecutors said victims first received malware pop-ups on their computers displaying fraudulent phone numbers. When victims called, conspirators falsely posed as Microsoft employees, bank representatives, government workers and law enforcement officials.

Investigators said the callers convinced victims that their identities or finances had been compromised and that their money was unsafe in bank accounts.

According to prosecutors, victims were instructed to withdraw money from bank and retirement accounts and use the funds to purchase gold bullion. In some cases, victims were told to package the gold and address it to the "Department of Justice" under a specific name to make the requests appear legitimate.

When the gold was delivered to victims' homes, prosecutors said couriers including Makki collected the assets and transported them across state lines to co-conspirators.

Federal authorities said Makki picked up 16 gold bars worth more than \$1 million from victims in Colorado and Missouri on March 25 and 26, 2024. He was arrested the following day in Illinois while transporting the gold, according to investigators.

Authorities said at least 12 identified victims lost more than \$6 million in the scheme.

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Georgia Man Pleads Guilty In Multimillion-Dollar Missouri Gambling Conspiracy

SPRINGFIELD, MO- Tushar R. Patel, a 40-year-old Indian national living in Georgia, has pleaded guilty to federal charges connected to an illegal gambling and money laundering operation in southwest Missouri. Patel pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud, conspiracy to operate an illegal gambling business, and conspiracy to commit money laundering, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Missouri. Federal prosecutors said Patel and his co-conspirators earned about \$9.5 million through illegal gambling businesses operating at multiple locations in southwest Missouri.

According to court records, the businesses operated under the guise of internet amusement arcade games, skill game arcades, and adult arcades. Prosecutors said the establishments used gambling devices, contests of chance, and slot machines in violation of Missouri and federal law. Games Authorities said Patel and others also carried out financial transactions

involving money from the operation. Patel was among nine individuals charged in a 72-count superseding indictment returned by a federal grand jury in Springfield on May 14, 2025. Prosecutors alleged the conspiracy operated between July 2022 and May 2025. All nine defendants were charged with conspiracy to commit wire fraud, conspiracy to operate an illegal gambling business, and operating illegal gambling businesses. In addition, all nine defendants faced at least one wire fraud charge, while eight were also charged with money laundering offenses. Patel faces a maximum sentence of up to 20 years in prison on the wire fraud conspiracy charge, five years on the illegal gambling conspiracy charge, and up to 20 years on the money laundering conspiracy charge. A sentencing date has not yet been announced. Get the latest local crime news, public safety updates, law enforcement reports, and community alerts followed by readers across cities and communities in Canada.

Telangana student dies in US after saving friends from drowning

A 23-year-old student from Telangana died in the United States after reportedly saving three friends from drowning at Toledo Bend Dam on May 29. Anurup Reddy Koduru, a native of Abdullapurmet near Hyderabad, had recently completed a master's degree in Computer Science at the University of North Texas and was preparing to begin his professional career in the US. According to family members, Anurup had gone on an outing with five friends when three of them reportedly slipped into the water while fishing. Anurup, described by relatives as an excellent swimmer, immediately jumped into the water and managed to rescue all three. However, while attempting to return to safety, his feet reportedly became entangled in a submerged fishing wire or net. The current then pulled him into the stream, and rescue teams later recovered his body from a depth of about 20 feet. Anurup completed his B.Tech from Guru Nanak Institutions before moving to the US for higher studies. According to his LinkedIn profile, he actively participated in university hackathons and

won top positions in competitions including HackUNT and a web design event organized by the Graduate Student Council at the University of North Texas. In an appeal seeking support to repatriate his body to India, his brother, Ashrith Reddy Koduru, described Anurup as a "true hero" who gave his life while saving others. The family said its immediate priority is to bring his body back to India for final rites. The online fundraiser, launched to cover repatriation, legal documentation and transportation expenses, had raised more than \$170,000 of its \$200,000 goal from over 5,000 donations as of June 1. The Consulate General of India, Houston, expressed condolences over Anurup's death and said it was in touch with the family and relevant authorities to provide assistance and facilitate necessary procedures. "The Consulate condole the tragic demise of Anurup Reddy Koduru, a young Indian student who just graduated from UNT, Denton," the mission said in a statement, adding that its thoughts and prayers were with the bereaved family.



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'Raped By 600-700 Men': UK MP Shares 'Pak Grooming Gang' Testimonies

According to testimonies, gang members used racial comparisons to justify the way they "treated and controlled" women.



London: British MP Rupert Lowe's recent speech has reignited discussion around the horrific "grooming gangs" in the United Kingdom that have indulged in "gang-based child sexual exploitation" across several states in the country. The UK government's investigation into these gangs has found that perpetrators of organised child sex abuse are mostly "taxi drivers and market traders of Pakistani heritage". Lowe, in his recent speech in the UK Parliament, read graphic testimonies of survivors, describing accounts of extreme sexual abuse, child pregnancies, intimidation, alleged police misconduct, and institutional failures. The testimonies, according to Lowe, were collected during his independent inquiry into group-based child sexual exploitation.

"I sincerely urge this Parliament to listen to the testimonies from these brave survivors and to act, to finally act," the British MP said, reading out statements from survivors who said they were targeted as children by organised grooming gangs.

The Testimonies

Among the testimonies cited by Lowe were accounts of extreme violence and sexual abuse. According to the independent MP, one survivor said a perpetrator "forced" a liquor bottle "up inside me". "He broke the glass while he was there. At that point, I was about 12, nearly 13," she said. One woman said that, over the course of the abuse, she was allegedly raped by multiple police officers in different parts of the country. Another recalled that her abuse started when she was 13 years old. "I was raped by probably about 600 or 700 different

men over three years," she said. "I was bleeding from both my vagina and my back passage and was so swollen I could not sit down. I told hospital staff my drink had been spiked, and I did not know what had happened because I was too afraid to tell the truth. They did not ask any questions. They gave me tablets and discharged me. I was 15 years old," said another survivor. Some survivors said the abuse escalated to bestiality, with victims themselves being treated like animals. "I remember a man opening the back of a van, and I saw 15 to 20 girls locked in dog cages," one woman said. Another recalled that dogs were brought in and she "had nowhere to move." "I think that was the scariest thing was not having any concept of it. There were men around me, not horrified, not disgusted, not helping, but filming and laughing, making bets on whether the dog could actually rape me or not. Yes, I was raped by a dog," she said. "The man just held my face, stared me down straight in the eyes, and he wanted to see me break, and he did," she added.

Another survivor recalled, "I was held down by the men as they each took turns to orally and vaginally rape me, taking it in turns to pin down my arms and my legs. When the assault ended, the men hit me repeatedly, threatened to find me, kill me and harm my loved ones if I ever told anybody what had happened." A third survivor recalled that their perpetrators constantly made remarks "suggesting the white girls, the Christian girls, were viewed as having fewer morals or lower values, whereas Muslim girls were described by some of

the men as having dignity and higher moral standing." "Race did play a part and motivated the selection or demographic of the victims. Throughout my exploitation, the other girls I encountered or who were abused alongside me were almost exclusively white," recalled another woman. According to testimonies, gang members used racial comparisons to justify the way they "treated and controlled" women. A survivor recalled that she was impregnated by one of the men whose father was an 'imam'-- a Muslim cleric. "His dad knew, and he got his son married and said that he wasn't allowed to see the child. They look after their own community," she said.

A woman recalled that the gang members "would toot the horn of the car and then a child would be taken to the front door

by a staff member of the children's home." "Things would escalate around Eid and holidays. Parties got bigger, got worse, got more violent. People, more people involved, more girls involved. The parties were just bigger," said another woman.

The Investigation

Last year, Lowe led a private investigation that identified "gang-based child sexual exploitation" in at least 85 areas across the UK. According to a statement issued by Lowe in August last year, the probe found that "rape gangs", predominantly comprising men of Pakistani heritage, have been active for decades and "far more widespread than thought". "Patterns of predominantly Pakistani males, combined with gross negligence from public bodies, are identifiable," the statement said. It also accused authorities of failing to act on the targeted abuse.

History Of Grooming Gangs In UK

The scandal came to public attention more than a decade ago in Rotherham, the rundown Yorkshire city, where authorities were notified about systematic grooming and sex abuse of young white girls around 2001, according to the American publication The Free Press. However, the convictions in the case came almost a decade later in 2010, when five men of Pakistani origin were jailed for multiple offences against girls as young as 12 years of age. This pattern was found to

be repeated in as many as 50 cities across the UK, including Rochdale, Oxford, Telford and Bristol. According to a 2014 report by Professor Alexis Jay, in Rotherham alone, more than 1,400 children were sexually abused over 16 years between 1997 and 2013. Many of the victims were abducted, raped, trafficked, and subjected to unimaginable violence, often with little to no intervention from authorities due to fears of being labelled racist. In its last report, the Child Sexual Exploitation Taskforce found that over 1.15 lakh cases of sexual offences against children were reported in the UK in 2023. Of them, 4,228 (3.7 per cent) were found to be group-based crimes. The task force was set up in April 2023 by then-Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to address grooming gangs. It arrested over 550 suspects in its first year of operation.

The report showed that 26 per cent of these crimes took place within families, while in 17 per cent of cases, groups including grooming gangs were involved. As many as nine per cent of the group-based crimes were reported to have taken place in schools, religious places, community centres, and other such institutions. In 2024, an independent review commissioned by Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham found widespread organised sexual exploitation of children within Rochdale from 2004 to 2012.

Venezuela Acting President To Visit India From June 3-7: Foreign Ministry

New Delhi: Venezuelan Acting President Delcy Rodriguez is scheduled to visit India from June 3-7, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Tuesday. The visit comes after Rodriguez was earlier scheduled to travel to India to participate in the International Big Cats Alliance Summit on June 1. However, the summit was deferred.

Addressing a briefing, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said that the Venezuelan leader would be accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising several ministers. "First, this is the announcement about the visit of the Acting President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Her Excellency Ms. Delcy Rodriguez, Acting President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who was earlier scheduled to visit India to participate in the International Big Cats Alliance summit on June 1st, which has been deferred as you know, will pay a working visit to India from June 3rd to

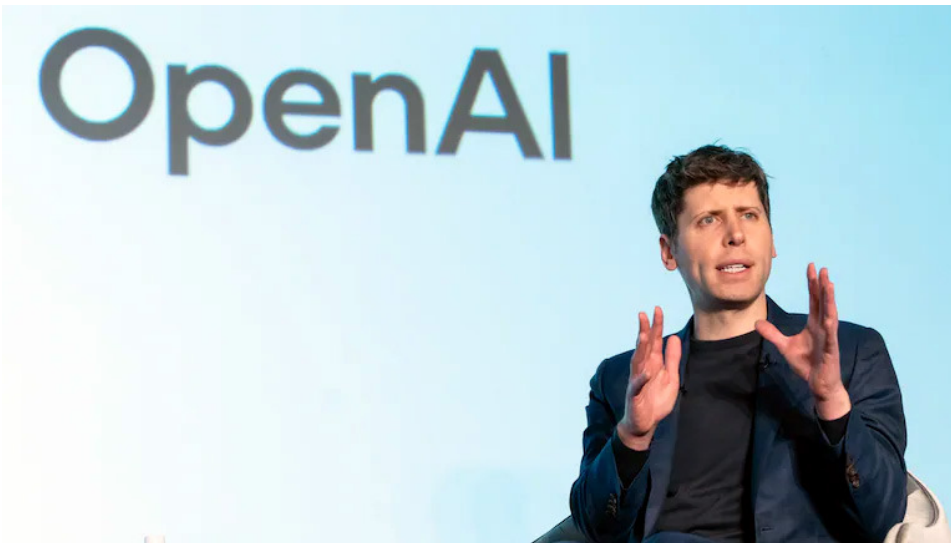
June 7th. She will be accompanied by several ministers, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Economy and Finance, Science and Technology, Communication and Information, and Transportation," he said. Jaiswal noted that Rodriguez has maintained close engagement with India over the years and has visited the country several times in her capacity as the Foreign Minister of Venezuela. "Some of you would know that Acting President Rodriguez has visited India several times in the past in her capacity as the Foreign Minister of Venezuela, as also in her capacity as the Vice President of Venezuela. She came here as Foreign Minister in 2015 and thereafter as Vice President in 2019, 2023, 2024, and 2025. This will be her sixth visit to India. So, she has had a long association with us. During the visit, Acting President, Rodriguez will hold bilateral discussions with the Prime Minister," he added.

"Endangering Our Kids": Florida Sues OpenAI Over ChatGPT Safety Risks

Florida's attorney general on Monday sued OpenAI and its CEO Sam Altman, accusing the company's ChatGPT chatbot of endangering young users by making them addicted and encouraging harmful behaviors.

Florida's attorney general on Monday sued OpenAI and its CEO Sam Altman, accusing the company's ChatGPT chatbot of endangering young users by making them addicted and encouraging harmful behaviors. "Today we're here to announce that we recently filed a monumental civil lawsuit against Sam Altman and ChatGPT for endangering our kids and deceiving parents into believing that this application is safe for use -- it's clearly not," James Uthmeier said at a press conference. "People are getting hurt, parents are getting deceived, and they need to pay for it."

"ChatGPT, we know, can be addictive. It mimics empathy and human characteristics to trick users into feeding it more information," he added. Contacted by AFP, OpenAI did not immediately respond. In the lawsuit, reviewed by AFP, Uthmeier cites a recent study from Drexel University reporting sleep loss, declining grades and reduced social interaction



among teenagers who use chatbots from Character.AI -- an OpenAI competitor -- for conversation.

The attorney general faults OpenAI for failing to put in place stricter rules to verify users' ages, invoking legal statutes on deception and negligence. The suit states that "despite public knowledge

of ChatGPT's use by minors, including preteens, defendants have not taken steps to prevent their use of ChatGPT." It adds that "the free version of ChatGPT has no gatekeeping or age verification mechanism whatsoever" and that while the paid subscription nominally asks users for their age, "there is no mechanism to verify the

age of its users, and no ability to inform parents of what conversations minors are having with ChatGPT." In January, the California startup introduced a system that estimates a user's age and, if it detects a minor, applies additional safeguards. ChatGPT use is banned for children under 13 and requires parental consent for users aged 13 to 17. Uthmeier also cited a report from the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH), which held several conversations with ChatGPT while posing as a teenager. The chatbot reportedly produced advice on how to hide eating habits from loved ones, and how to plan a suicide or self-harm in a "safe" way. The Florida attorney general is seeking stronger protections for minor users and damages set at \$10,000 per violation. "We believe that OpenAI and its ChatGPT and Sam Altman personally are liable for potentially up to billions of dollars," he said. The attorney general invited other states "that want to protect kids" to join the lawsuit.

Women, Black Officers Among 9 Dropped From US Navy Promotion List: Report

Hegseth removed at least three women, two Black men and four white men from the promotion list.

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth has removed nine officers from a promotion list, The New York Times reported. Hegseth removed at least three women, two Black men, and four white men from the promotion list. Despite women making up 21% of active-duty Navy personnel, no female officers made the May list. Only two nonwhite officers were included, though 38% of the force identify as racial minorities. The final 22-person slate of one-star admiral nominees lacked diversity and bore little resemblance to the broader force these officers will help lead.

Four current and former defence officials, speaking anonymously to the portal, said Hegseth's actions appear to violate rules for the apolitical, merit-based promotion system. The officials called his removal of officers from the one-star list "highly unusual." Pentagon rules state the defence secretary should only pull officers



for moral, mental, physical, or professional failings that raise fitness-to-lead concerns. Chief Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell denied the NYT report in a statement on X. He called the "failing" outlet full of "radical left reporters" and labelled its work "race-baiting garbage."

"They continue to push this worn-out narrative because they view almost everything through the lens of race and gender over merit. As we've said before, military promotions are given to those who have earned them. The Department will never consider the colour of a service member's

skin or their gender as a factor in promotions. Under President Trump and @SecWar Hegseth, meritocracy reigns supreme at the War Department," he added. Military promotions are given to those who have earned them," Parnell also told The New

York Times. "The department will never consider the colour of a service member's skin or their gender as a factor in promotions." In March, the outlet reported that Hegseth blocked the promotions of two women Army officers and two Black Army officers to one-star generals.

Green-Card Hopes Dim as June Visa Bulletin Brings Setbacks

WASHINGTON — Two pieces of immigration news landed in the same week, and both cut against Indian professionals. First, the State Department's June 2026 Visa Bulletin delivered retrogression — a backward slide — in the employment-based EB-1 and EB-2 categories for India. For applicants who had been inching toward a green card, the priority dates moved the wrong way, pushing relief further into the future. India's EB-3 category and China's EB-3 saw slight forward movement, small comfort for the larger group affected. Second, the first H-1B cap season under the new wage-weighted selection system produced exactly the divide critics had warned about. According to data compiled by the immigration firm Boundless, higher-wage positions were selected at far higher rates than entry-level roles: roughly 68 percent of Level III positions and 64 percent of Level IV positions were chosen, compared with just 40 percent for Level I jobs.

The math is unforgiving for newcomers. Indian nationals account for the overwhelming majority of H-1B holders

— about 71 percent in 2024 — and many of them are recent graduates entering at Level I or II. The new system rewards seniority and salary, meaning a young software engineer at the start of her career now faces markedly worse odds than a mid-level colleague, even with identical qualifications on paper. Layered on top is a proposed \$100,000 H-1B application fee that immigration attorneys describe not as a fee increase but as a fundamental rewrite of who can realistically sponsor foreign talent. Smaller employers and startups — the kind that have historically given many Indian graduates their first foothold — may simply opt out. For families already deep in the decades-long green-card backlog, retrogression is not an abstraction. It can mean a child "aging out" of dependent status, a job change deferred, a home purchase postponed. The advice from practitioners is consistent: document everything, file early, and treat travel decisions with new caution, because the predictable process of a few years ago no longer exists.

The Quiet Rule Change Squeezing H-

4 Spouses

It did not make headlines, but a change that took effect last October is now reshaping household budgets across the community. As of October 30, 2025, most categories of work-permit holders no longer receive an automatic extension of their employment authorization while a renewal application sits in the queue. Under the old rules, a timely-filed renewal bought workers a grace period — up to 540 days — to keep their jobs while the government processed the paperwork. Under the new rules, authorization ends on the expiration date printed on the card, full stop. The people caught in this gap are familiar names in many South Asian households: H-4 spouses with work permits, applicants adjusting status toward a green card, and asylum seekers. For an H-4 spouse — overwhelmingly women, many of them highly educated professionals — the consequence is stark. If the renewal is not approved before the card expires, she must stop working, even if she filed months in advance and the only delay is

government processing.

And the delays are real. Based on processing data from late 2025, a substantial share of work-permit renewals stretch beyond 180 days. The result is a cruel arithmetic: file on time, do everything right, and still face an involuntary, unpaid pause in your career because the agency could not keep pace. There are narrow exceptions. F-1 STEM OPT retains its own separate 180-day extension, and certain Temporary Protected Status categories can be shielded through federal notices. But for the typical H-4 spouse, the safety net is gone. The practical takeaways for affected readers: file renewals at the earliest possible moment — the day you become eligible — rather than waiting. Keep copies of every receipt notice. And budget for the possibility of an income gap, because hoping the timeline cooperates is no longer a plan. For a community that prizes dual incomes and professional achievement, this is more than a bureaucratic footnote. It is a tax on patience, paid disproportionately by women who did nothing wrong.

From Enemies To Friends: Russia Signs Military Pact With Taliban

Russia has signed a military cooperation agreement with the Taliban, further strengthening ties with Afghanistan's ruling group and reinforcing its position as the only country to officially recognise the Taliban government.



Russian President Vladimir Putin and former defence minister, used the meeting to criticise Western sanctions on Afghanistan and called for frozen Afghan assets to be released.

"We are convinced that Western countries should unfreeze blocked Afghan assets, fully recognise the full extent of responsibility for their 20-year presence in Afghanistan and take upon themselves the full burden of post-event recovery of the country," Mr Shoigu said.

Russian officials also highlighted

concerns about the presence of the Islamic State's regional affiliate, ISIS-Khorasan, in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Moscow has repeatedly warned that the group poses a growing security threat.

The Taliban, however, dismissed those concerns. Spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid claimed ISIS had been "completely eliminated" in Afghanistan and insisted no terrorist groups were operating from Afghan territory.

"No country should have concerns about Afghanistan. No individual

or group is allowed to carry out such activities. Isis has been completely eliminated in Afghanistan, and the Afghan security forces have fought against it," Mr Mujahid said.

Analysts say the agreement is more likely to focus on security cooperation, equipment support and regional stability rather than troop deployments. They note that Afghanistan's Taliban-led government is facing its own security challenges and lacks the resources to provide significant military assistance abroad.

Russia has signed a military cooperation agreement with the Taliban, further strengthening ties with Afghanistan's ruling group and reinforcing its position as the only country to officially recognise the Taliban government.

The agreement was ratified during an international security forum in Moscow attended by senior Taliban leaders, including Defence Minister Mohammad Yaqoob, the son of Taliban founder Mullah Mohammad Omar.

While neither side disclosed details of the agreement, the move is likely to fuel speculation about whether the Taliban could eventually provide experienced fighters to support Russia's war effort in Ukraine. The possibility has drawn attention because North Korea deployed thousands of troops to aid Moscow after

signing a defence pact with Russia in 2024, although analysts say there is currently no evidence of a similar arrangement with the Taliban.

The development is particularly notable given that Taliban fighters, then part of the Afghan mujahideen, fought a decade-long insurgency against Soviet forces after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979.

Speaking at the forum, Yaqoob described Russia as an important regional and global power and said bilateral relations between the two sides were expanding.

"Afghanistan and Russia have long and historical relations, in this direction we want to move further. We have expanded bilateral relations," Mr Yaqoob said at the meeting.

Sergei Shoigu, a close aide to

US House backs resolution to end Iran war, 3 Republicans give support

The Republican-led US House of Representatives approved a resolution on Wednesday to block President Donald Trump from continuing the war against Iran, reflecting growing concern among members of his party about the three-month-old conflict. The House voted 215 to 208, as four Republicans voted with Democrats in favor of the war powers resolution. It was the latest setback for Trump in Congress despite his party's slim majorities in both the House and Senate. The vote is largely symbolic. Any resolution would also have to pass the Senate to become effective, and garner the two-thirds majorities in both chambers to overcome an almost certain Trump veto. The vote, nonetheless, reflects unease

among some Republicans over Trump's handling of the conflict and marks a rare bipartisan effort to curb presidential war powers. The war has entered a fourth month with no end in sight and after three previous war powers resolutions had failed in the House by increasingly slim margins. The Senate advanced a separate, but similar resolution last month in a procedural vote, after seven previous attempts had failed. The four House Republicans who voted for the war powers resolution were Representatives Tom Barrett of Michigan, Warren Davidson of Ohio, Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania and Thomas Massie of Kentucky. No Democrats voted against it, although seven House members did not vote.

The Fine Print of Friendship

Washington calls the new trade deal historic. But an arrangement that trades India's autonomy for a tariff cut - and then dispatches a secretary of state to defend what remains - is partnership on someone else's terms.

IN FEBRUARY, President Trump announced what his White House called a historic trade deal with India: tariffs on Indian goods cut from a punishing 50 percent to 18, in exchange for New Delhi curbing its purchases of Russian oil and pledging to "buy American" across energy, technology and agriculture. In India the news brought relief, and that relief is understandable. But relief is not the same as partnership, and gratitude is a poor foundation for foreign policy.

Begin with the arithmetic. Eighteen percent is still a tariff - a tax on Indian exporters that did not exist before this administration manufactured the dispute. The "deal" did not open a new door; it lowered, only partway, a wall that Washington itself had built. Celebrating it is a little like thanking the man who flooded your basement for handing you a bucket. And even the terms are contested: Mr. Trump has claimed that India agreed to drop its own tariffs to zero and to buy American goods wholesale, while New Delhi has pointedly declined to confirm the sweeping version. When the two accounts of a single "deal" diverge this sharply, the weaker party would be wise to read the fine print twice.

The deeper cost was never measured in percentages. To win the cut, India bent on a matter it had long treated as sovereign - its right to buy oil from whomever it chooses. This is the same India that built its entire diplomatic identity around "strategic autonomy," the refusal to let any great power dictate its choices. To have that autonomy bargained away under tariff pressure, and for the prime minister to face criticism at home for conceding it, is a heavier price than any customs schedule will ever record.

If any doubt lingered about the spirit of the arrangement, the secretary of state's visit to New Delhi in late May dispelled it. He arrived to sign

agreements and, in nearly the same breath, to defend the tariffs that remain by lecturing his hosts about the trade imbalance. An honest partner does not keep a punitive tax in place, justify it by pointing at the very deficit that tax distorts, and then ask you to buy his fighter jets and his liquefied gas. That is not friendship. It is leverage wearing friendship's clothes.

None of this means India should walk away. The opportunities are real - deeper access to the world's largest consumer market, advanced defence technology, the shared ambition to more than double bilateral trade by the end of the decade. The point is the posture. India should take what genuinely serves it and negotiate the rest from a position of self-respect rather than supplication. The country that retains the ability to say no is the only one whose yes carries any weight.

Indian Americans, who form one of the most successful communities in the United States, are uniquely placed to insist on a relationship between equals rather than between patron and client. And they have particular reason to. The same administration offering India a discount on tariffs is, with its other hand, narrowing the visa pathways that brought many of them to America in the first place. A friend who gives generously with one hand while quietly taking with the other is teaching a lesson well worth learning.

India should pocket the market access and the technology, and it should keep talking. But it must never mistake a tariff cut for respect, or a transaction for an alliance. The fine print of this friendship was drafted in Washington's interest. New Delhi's task, in the chapters still to be written, is to ensure that its own interests are no longer relegated to the footnotes.

(TSAI Editorial Board)

Ninety-Seven to the Dollar

The rupee's slide to a record low is not merely a market headline. It is a verdict on how exposed India remains to a war it did not start - and a reminder that paper strength is no substitute for resilience.

NINETY-SEVEN RUPEES to buy a single American dollar. In May the Indian rupee slipped to a record low of nearly 96.96, and the number lands differently depending on where you stand. For the family in Queens or Southall wiring money home to relatives in Punjab, each dollar now stretches a little further - a small, bittersweet windfall. For the country those dollars are sent to, the same figure is a warning.

The proximate causes lie largely beyond India's borders. The war in the Gulf and the near-closure of the Strait of Hormuz drove crude oil sharply higher for much of the year, and India, which imports close to nine-tenths of the oil it burns, must settle that bill in dollars. Foreign investors, meanwhile, pulled tens of thousands of crores out of Indian equities in a single month, chasing the safety and higher yields of American assets. A strong dollar did the rest. The rupee, in short, has been punished for a crisis it had no hand in starting.

What makes the slide genuinely unsettling is the paradox that surrounds it. By most domestic measures, India is not in distress. Inflation has been remarkably tame, the central bank has held interest rates steady, and growth remains among the fastest of any large economy on earth. And yet the currency bleeds. That contradiction exposes a truth the headline growth figures conceal: an economy that imports its energy is forever hostage to chokepoints it does not control. Strength on paper is not the same thing as resilience in a storm.

There is a temptation, particularly from abroad, to treat each record low as routine. The rupee was 60 to the dollar a decade ago, then 70, then 80, and now it brushes against 100. But that very normalisation is the danger. Each crisis ratchets the currency permanently lower, and the new level is quietly accepted

as the floor - until the next shock arrives to lower it again. A nation that shrugs at a record low has stopped asking why the record keeps being broken.

The honest answer is structural, and so must be the remedy. No amount of central-bank intervention in the currency markets can substitute for reducing the dependence that makes India fragile in the first place: a faster diversification of energy suppliers away from a single waterway, strategic petroleum reserves that actually hold what the government claims they hold, and a harder push toward domestic refining and renewable power. The recent fuel crisis - in which India's real emergency reserves were revealed to cover only a handful of days rather than the weeks officials had advertised - was a humiliating illustration of how thin that cushion has become.

The diaspora has a stake here that goes well beyond the exchange rate on a remittance app. Indians abroad send home one of the largest flows of money any country in the world receives, and a meaningful share of it originates with workers in the very Gulf states this war has destabilised. To cheer a cheaper rupee while ignoring the vulnerability it signals is to mistake a symptom for good news. Far better to channel that energy - and that capital - toward the long, unglamorous work of building an economy that can take a punch.

Ninety-seven to the dollar is, in the end, just a number on a screen. The lesson behind it is about sovereignty: a country is only as strong as its capacity to weather the storms it did not summon. India can absorb this one. The question its policymakers - and its friends abroad - should be asking is what happens when the next storm, as it inevitably will, arrives.

(TSAI Editorial Board)



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The Peace Trump Didn't Make

A year after India and Pakistan went to war, the loudest voice claiming credit for the calm sits in Washington. The quietest work toward a real peace is happening where he cannot see it.

IT IS A YEAR since the spring of 2025, when India and Pakistan fought their most serious confrontation in decades - four days of missiles, drones and air raids that carried two nuclear-armed neighbours to the brink. This May, both capitals marked the anniversary not with mourning but with triumph. Pakistan held air-force ceremonies and a government concert it called the "Day of the Battle of Truth." India staged its own commemorations of victory. Two nations, one war, two victories. That contradiction alone should tell us how far the subcontinent remains from an honest reckoning - and how easily that vacuum is filled by others.

Hovering over the anniversary is a third figure who fought in none of the battles and lives on no part of the subcontinent: Donald Trump. From the moment the guns fell silent, the American president has insisted that he stopped the war - that his intervention, not the two governments' own contacts, produced the ceasefire. He has offered, more than once, to "solve" Kashmir, the dispute that has defined the region since 1947. Pakistan, ever attentive to where power sits, nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize. It is a tidy arrangement: Islamabad acquires a patron, and Mr. Trump acquires a story in which he is the indispensable man.

New Delhi is not playing along, and for good reason. India has insisted for generations that its quarrels with Pakistan are bilateral - to be settled, or left unsettled, by the two of them alone, with no great power refereeing from afar. When Mr. Trump invited Mr. Modi to detour to

Washington last June, the prime minister declined, telling him by telephone that the ceasefire had been reached directly between the two sides. The message was unmistakable: India would not be a prop in someone else's peace pageant. A year on, Mr. Trump has flown to Beijing but not to New Delhi; his secretary of state arrived in May to sign agreements while defending the punishing tariffs Washington has imposed on Indian goods. This is not the conduct of an honest broker. It is leverage dressed as friendship.

There is a deeper problem with the peacemaker pose. Peace, in this telling, is a brand - a press release, a photograph, a line for the Nobel committee. Real peace is slower, duller and far less photogenic; it does not announce itself online. And the irony cuts deep: the same Washington claiming to calm South Asia has spent the year inflaming the wider neighbourhood. The war on Iran, the near-closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the energy shock now rationing fuel from Karachi to Colombo - all trace back to the same capital. A government lighting fires across the Gulf cannot credibly sell itself as the region's firefighter.

And yet there is genuine movement - fragile, halting, and precisely where the cameras are not. Quietly, serving officials and retired generals on both sides have revived the back-channel conversations that diplomats call a "safety valve." Even within Mr. Modi's own ideological family, voices have begun to say aloud what was lately unspeakable: that New Delhi should talk to

Islamabad, that the ordinary citizen of either country has no quarrel with the other. This is how peace actually begins - not with a superpower's handshake staged for the lens, but with adversaries deciding, on their own terms, that another war is not worth its price.

For the South Asian diaspora reading this an ocean away, the temptation is to welcome any outside hand that promises to keep our families safe. We should resist it. A peace that depends on the moods of an American president is no peace at all - it is a hostage to his next post, his next election, his next deal. Pakistan may yet learn that the patron who flatters today will demand tomorrow. India is right to guard its autonomy, even when that autonomy is inconvenient and even when it irritates a benefactor. The subcontinent has spent seventy-eight years learning a hard lesson: the settlements that endure are the ones its own people own. So a year after the war, the honest verdict is this. The calm is real; the credit is misplaced. The people who can keep this peace are the very ones who would have to fight the next war - the soldiers and citizens of Lahore and Ludhiana, Karachi and Kolkata - not a dealmaker in Washington chasing a medal. Let Mr. Trump keep his mirror. South Asia would do better to keep its eyes on the quiet rooms where the real work is being done, and on the long, unfinished task of building a peace that no foreign hand can grant - and therefore none can take away.

(TSAI Editorial Board)

The Line That Moves Backward

As the green-card queue lurches into reverse, H-1B selection tilts toward the highest bidder, and a new rule puts a clock on every student visa, the message to Indian talent could not be clearer.

CONSIDER THE CRUELTY of a queue that runs backward. In its June 2026 visa bulletin, the United States moved the priority dates for employment-based green cards for Indians in the wrong direction - what officials politely call "retrogression." The line for advanced-degree professionals, the EB-2 category, jumped back by nearly a year; even the fast lane reserved for senior managers and researchers slipped. Tens of thousands of Indians already working in America on temporary visas, some of whom filed their applications more than a decade ago, were told, in effect, to wait longer still. The stated reason was almost insulting in its circularity: demand from Indians is too high.

That demand is no accident. Indians account for roughly three-quarters of all H-1B visas issued in a typical year. The American technology industry that the world envies was built, in no small measure, on this pipeline; the chief executives of some of its largest companies arrived on the very visas now being rationed. To treat that contribution as a problem to be managed, rather than a partnership to be honoured, is to misread both the history and the self-interest of the country doing the rationing.

The retrogression is only the most visible turn of the screw. This year's H-1B cap season was the first conducted under a new "wage-weighted" selection system, and the results were exactly as

one would predict: the highest-paid positions were chosen at far higher rates than entry-level ones - roughly two in three senior roles against four in ten junior ones. The old lottery, for all its randomness, at least handed the young graduate a fair coin to flip. The new auction quietly favours the deepest-pocketed employer and the already-established, and tells the recent graduate that her turn may simply never come.

Then there are the students. A proposed rule would replace the open-ended student visa with a fixed term of up to four years, after which any extension - to finish a degree, to begin post-graduation training - would require fresh approval from the immigration bureaucracy. A doctoral candidate whose research runs long could find herself not merely delayed but deportable. Indian students, who form one of the largest international cohorts on American campuses and feed directly into the skilled-work system, would absorb the heaviest blow. A separate policy memo, meanwhile, recasts the routine green-card adjustment as a discretionary favour to be granted or withheld, inviting more scrutiny, more demands for evidence, and more years of limbo.

Each of these measures can be defended in isolation as a dry technical adjustment. Taken together, they amount to something far larger: a

deliberate narrowing of the path that Indian talent has walked for three decades. And it is self-defeating. Talent is not captive. Canada, Britain, the Gulf and, increasingly, a more confident India are all competing for the very engineers and researchers that America is busy making feel unwelcome. A country that turns its queue into a maze should not be surprised when its brightest applicants stop joining the line.

For our community, the lesson is neither despair nor denial - it is preparation. Document every filing, track every deadline, seek qualified counsel early, and build the political voice that a population of this size and accomplishment has for too long declined to exercise. And for New Delhi, the narrowing of the American door is an opening of its own: a chance to offer returning talent the laboratories, the capital and the freedom to build at home what they once crossed an ocean to build elsewhere.

The door has not been slammed shut. But a welcome that depends on out-earning your peers in a lottery, on finishing your degree before a clock runs out, on standing in a queue that moves backward as often as forward, is a welcome in name only. The men and women who helped build modern America deserve better than to be told, year after year, simply to wait.

(TSAI Editorial Board)

The Partnership Cools — and the Diaspora Notices

For a decade, Washington and New Delhi sold the world a story about the “defining partnership of the 21st century.” This year, that story is harder to tell — and Indian Americans, the human bridge between the two countries, are feeling the strain. The numbers are sobering. The 2026 Indian American Attitudes Survey from the Carnegie Endowment found that just 20 percent of Indian Americans approve of how the current administration is handling U.S.–India relations, while 55 percent disapprove. That is not a rounding error. It is a community watching a relationship it cares about deeply, and finding the stewardship wanting. The official line from

Washington remains warm in tone. A State Department official recently insisted the U.S. “won’t make the same mistakes” with India that it made with China, framing New Delhi as a partner to be cultivated, not a rival to be contained. But tone is cheap. The trade turbulence of the past year, the visa squeeze, and the rhetoric swirling around Indian workers tell a different story on the ground. Here is the uncomfortable truth a strategic partnership cannot wish away: you cannot court a country while publicly humiliating its people. The grand vocabulary of the Indo-Pacific, of supply-chain resilience and democratic alignment, rings hollow to the H-1B engineer

reading slurs in his social media replies, or the small-business owner watching tariffs eat his margins. This is not a call for the community to pick sides between two governments it has no vote in choosing. It is a call to insist that the relationship be measured not only in defense deals and summit photo-ops, but in how the diaspora is treated — as citizens, neighbors, and contributors, not as bargaining chips. A partnership worthy of the name would notice when 55 percent of its most natural champions are unhappy. The question for the months ahead is whether anyone in either capital is listening.

(TSAI Editorial Board)

Beyond the Headlines, Mamdani Closes the Books

NEW YORK — Lost in the noise over a parade is a quieter story about whether the new administration can actually run the city. On the evidence of his first five months, Mayor Zohran Mamdani is making his case. The headline achievement is fiscal. Mamdani inherited a budget deficit exceeding \$12 billion from the previous administration. In May, Governor Kathy Hochul and the mayor announced a package of state support — roughly \$4 billion in new aid, bringing total assistance to nearly \$8 billion over two years — that the administration says officially closes that gap ahead of the Fiscal Year 2027 executive budget. For a mayor whose critics predicted fiscal chaos, balancing the books is a meaningful early marker. He has also moved to reshape how the city

governs. Mamdani appointed a Commission on Government Efficiency, a charter revision body chaired by veteran public servant Patrick Gaspard, tasked with modernizing city government and improving service delivery. Its recommendations are expected to reach voters as ballot questions in November. Other initiatives have rolled out steadily. The administration committed \$12 million from an opioid settlement to expand peer-led addiction recovery services, aiming to create 500 new peer-specialist jobs over four years. It announced continued investment in early-childhood “birth-to-2” programming. And with the World Cup descending on the region, City Hall has unveiled a Midtown transportation plan to keep traffic

moving during match days. None of this is glamorous. Closing a deficit, revising a charter, funding recovery beds — these are the unphotogenic tasks of actually governing eight and a half million people. For a mayor elected on a bold progressive platform and watched skeptically by the business community, demonstrating basic competence may be the most radical thing he can do. The verdict is far from in. State aid is not the same as structural balance, and the hard budget choices lie ahead. But for residents who tuned in expecting either revolution or collapse, the early reality is more prosaic and perhaps more reassuring: a city government doing the work.

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Why PoJK Is Boiling - And Islamabad Is Sweating?

The Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), the group spearheading the movement, has announced a territory-wide shut down on June 9.

The streets of Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) are no longer whispering dissent. They are roaring it. What began as scattered protests over inflation, electricity shortages and unemployment has now transformed into a full-scale political revolt against Islamabad's authority in the region. The Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), the group spearheading the movement, has announced a territory-wide shut down on June 9, warning of mass protests, wheel-jam strikes and civil resistance if the Pakistani establishment continues to ignore public demands. The significance of this protest goes far beyond another agitation over economic hardship. This is a direct indictment of Pakistan's decades-long governance model in PoJK — a system built on political manipulation, economic exploitation and repression masquerading as administration. For years, Islamabad projected PoJK as a "free" territory supposedly enjoying autonomy and democratic rights. But the reality visible on the ground in 2026 tells a very different story. The region remains politically controlled from Islamabad, economically dependent, and increasingly furious. The upcoming June 9 strike may become the biggest challenge Pakistan has faced in the region in years.

The anger did not erupt overnight. The JAAC movement gained momentum after repeated negotiations with Pakistani authorities produced little more than empty assurances. Protest leaders accuse Islamabad of deliberately delaying constitutional reforms, electoral restructuring and economic relief measures while attempting to weaken the movement through intimidation. That refusal to back down matters. Because this movement is no longer merely about electricity bills or wheat subsidies. It is about accumulated humiliation. The people of PoJK increasingly believe they are treated not as citizens with rights, but as subjects expected to remain silent while decisions about their future are taken elsewhere. The resentment has deepened due to worsening economic conditions across Pakistan in 2026. Inflation continues to hammer ordinary families, fuel prices remain volatile, and unemployment has risen sharply. The Pakistani rupee remains under pressure, food inflation continues to burden households, and economic instability has become a defining feature of everyday life. But PoJK suffers a double burden. The region not only faces Pakistan's broader economic collapse but also carries the frustration of political exclusion. Residents routinely complain that despite

producing electricity through projects like Mangla Dam, they endure crippling power cuts and inflated tariffs. Protesters argue that the region's resources are exploited while locals receive little benefit in return. This contradiction has become politically explosive. When a government cannot provide affordable food, reliable electricity or credible representation, it loses moral authority. And when it answers peaceful protest with arrests and force, anger inevitably hardens into resistance.

Pakistan has long insisted that Azad Jammu and Kashmir enjoys freedom and self-governance. But the ongoing unrest is exposing the hollowness of that claim. The protesters are not demanding separation from Pakistan alone; they are demanding dignity, accountability and genuine political rights — demands that should already exist in any truly autonomous territory. The JAAC has repeatedly highlighted issues such as constitutional reform, electoral restructuring and abolition of controversial reserved seats controlled through Islamabad-backed mechanisms. Protest leaders argue that the political system in PoJK is engineered to ensure loyalty to Pakistan's establishment rather than accountability to local people. That accusation is gaining traction because many residents have watched successive governments come and go without any meaningful change in governance.

Prime Ministers in PoJK are frequently reshuffled amid political engineering, while the military establishment continues to wield enormous influence behind the scenes. The result is a dangerous crisis of legitimacy. Human rights activists allege that previous protest movements were met not with dialogue but with brute force. During earlier demonstrations linked to inflation and electricity tariffs, clashes reportedly left people injured and triggered widespread arrests. This pattern has fueled a growing belief among residents that Islamabad views PoJK less as a democratic territory and more as a controlled strategic zone where dissent must be managed rather than heard. That perception is toxic for any state.

Even more alarming for Pakistan is the fact that anti-establishment sentiment is no longer confined to isolated activists. Public demonstrations indicate that frustration has spread across different sections of society — traders, students, workers and civil groups alike. The June 9 strike therefore represents something larger than a single day of protest. It symbolizes the collapse of public trust.

Islamabad's Crisis Is Deepening

Pakistan's leadership faces a dilemma it can no longer avoid. If authorities attempt

another heavy-handed crackdown, they risk intensifying anti-government anger and transforming PoJK into a permanent center of instability. But if they concede to the protesters' demands, they expose years of official propaganda about political satisfaction in the region. Either option carries consequences. The broader context makes the situation even more volatile. Across Pakistan in 2026, public frustration is already rising over inflation, governance failures and political repression. Political tensions remain high, opposition parties continue attacking the government over economic mismanagement, and ordinary citizens are increasingly disillusioned with the state's inability to stabilize the economy. In this atmosphere, unrest in PoJK becomes more than a regional problem. It becomes part of a national legitimacy crisis. The Pakistani establishment has historically relied on security narratives to maintain control over contested regions. But economic collapse changes political equations. When ordinary citizens struggle to buy food, survive inflation or pay electricity bills, nationalist

slogans lose their power. That is precisely why the protests in PoJK are so dangerous for Islamabad. The anger is rooted in everyday suffering.

It is difficult to suppress permanently because it emerges from lived reality rather than ideology alone. The coming weeks could therefore become decisive. If the June 9 strike draws massive participation, it may embolden wider anti-government sentiment across Pakistan-administered territories. If authorities respond with repression, scrutiny over human rights violations in the region will intensify further. Either way, one fact is undeniable: the political mood in PoJK has fundamentally shifted.

For decades, Islamabad attempted to present the region as proof of Pakistan's commitment to Kashmiri aspirations. But today, many residents of PoJK are openly accusing Pakistan itself of betrayal. That accusation carries enormous symbolic weight. Because when the people living under your administration rise in anger against you, the crisis is no longer external. It is internal. And internal crises are always the hardest to contain.

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When the Hate Goes Offline

We have spent the past year telling ourselves that the venom aimed at Indians online is just noise — the bile of anonymous accounts, easily scrolled past. The data say otherwise, and it is time we stopped pretending. The Carnegie Endowment's 2026 survey of Indian Americans makes for grim reading. Nearly half of respondents — 48 percent — said they encountered racist posts targeting Indians often since the start of 2025. One in four reported being called a slur. Smaller but chilling shares reported worse: physical threats, hate mail, property damage, even assault. Fully half said they experienced some form of personal discrimination over the year, citing skin color, country of origin, and religion.

The rhetoric has a script. Researchers who track organized hate describe Indian Americans being recast as "job stealers and visa scammers," with some campaigns appearing coordinated — including, disturbingly, efforts to single out Indian American entrepreneurs who received federally backed small-business loans. The H-1B debate, whatever one's view on immigration policy, has become the vehicle for something uglier: the racial scapegoating of an entire community for the alleged sins of a visa program.

The cost is not only bruised feelings. The same survey found that nearly a third of respondents now avoid discussing politics online for fear of the abuse that follows. That is a community being pushed out of public

life — silenced not by law, but by intimidation. We can argue about immigration numbers and wage levels like reasonable people. We should. But there is a line between policy disagreement and bigotry, and too many public voices have let it blur. When a city council meeting turns into a confrontation over a community's mere presence, as happened in Frisco, Texas earlier this year, the abstraction has become local. Our response cannot be to disappear. It is to document, to report, and to refuse the lie that we are guests who should be grateful and quiet. Indian Americans are doctors and drivers, founders and cashiers, voters and neighbors. This is our country too. The hatemongers would prefer we forget that. We will not.

Saheb, I have a passport, why don't I still feel sufficiently Indian?

Perhaps that is the paradox of citizenship in current India: the more documents one gathers to prove belonging, the farther one drifts from the feeling of truly belonging.

In his excellently-argued piece on citizenship, which appeared on this website, BV Rao posits that the contours of a birthright Indian, as drawn by the state, are pencilled with the graphite of metrics contained within a sheaf of documents: passports, voter IDs, Aadhaar cards. He contends that, despite being in possession of each one of these records for a good part of his life, the notion of citizenship is just that, an inchoate idea that may be marvelled at as legal nuance, but cannot be held in one hand, with the other planted on his chest.

His premise is that the hunt for Indian citizenship with a quiver-full of documents approximates chasing the horizon. This argument offers a suitable platform from which to launch an enquiry into aspects of citizenship that might not be contained within state-issued credentials. It is not so much an analysis of what may or may not pass muster as documentary evidence of citizenship, but the questions that shape the philosophical notion of nationhood. What does citizenship mean if I stripped away constitutional protections and documentary evidence? As a thought experiment, if I were told that I had none of the papers listed in Rao's piece, and all else being equal, would I still think of myself as a citizen of India?

Conversely, if I did buy into the idea that records drawn up by the state and the possession of such certification defined me as Indian, would I hark back to these documents each time I considered the idea of citizenship? Does my conception of nationhood exist outside the borders of paperwork?

What tethers me to this country?

Do I think of citizenship as a noun or a verb?

What do I owe this collective that I think of as nation? Does this idea of me being a part of a "we" mean there is a "they", and how do I look at "them" in this context? And finally, is my idea of being Indian a settled concept? The answers, I suspect, may be found in two bodies of knowledge: the constitution and the manner in which it was framed, and my own experience of having lived in this country for 51 years.

I'll start with a story.

I began my career as a journalist in 1997, covering the crime beat for the Asian Age in Bangalore. A few years into the job, my editor asked me to switch to writing about defence research and aviation. One of my main areas of concern was the Light Combat Aircraft, which

was in its last stages of development at the Aeronautical Development Agency-Hindustan Aeronautics Limited facilities in the city. The LCA, now designated Tejas, first took flight from the HAL airport, as a technology demonstrator, on January 4, 2001. I didn't have the



credentials necessary to stand among the airmen, scientists and journalists gathered along the tarmac as they watched the aircraft take off. Instead, I knew the roads of Bangalore well: there was one that skirted the western wall of the airport, directly beneath the flight path of the LCA. I positioned myself on the hood of a car an hour before it taxied onto the runway. Wg Cdr Rajiv Kotiyal pointed the fighter's nose into the winter sky and its delta wing obscured my line of vision for a brief second, during which I felt elated, proud, a sense of kinship and, perhaps vaguely, Indian.

By now, as an adult with a job, I had more than half the documents Rao lists in his piece, folded into a file back home. But I didn't have to think of them to feel what I was feeling. It was an un-tethering from paperwork and the meshing with the idea of jus soli as an abstraction. This was an expressionist manifestation of nationhood, not a figurative one.

This segues into the examination of citizenship as a verb rather than a noun. What do I have to do to feel Indian? Again, going back to Rao's piece can be instructive. I have paid my taxes, cast my vote, abided by the law, given over my biometrics. I have done all the things the state requires by way of documentary proof.

What more should I do? Is there more I can do? The answer lies in lived experience, as described previously, and in the document to which I refer further back in this essay: the Constitution. But to extract anything germane to my argument, it's essential that we go outside of the confines of Articles 5 to 11 or the

Citizenship Act passed five years after the Constitution became a reality. It's necessary to look at changes the 42nd Amendment wrought on this document in 1976, by way of the 11 fundamental duties described in Article 51A.

And this is where we step out from under the umbrella of clear, measurable actions into the fog of questions (and insufficient answers) that Rao's piece hints at. Unfortunately, the only succour we can find in 51A is that the questions are finite, their meaning, and consequently, the solutions that might issue, are not so. The last two of the questions I asked in this essay provide the scaffolding for how this may be understood, and this must be done with two frames of reference in mind: the state and the individual. Let's take three of the duties described in 51A: "To cherish and follow the noble ideals that inspired the national struggle for freedom", "To value and preserve the rich heritage of the country's composite culture" and "To develop the scientific temper, humanism, and the spirit of inquiry and reform."

The actions prescribed here, which transform the noun into a verb, present a fundamental problem, a friction that I had stowed away behind all the baggage I have accumulated as a journalist running newsrooms. It is the notion that what I believe are the duties that qualify me as a citizen of this country might not be consonant with what the state or even a large section of the collective to which I belong holds as justifiable actions. That the ideals I consider noble, my understanding of a composite culture and definition of inquiry and reform, aren't, in fact, entirely shared either by the state which deigns to anoint me with citizenship or the chunk of society that grants the state this power. This is not to say I don't have at least some semblance of an answer. I do; it stems from the variance in the state's, society's, and my definition of "we". And it is, unfortunately (and inevitably), one tempered by a journalist's cynicism. It is contained within the inverse ratio between my idea of citizenship and the quantity of documentary evidence I have gathered to prove it: the more paperwork I have the less sufficiently Indian I feel.

Mamdani's Empty Chair at the Israel Day Parade

On Sunday, May 31, Mayor Zohran Mamdani did something no New York City mayor had done in decades: he skipped the Israel Day Parade. The annual march up Fifth Avenue, a fixture since 1964, gathers Jewish organizations, synagogues, and youth groups in a public celebration of identity. The city's first Muslim mayor — and the most prominent elected official of South Asian heritage in the country — chose to stay away. He did not stay silent. Mamdani, who has called Israel's conduct in Gaza a genocide and who marked Nakba Day with a video weeks earlier, said his absence should not be mistaken for any refusal to provide security or permits, and stressed that his administration had spent weeks preparing to keep marchers safe. By all

accounts, the parade went off without incident. The criticism was swift and bipartisan in its volume. A former Israeli prime minister called the decision "cowardly." A Hudson Valley congressman called it "disgraceful," noting that New York is home to the largest Jewish population outside Israel itself. A prominent rabbi told the mayor, in print, to stay home. There is a serious argument on each side, and this page will not pretend the question is easy. A mayor is entitled to his convictions, and Mamdani has never hidden his. Principle that evaporates the moment it becomes inconvenient is not principle at all. Many in our own community, who know what it is to be told to apologize for who they are, will recognize the instinct to stand

firm. But there is also weight to the other view. The job of a mayor is not only to govern the city's machinery; it is to show up — for all of it, including the New Yorkers one disagrees with. Leadership sometimes means standing in a crowd that did not vote for you. For Indian Americans watching one of our own navigate the most scrutinized job in city politics, this is a useful, if uncomfortable, lesson. Visibility cuts both ways. The same platform that lets Mamdani champion the marginalized also magnifies every absence. He will have many more of these choices to make. How he makes them will shape not just his mayoralty, but the public's sense of what a leader from our communities looks like.

Why Pete Hegseth's Unusual 'Shangri-La' Speech Should Worry India

If anyone has doubts about US intentions in the region, a recent speech by Pete Hegseth, heading the Department of War - the aptly renamed Defence Department - was illuminating. Time for considerable Indo-Pacific musing, and suitable action. US policy changes are already having a domino effect on the Indo-Pacific. Defence budgets are rapidly rising as neighbours confront a highly belligerent China, and greyzone warfare has come to stay. The Defence Secretary, however, went according to a script that might have been very well written for his European allies. The same phrasing, the same expectations, and possibly, therefore, the same results.

The 'Pay More' Debate

Hegseth made his intervention at the Shangri-la Dialogue, hosted annually in Singapore, which brought together some 40-plus Chiefs of Defence, among other officials. Usually, the forum, while offering some interesting insights, is not the stuff of headlines. This year, though, almost every country seemed uneasy, and much of that could be attributed to the 'new' US posture, well in evidence as the US President visited Beijing just a short while ago. Now add to that the provocative speech of his Defence secretary, and you have a real pot-boiler.

Hegseth, who is no stranger to controversy given his resignation from the Army and accusations of 'white nationalism', began his speech in the first few seconds by rejecting "wishful thinking or utopian idealism" for a "future that will be defined by our collective efforts to safeguard and secure our most vital national interests". The rest of the speech stressed 'collective' entirely. He declared, "The era of the United States subsidising the defence of wealthy nations is over. We need partners, not protectorates. We seek alliances built on shared responsibility, not dependency." That's hard talking. In other words, you want defence, you pay for it yourself. Add to that this quote, "Allies who refuse to step up and carry their own weight for our collective defence will face a clear shift in how we do business." That's primarily aimed at Japan and South Korea, but expect pressure on India as well to raise its defence budget.

The Main Threat

That main threat was sitting in the room, though in the form of a markedly lower rank. China didn't send its defence minister to the forum - for the second time in a row - but Major General Meng Xiangqing, from the People's Liberation Army National Defence University, who is more of a strategic scholar than anyone with political weight. Nonetheless, the impact of Hegseth mentioning "rightful alarm regarding China's historic military buildup and the expansion of its military activities in the region and beyond" would have resonated with an audience that is now

one in recognising the multifaceted Chinese threat. Hegseth's promise to preserve the "equilibrium" would have raised eyebrows, since, ironically, what is evident, by and large, is its complete absence. Nothing much to 'preserve' here unless it's an attempt to soothe nervousness in Beijing. The Chinese use not just their navy, air force, or coast guard but even massive fishing fleets to threaten neighbours. Japanese sources note how thousands of Chinese fishing vessels have repeatedly formed lengthy "walls" in the East China Sea close to Japan's EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone). These "maritime militia" obstruct shipping routes, forcing international shipping as well to zigzag around them. These "greyzone operations" have been used on at least four occasions since October 2024, with the last in January this year.

No, no equilibrium here at all.

The Big Bite

Then came the bite. While observing that Asian allies "do not seek constant escalation, rhetorical theatrics, or a region defined by public confrontation" - he is right there - he promised a "strong denial defence". That is a core concept in America's defence strategy, focused on resisting aggression by making an adversary's objectives difficult to achieve. It relies on a defensive posture rather than an offensive one. Hegseth's comment in the current context, thus, essentially indicates that the US will not really initiate any change in the present situation and would offer its support just as a 'quiet power'. Ironically, though, that is an aspect entirely missing in the war against Iran, in which America has become as noisy as it gets.

Then is the core of this 'strategy', which is that America could not be expected to carry the burden alone, but required "capable allies with real military strength and industrial capacity, and political resolve". Why? Because it is a bad deal for the American taxpayer. To keep that section happy must naturally be the first aim of political leaders in the region, now struggling under massive energy costs and petroleum prices in the wake of an entirely senseless war.

With China In The Room

Meanwhile, anxiety is apparent among major Pacific countries. Australia's defence minister baldly stated that his country faced its "most complex and threatening strategic landscape since the end of the Second World War", pointing to increased cutting of undersea cables, and again, a clear security threat from the 'systematic plunder' by illegal fishing vessels. Australia has increased its defence budget to 3% of GDP by 2033, with a major part of it earmarked for the maritime domain.

The New 'Gold Standard'

Acknowledging that all these countries had made

rapid hikes in their defence spending, Hegseth referred to 3.5% of GDP as the 'new' global standard for defence spending and praised all those like South Korea who are on the front line. "We demand 3.5% from our allies and partners ... We expect every single ally and partner to match that kind of resolve."

Last year, Hegseth indicated that America's 28,500 soldiers stationed in South Korea might be used against other threats - not just North Korea - making Seoul even more uncomfortable than it already is in handling its neighbour.

India also came in for praise as "a critical anchor to hold the line", though most commentators are still wondering what this meant. Our 'line', after all, lies primarily in the Himalayas, and it's a very hot one indeed.

Finally, Hegseth said the US will produce weapons on a scale and price that was unbeatable. This is sales talk that passes for diplomacy.

All this is being said as the world faces the financial (and political) fallout of the Iran war, and less so the Ukraine war. Japan recently asked for a \$20 billion supplemental budget to cope with rising energy import costs. South Korea is similarly import-dependent, and the government has asked people to conserve 'every drop of fuel', just like India has.

Also consider how every country on the block now knows that not only did the US start a war it cannot end, but it now also expects 'regional allies and partners' to chip in to finish - and pay - for a conflict that they did not start. If there are any lessons to be learnt from Iran, it is this: Washington is great at starting wars, but it has not ended one on favourable terms for itself or others in the region in the last few decades. At Shangri-La, India was represented by Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar. There is no official read-out of his talk, and it does not seem to have been quoted heavily anywhere. In other words, Delhi kept a low profile. That might have been by design or default, but it's a good thing. As India's Reserve Bank points to lowering foreign exchange reserves and a continuing and worrying contraction in Foreign Direct Investments, this is no time to up the ante on anything other than stabilising the economy, even while we pursue self-reliance in defence. Nonetheless, Delhi is reaching out quietly to every other Indo-Pacific nation for a range of issues, from trade to supply chain resilience and maritime domain intelligence. The challenge is to translate that into action. There's no light at the end of that particular tunnel yet, Hegseth's claims of 'quiet power' notwithstanding. Therefore, a little quietude might be a good thing, at least till the Department of War decides to finally end its warmaking adventures, and, more importantly, mend its seriously depleted war stocks and equipment.

The World Comes to MetLife - and the Diaspora Is Ready



EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — For a community that has long had to explain why it cares about a sport most of its American neighbors ignore, this is the summer of vindication. The FIFA World Cup arrives in the tri-state area on June 13, and the cricket-and-football-loving South Asian diaspora intends to enjoy every minute.

MetLife Stadium — rebranded "New York New Jersey Stadium" for the tournament under FIFA's rules — will host eight matches, the most prestigious slate of any venue. The run opens with Brazil versus Morocco on June 13, continues through group-stage fixtures featuring France, Senegal, Germany, England, and others, and culminates in the World Cup final on July 19. It is the first time the United States has hosted the tournament since 1994, and the first time ever that three nations — the U.S., Canada, and Mexico — share hosting duties across 104 matches in 16 cities.

The celebration will not be confined to the stadium. Hudson County, home to one of the densest South Asian populations in the country, is rolling out a series of Flag Cities Festival events across Jersey City, Secaucus, and Bayonne, complete with food trucks, music, and vendor

villages. A festival kicks off on Columbus Drive in Jersey City on June 12, with another at Overpeck Park in Leonia on June 14.

For our readers, the World Cup is more than spectacle. It is a chance to claim public space — to fly a flag, fill a backyard, and pack the local restaurant for a watch party without anyone asking why. Whether your loyalties run to Brazil's flair, England's persistence, or a neutral's pure love of the game, the next five weeks belong to the fans.

A few practical notes. Tickets to the matches themselves are scarce and pricey, but the region is dotted with watch parties and fan zones for those who want the atmosphere without the gate price. Plan transit carefully — City Hall has issued a Midtown traffic plan for match days, and the Meadowlands will be busy. And expect the trains and PATH to be packed; build in extra time.

Thirty-two years after the World Cup last graced these shores, it returns to a region transformed — more diverse, more global, and more ready than ever to host the planet's game. Bring the whole family.

On June 21, the Mat Comes Out
There was a time when a New Yorker rolling out a yoga mat in a public park drew

curious stares. On Sunday, June 21, it will draw a crowd.

International Day of Yoga returns on the summer solstice, the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and, in yogic tradition, a moment of renewal. The observance has a distinctly Indian origin story: Prime Minister Narendra Modi proposed it at the United Nations in 2014, a record 175 member states endorsed the resolution, and the first global celebration followed in 2015. A practice rooted in India some five thousand years ago is now shared by an estimated two billion people worldwide.

The tri-state area will mark the day in force. In New Jersey — home to one of the largest concentrations of Indian Americans in the country — the Sri Sri School of Yoga will host a morning session at Roosevelt Park in Edison from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. In Hoboken, Urban Souls Yoga returns for a third year with a full-day waterfront festival at Pier A Park, weaving together Iyengar, Hatha, Ashtanga, and Vinyasa traditions, meditation, and a closing sound-and-kirtan experience. Farther afield, the Heartfulness Institute will gather practitioners in Orlando. The United

Nations had not yet announced this year's official theme as of press time.

What makes the day worth marking in these pages is not the stretching. It is the quiet pride of watching something unmistakably ours become unmistakably universal. Yoga did not arrive in America as a cultural export campaign; it traveled in the suitcases and memories of immigrants, and then it spread, until the word "namaste" turned up in suburban gyms and corporate wellness brochures. That journey has not been without friction — debates about appropriation, about commercialization, about whether the spiritual roots survive the studio markup. Those conversations are worth having. But June 21 is also simply a good day to set them aside, breathe, and notice how far a practice from the Indian subcontinent has carried.

For families looking to mark the day, the events above are free or low-cost and open to all ages; many organizers suggest bringing your own mat and arriving early. Beginners are welcome everywhere. The point, after all, was never perfection of posture. It was union — of body and breath, and of a community with the wider world that has embraced its gift.

From Obsession to Companion: Hollywood is entering its 'incel horror' era

For decades, horror films have warned audiences about monsters lurking in the dark. But a growing wave of modern horror is suggesting something even scarier: men who refuse to accept "no" as an answer.

The latest example is *Obsession*, the surprise horror hit of 2026 that has sparked intense online discussion, particularly around its disturbing Hansel and Gretel monologue. On the surface, the scene is a grotesque shock horror. But it reveals something deeper about the film's central theme: the horror of having your autonomy stripped away by someone who claims to love you.

In *Obsession*, Bear uses a supernatural object called the 'One Wish Willow' to make Nikki love him more than anyone else in the world. What follows is not a romance but a nightmare. Nikki gradually loses control of herself, becoming a distorted version of the person she once was.

The film's most unsettling moment arrives when the possessed Nikki tells a twisted version of Hansel and Gretel at a party that leaves everyone dumbfounded and uncomfortable. The story includes incestuous undertones, bodily horror, and repeated references to a willow tree. Viewers quickly noticed that before the wish was made, Nikki had described Bear as being "like a brother" to her. The story's warped sibling relationship mirrors the unnatural way Bear forces intimacy onto someone who never wanted it.

My theory is, the monologue is actually the "real" Nikki briefly breaking through the possession. Rather than being random horror



imagery, the story can be interpreted as a coded expression of her trauma. The references to the willow tree directly connect the story to the wish that destroyed her agency.

In this reading, Nikki is trying to communicate the violation she has endured, even as the supernatural force controls her body. What makes *Obsession* particularly interesting is that it belongs to a growing subgenre that could be called "incel horror" or "consent horror." These films are less interested in ghosts and slashers than in exploring what happens when male entitlement becomes monstrous.

The roots of this trend can be seen in several recent films.

In *Companion* (2025), a seemingly perfect girlfriend is revealed to be an AI companion designed around a man's desires. The film gradually transforms into a story about control, ownership, and what happens when a woman, even an artificial one, refuses to behave

according to a man's expectations. Beneath its sci-fi premise lies a sharp critique of the fantasy of creating the "perfect"

under the guise of luxury, pleasure, and opportunity. As its mystery unfolds, it becomes a chilling allegory about coercion,

as a disturbing violation of choice and autonomy.

Even *The Menu* (2022), while not explicitly about romance, examines entitlement in a broader sense. Several of its male characters treat women as accessories, possessions, or extensions of their own status. The horror emerges from systems of power that reduce people to objects. What connects these films is a common fear: not physical violence alone, but the erasure of consent. In traditional horror, monsters attack bodies. In these stories, the monster attacks agency. The terror comes from being trapped in someone else's fantasy, whether through technology, wealth, social power, psychological manipulation, or, in the case of *Obsession*,



obedient partner.

Blink Twice (2024) examines a different form of power imbalance. The film explores how wealthy and influential men exploit women

manipulation, and the ways power can erase consent.

Even *Don't Worry Darling* (2022) fits comfortably within this category. The film's central horror comes from a husband literally trapping his partner inside a fantasy world designed around his idea of happiness. Her desires become irrelevant. What matters is maintaining his vision of the perfect relationship.

Perhaps the most controversial example is *Passengers* (2016). Though marketed as a romantic sci-fi adventure, many critics and viewers have since re-evaluated the film through a darker lens. The story revolves around a man who wakes a woman from cryosleep, effectively stealing her future so he will not have to be alone. Years later, audiences increasingly view the premise not as romance but

supernatural force. The rise of these films also reflects a broader cultural conversation. In the wake of discussions around toxic masculinity, coercive relationships, online misogyny, and incel communities, horror filmmakers are increasingly exploring the consequences of male entitlement taken to its logical extreme. That's why the Hansel and Gretel monologue in *Obsession* resonates so strongly. The scene transforms forced affection into body horror. It turns a wish for love into a nightmare about ownership.

And perhaps that is why audiences cannot stop talking about it. The scariest thing in modern horror is no longer the monster under the bed. It is the person who believes they deserve your love, whether you want to give it or not.



The good girl who never came home

My two buas (aunts) never returned. A friend who I couldn't meet again after college. A generation of brides learnt how to smile while quietly disappearing inside homes they were told to preserve at all costs. My bua's body was found near a riverbank, decomposed and almost unrecognisable, allegedly murdered. The family called it a tragedy. Tragedy is a softer word. She was the second aunt I lost to marriage. The first died by suicide.

No one in my family ever fully explained what happened to either of them. Women in Indian families often disappear without complete sentences.

Growing up, I was not allowed to wear sleeveless clothes. Not because of modesty in any meaningful spiritual sense, but because I was told my brother may not like it and my father may disapprove. The lesson arrived long before feminism or gender politics ever did: your body exists in relation to male comfort.

Dress accordingly. Sit accordingly. Behave accordingly. Lipstick too carried morality. Red lipstick especially. "Good girls don't wear that." I still remember a roommate from western Uttar Pradesh wearing bright red lipstick once, only for her mother to tell her she was "asking for it." Years later, when senior journalist Preeti Choudhry was trolled online for wearing makeup and red lipstick on television, I realised geography changes faster than mentality. Villages, metro cities, newsroom studios, or social media platforms, the language modernises, but the policing remains identical.

And then there are memories that remain buried inside the body even when the mouth never learns to articulate them.

There was a neighbourhood uncle, nearly seventy years old.

I was a child. He touched me in a way that was wrong. Children know the violation before they know vocabulary. I said nothing. Not because I didn't want to, but because somewhere, even at

three women in India has experienced physical or sexual violence. More than 30 percent of ever-married women have experienced spousal violence. India still records close to twenty

depression were called evidence of addiction. That stayed with me, because I, too, have been prescribed anti-anxiety medication during severe panic attacks. Would today's social

deserves serious legal attention. But there is now a visible category of men's rights activists online no longer interested in fairness. The simplest question: would you feel comfortable if your daughter married someone exactly like the man you are defending? If the answer is no, this was never about equality. I cannot stop thinking about Twisha's parents either. Not because I believe they did not love her, but because I believe they loved her inside a system that trained them. A broken marriage becomes a permanent stain people believe society will never forget. So parents repeat what generations before them repeated: "adjust a little more," "things will improve," "every marriage has problems." This is how generational conditioning survives, not always through cruelty, but often through fear.

I am afraid of getting married. Not because I think every marriage ends in violence, and not because I believe love is fake, but because I am terrified of what happens to women who choose themselves loudly. I am afraid of becoming the woman society describes as difficult, emotional, dramatic, too modern, too ambitious, too unwilling to adjust. I am afraid that the same society which lights candles for dead women will isolate living women who refuse suffering.

Perhaps that is why so many women today are obsessively building financial independence, emotional regulation and private escape routes before marriage. Not because we hate commitment, but because we have watched too many women disappear inside it. We light candles for dead women and then return home to police the living ones. We mourn Twisha Sharma on X and then tell our daughters to adjust at the dinner table. That contradiction is not accidental. It is the entire system working exactly as designed. I refuse to be mourned. I choose to be inconvenient instead loud, boundaried, financially independent, emotionally unwilling to disappear on demand. If that makes me a difficult woman, I will wear it on my sleeves. Freely. Without apology.



that age, I already understood the consequences of speaking. I would be questioned. Restricted. Watched more carefully. Perhaps blamed. That is what years of "be a good girl," "stay gentle," and "don't create chaos" does to a child. It teaches her that her own violation is somehow a disturbance she caused herself.

Do I blame my family entirely? No. Most families are not consciously manufacturing oppression. They are transmitting survival manuals handed down across generations. Mothers teach daughters endurance because endurance once kept women alive. Fathers police daughters because society taught them control is protection. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5, nearly one in

dowry deaths every single day. And these are only the violence we can count. Statistics cannot measure fear, emotional erosion, psychological humiliation, or the number of women who stay silent because returning home feels more shameful than suffering. Twisha Sharma's case entered my news feed nine days ago and has refused to leave. Perhaps because I am twenty-seven. Perhaps because I, too, stand at what society calls "marriageable age." Every element felt horrifyingly familiar: the press conferences, the character assassination, the dissecting of a dead woman's choices before cameras. The mother-in-law spoke of expectations unmet, of a daughter-in-law who denied the family a grandchild months into marriage. The internet joined immediately. Pregnancy became public property. Reports of abortion surfaced and strangers debated her capability as a woman. I write this as someone who plans to freeze her eggs not because I reject motherhood, but because I want the freedom to decide when my body is ready. That decision should belong to nobody except me.

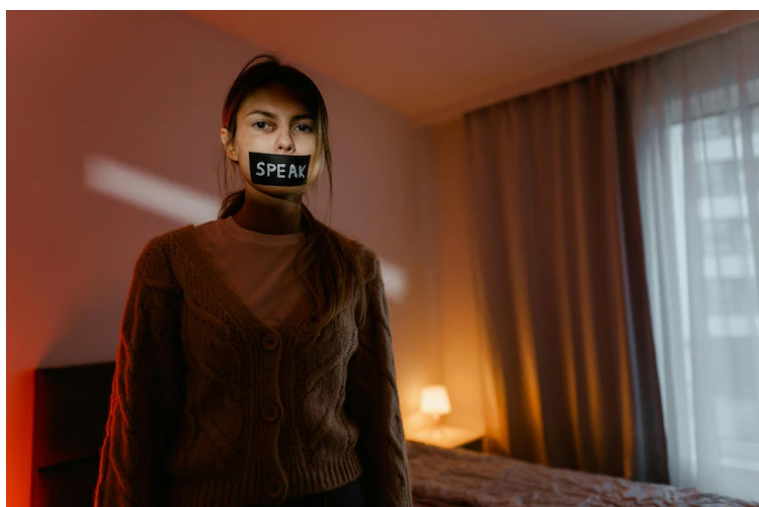
Then came another accusation. Prescribed medications Etizola for anxiety and Flutruue for

media psychologists call me an addict? Maybe.

India remains deeply uncomfortable with mental health unless suffering stays invisible. I am proud of Twisha for seeking help. The tragedy is not that women seek therapy. The tragedy is that women often require therapy to recover from people who desperately needed it themselves. The script that follows women after death is painfully repetitive. "She married him for money." "She was unstable." "She was too modern." "Our son is innocent." Notice what remains absent: the son himself. Present everywhere, accountable nowhere.

Society then asks: if she was educated and independent, why didn't she leave? Because psychological abuse is erosion. It dismantles selfhood slowly enough that the victim starts negotiating against herself.

Women stop speaking because explaining becomes exhausting, because families insist every marriage has rough phases, because eventually even the victim wonders whether she is "too much." There is an uncomfortable truth that must also be acknowledged. Yes, there have been cases where women misused legal protections. The case of Atul Subhash was tragic and



By: Naimisha

There Is A 'Shadow' Route Keeping Iran Alive, And America Can't Touch It



On February 28, the US and Israel struck Iran, targeting its political and military power centres, eliminating the Grand Ayatollah on the first day of the war. Washington and Tel Aviv assumed that the decapitation of the Islamic regime by killing Ayatollah Ali Khamenei would lead to political paralysis and mass uprising, like what the world saw at the start of the year - which, in turn, would result in a regime change - one of the implicit goals of the joint US-Israel operation. However, the Islamic regime and its armed forces remain intact. As Mehdi Hasan told NDTV, "Iran is winning by not losing the war."

Caspian Sea - A Brief Introduction

The Caspian Sea is the world's largest inland body of water and is called the world's largest lake, sometimes referred to as a sea. Five countries have territorial control over the waters of the Caspian Sea: Azerbaijan, Russia, Iran, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. The sea is strategically located in Central Asia, connecting Europe and Asia, and it is rich in natural resources, with 48 billion barrels of oil and 292 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in proven and probable reserves.

The discussions over the significance of the Caspian Sea are not new, and Israel and the US are aware of the arms trade between Russia and Iran via the sea. Israel struck Iran's Bandar Anzali port on the Caspian Sea to disrupt arms shipping between the two countries. Iran maintains four major ports on the Caspian: Bandar Anzali, Amirabad, Neka, and Nowshahr, while Russia operates the Astrakhan, Makhachkala, and Olya ports.

How Russia and Iran Ship Arms

Trade between Iran and Russia in the Caspian region is shrouded in secrecy and often referred to as the dark web of sea trade due to irregularities. The sea route came to prominence a few months after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. A maritime trade analysis from Bloomberg found that Russia and Iran are investing \$20 billion to expand rail, sea and river routes connecting the countries via the

Caspian Sea. The logic was simple. Evade global sanctions and ship weapons to and from Iran via the Caspian Sea, which is connected to the Black Sea via the Sea of Azov and the Volga-Don Canal on the Volga and Don rivers in Russia.

The ships from Russia and Iran conduct dark port calls - a process in which vessels turn off their Automatic Identification System (AIS), which transmits signals to satellites that help determine the location of ships at sea. While turning off AIS is one method, AIS spoofing, ships operating under a different country's flag, and vessel-to-vessel transfers in international waters are other techniques used to make it virtually impossible to track the ship. Russian and Iranian ships make fake port calls to cover sanctioned maritime routes. Many companies steal IMO numbers of scrapped tankers or invent their own numbers. Mostly, the shipping trade is handled by shell companies registered in countries such as Panama, Gambia, Singapore, China and Fiji.

Weapons and oil are not the only commodities being shipped from the Caspian Sea. Iran imports grain from Russia, and the total trade volume in 2024 stood at 3.4 million tons, underpinning the significance of the north-south trade corridor.

According to data from Windward, an open-source platform, the number of cargo and tanker vessels increased significantly after Russia invaded Ukraine, from 23 a month in March 2022 to over 70 by the end of the year. The trend was visible in the Volga and Don rivers, which saw an increase in the number of ships sailing to the Sea of Azov and then to the Black Sea. Most likely, the vessels carried weapons and oil to fund and support Russia's war machinery. Ships with the Russian flag make it difficult for other countries to contest the trade due to a fear of inviting a military response if they take action. Moscow operates a fleet of over 20 naval ships, including minesweepers, landing craft and anti-saboteur boats, forming the Caspian

Flotilla of the Russian Navy, the oldest Russian flotilla. The absence of the US to counterbalance Russian naval influence makes it nearly impossible for Caspian littoral states to stop sanctioned shipping.

Russia-Iran Arms Trade, In Numbers

From the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has been the main supplier of arms to Iran. In 1991, Moscow lifted the barrier on the sale of conventional weapons to Iran, and in the last 35 years, Russia has supplied tanks, naval ships, surface-to-air missile defence systems such as S-300 and artillery to Iran. According to an estimate from Bloomberg, since 2021, Iran has sold \$4 billion worth of weapons, including \$2.7 billion worth of missiles. This includes several Fath-360 short-range ballistic missiles, 500 other types of munitions and over 200 air defence missiles. In another contract worth \$1.75 billion, signed in early 2023, Iran also supplied Russia with Shahed-136 kamikaze drones and helped set up production of its domestic variant, known as the Geran-2.

Shadow Fleet In The Caspian Sea

Fleetleaks is an open-source platform that tracks the movement of Russian vessels sanctioned by Western nations. The platform serves as a database for identifying and examining the ships; however, it is difficult to ascertain the type of commodity being shipped, but a deep analysis of the vessel's information would explain the trade practice. Zal Pars 3 and Irtysh River are connected. The latter is owned by Perspektiva Jsc, which is also connected to Eneya LLC and Jamaldin Pashayev. Irtysh also sailed with a Malta flag twice before switching to the Russian one. Though Perspektiva Jsc has not been sanctioned, it remains an entity of interest. Currently, the vessel is in the middle of the Caspian Sea, sailing back to Russia. Oil trade and other cargo bring money to the economy, and military hardware helps with defence. Iran had the expertise to produce cheap kamikaze drones, and Russia has the manufacturing capacity to scale it. Since

2022, both countries have jointly produced drones to dominate in a war of attrition. The Shahed drones have helped Iran attack its neighbours on a large scale. In March, a Geran-2 drone, the Russian version of the Shahed-136 drone, was shot down in Dubai, prompting Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky to say that Iranian drones were going to Russia and coming back to Iran.

In 2023, over 600 monthly incidents of AIS gaps were reported in Russia-flagged ships, compared to over 100 monthly in the first half of 2022. Both countries are operating in a shadow economy, making the Caspian Sea their best bet to evade sanctions.

Can the US Do Anything?

The two vessels are a small part of a large trade system between Russia and Iran, and for years, the US and Europe have largely failed in controlling it. After the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan became independent, dividing the waters of the Caspian Sea, causing dispute. Since officially it is not a declared sea, the rules under the United Nations Law of Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) are not applicable. In 2018, the littoral states signed the Caspian Sea Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation Agreement, which defined the territorial boundaries and economic zone and rejected any foreign naval presence in the sea. What does this mean? The US maintains relations with all the countries except Moscow and Tehran, but it does not have a naval presence in the region, especially one that matches Iran and Russia's. Washington backs Azerbaijan, a secular Shia Muslim nation that tries to counterbalance Iran, but in the present war, Tehran has targeted the country with drones.

The US has several military options. One possibility is for President Trump to order strikes on Iranian rail and road links connecting the Caspian Sea ports to the interior, aiming to disrupt supply lines. Alternatively, long-range strikes could be directed at the ports themselves; however, this carries the serious risk of inadvertently striking Russian shipping fleets. A third, highly improbable option is arming Azerbaijan to involve them in the conflict.

The option of targeting transportation infrastructure appears the most likely. Nonetheless, it is risky because long-range cruise or ballistic missiles, because of their lighter payloads, pose a higher risk of collateral damage compared to aerial bombardment by fighter jets. Furthermore, for the US to conduct strikes deep within Iran, it requires complete air superiority, which current evidence suggests it lacks, as demonstrated by the earlier downing of an F-15 in southwestern Iran.

The focus of this war may remain fixed on the Strait of Hormuz, but that is only a part of the story. Away from global attention, the Caspian Sea has been fuelling trade, moving weapons, and buying Iran time for years now.

By: Divyam Sharma

Beyond Anger: Understanding Sikh Concerns And Trust Deficit

Sikh sentiment towards India, especially in parts of the diaspora, is often seen through emotion and slogans. But the reality is far more layered and complex. The issue needs to be examined through the lens of historical trauma, political mistrust, identity concerns, security debates, economic anxieties and evolving efforts at reconciliation.

At the heart of this debate lies one crucial word: trust.

Historical Trauma and Collective Memory

For many Sikhs, especially those who either witnessed or inherited memories of the 1980s and early 1990s during the Congress-led government, the emotional scars of Operation Blue Star and the 1984 anti-Sikh violence, described by many Sikh groups and survivors as genocide, remain deeply significant.

At the same time, Punjab also suffered a violent insurgency, affecting civilians, police personnel, and political leaders. This duality, between state security concerns and community trauma, continues to define much of the Sikh-state debate even decades later.

Punjab has an estimated population of over 3.2 crore. As per the 2011 Census, Sikhs form 57.7% of Punjab's population and around 1.7% of India's population.

These figures are important because they show that Sikh concerns cannot be understood merely as a minority issue. They are deeply connected with Punjab's history, India's federal structure, national security, diaspora politics and the emotional memory of a community that has contributed immensely to India.

The Diaspora and Trust Deficit

The Punjabi and Sikh diaspora today is among the most influential Indian-origin communities globally. Over the years, successive governments in India have attempted certain confidence-building measures toward Sikhs, especially the diaspora community. One such step was the removal of names of several overseas Sikhs from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government "blacklists". For decades, many expatriate Sikhs, particularly from Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, alleged that they faced difficulties visiting India due to suspicions linked to the militancy period.

The removal of these names from the blacklist was projected as a gesture of outreach and reconciliation. Yet an uncomfortable and largely unanswered question remains: how many of those individuals actually returned to India after their names were removed from the blacklist?

That question reflects the depth of the



trust deficit. Many among the diaspora continue to fear that even if formal restrictions are lifted by the Union government, old police records, dormant cases, or local complaints may create legal trouble when visiting India.

If familiarisation tours can be organised for foreign delegates, diplomats and visiting media teams, then perhaps similar confidence-building visits could also be arranged for members of the Sikh diaspora.

Identity, Language and Religious Sensitivities

Another important example of this complex relationship emerged around Veer Bal Diwas.

The BJP-led government in recent years announced a day to honour the sacrifice of the Sahibzadas, the sons of the tenth master of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, revered in Sikh history for their martyrdom.

A large number of Sikhs welcomed the recognition of Sikh history at the national level. However, sections within the Sikh community raised objections not to the commemoration itself, but to the terminology used. Some argued that the observance should explicitly be called "Sahibzade Divas", maintaining that the spiritual and historical significance associated with the Sahibzadas could not be fully conveyed through broader terminology.

This controversy highlighted a larger lesson: when matters relate to faith and religious identity, consultation with Sikh religious bodies and institutions becomes extremely important.

Many observers believe that before making announcements on sensitive religious matters, authorities should ideally engage Sikh representative organisations to build consensus.

Political decision-makers sitting outside Punjab may not always fully understand the nuances of Sikh Rehat Maryada (sikh

code of conduct) and religious sensitivities in the same way Sikh institutions do. In Punjab, consultation becomes even more important because institutions such as the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), often described as the mini-parliament of the Sikhs, and Sri Akal Takht Sahib, the highest temporal seat of the Sikh community, carry deep religious and emotional authority.

To outsiders, such debates may appear merely semantic. But in identity politics, language often carries deep emotional, theological and cultural meaning.

Legitimate Grievance, Dissent and Security Concerns

One dangerous oversimplification must be avoided: the assumption that every Sikh concern is separatist, or that every diaspora criticism is anti-India.

A mature democracy must separate genuine grievance, democratic dissent and religious identity from violent separatism. This distinction is crucial. India has genuine security concerns, especially given the history of militancy, cross-border interference from Pakistan, radical propaganda and the use of social media by extremist elements. No responsible state can ignore violence or threats to sovereignty.

But at the same time, security concerns should not lead to every critic, activist, religious voice or diaspora Sikh being viewed through the same lens of suspicion.

Diaspora groups must also separate historical memory from permanent hostility. Remembering pain is important, but it should not create endless distance or alienation.

Sikh Representation and the Indian Armed Forces

Sikh representation in the Indian armed forces remains a sensitive issue, especially among diaspora groups, retired officers and observers. Some

sections of the Sikh community believe that Sikh representation in the armed forces has declined over the decades, though the Army maintains that recruitment is based on operational requirements, national integration and evolving military structures rather than religion.

Still, many Sikhs feel their historic bond with the Indian Army weakened after Punjab's "black days". Sikhs have contributed far beyond their population share, and the Sikh Regiment remains one of India's oldest and most decorated regiments. To bridge this perception gap, more military preparatory academies in Punjab could help youth join the forces and create employment.

Punjab's Economic Anxiety

Punjab's challenge today is not only emotional or political, but also economic.

The state once led India's Green Revolution and became known as the "breadbasket of India". Even today, Punjab contributes greatly to India's wheat and rice production despite its small size.

But it now faces agricultural stagnation, falling groundwater, slow industry, drug abuse and youth migration. Economic frustration can easily mix with identity politics. Unemployed youth may become more vulnerable to emotional or online mobilisation. That is why real development, jobs and hope may help Punjab more than political slogans.

Farm Laws and the Crisis of Consultation

The farm laws debate showed deep mistrust. Many Punjab farmers felt major reforms were brought without enough consultation with grassroots farmers and regional voices. The protests became one of India's biggest mass movements, and the laws were later repealed.

Still, Punjab's farming needs reform, as landholdings are shrinking and traditional farming is becoming difficult. New models, food processing, dairy and agribusiness can help. But reforms need trust and consensus.

However, the broader lesson from the protests may be this: reforms without trust and consensus become politically difficult to sustain.

Development as Reconciliation

As a landlocked border state, Punjab needs better freight corridors, cold-chain systems and air-cargo facilities. Trade through Attari-Wagah could help, but India-Pakistan tensions limit it.

Punjab also needs more IIT-level institutes, skill centres, innovation hubs and village-level training in AI farming, hydroponics, greenhouse farming and

agri-startups.

Anand Marriage Act and Sikh Religious Identity

The Anand Marriage Act recognises Sikh marriages performed through Anand Karaj. However, many Sikh groups feel its implementation remains uneven. For Sikhs, this is not just an administrative issue, but a matter of dignity, identity and proper recognition.

Diversity Within the Sikh Community

It would be wrong to assume that all Sikhs hold one political view. The Sikh community is diverse, with nationalists, regional voices, moderates, diaspora critics, reformists and apolitical citizens.

At the same time, Sikhs remain among India's



strongest symbols of courage, sacrifice and enterprise. From the armed forces and agriculture to diplomacy, business, sports and public life, Sikh contribution is deeply

woven into India's story. India has also had a Sikh Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh.

So, this is not a "Sikhs versus India" issue. Sikhs have shaped India. The real challenge is rebuilding trust where hurt and doubt still remain.

Kartarpur Corridor and Pilgrimage Access

The Kartarpur Corridor, which was a major spiritual and symbolic step giving pilgrims visa-free access to Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, is linked to Guru Nanak Dev Ji. It was one of the most significant symbolic steps taken by the

BJP despite severe tensions between the two countries at the time.

However, many devotees still face problems, especially with passport requirements, which affect rural pilgrims. Access to Pakistan for pilgrimage also remains limited under older frameworks. Many feel these rules should be reviewed as demand for visiting Sikh shrines has increased.

Similarly, the broader issue of Sikh pilgrimage access to Pakistan remains significant.

Punjab's Unresolved Regional Concerns

Punjab still faces many

unresolved issues, including water disputes, irrigation problems, Chandigarh's status, state debt, border security, drug abuse, youth migration and slow industrial growth. The Union government could benefit from wider consultation with Sikh intellectuals, scholars, veterans, economists and community voices to avoid misunderstandings.

Punjab's Next Chapter: Hope, Innovation and Resilience

Punjab should not remain known only as India's food bowl. It should grow into a centre of learning, technology, new farming ideas and border-state strength. For this, it needs steady investment in modern agriculture, skills, industry, food processing and village-level innovation.

Young Punjabis must feel that their future can be built at home, not only abroad. When opportunity becomes stronger than disappointment, many social tensions can slowly ease. If Punjab's energy is directed toward innovation, resilience and opportunity, the sky is the limit for Punjab and India.

By: Ravinder Singh Robin



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ad COUNCIL **AARP**

Nvidia ramps up hiring, offers salaries up to Rs 4.64 crore as rivals cut jobs

While some of America's biggest technology companies are cutting jobs and slowing foreign hiring, Nvidia is moving in the opposite direction.

The artificial intelligence giant, which sits at the centre of the global AI boom, is increasing its hiring of H-1B visa workers at a time when rivals such as Google, Amazon and Meta have become more cautious amid layoffs and cost-cutting efforts.

The development is particularly important for Indian technology professionals, who make up the largest share of H-1B workers in the United States.

According to federal filings cited in a report by NDTV, Nvidia secured certification for around 1,200 H-1B positions during the first two quarters of fiscal 2026. That is up from roughly 1,000 positions during the same period a year earlier.

The increase stands out because many technology firms have been moving in the opposite direction.

NVIDIA'S HIRING PUSH COMES AMID BIG TECH LAYOFFS

The technology sector has seen thousands of job cuts over the past year as companies adjust to changing business priorities and increasing investments in artificial intelligence.

Several major firms have either reduced hiring or laid off employees as they shift resources towards AI-related projects. According to data



compiled by Business Insider and cited by NDTV, Google's approved H-1B hires dropped to around 2,200 from 5,100 a year earlier.

Amazon's approvals also fell sharply, declining to roughly 4,300 from 6,100 over the same period.

Against this backdrop, Nvidia's decision to expand foreign hiring has attracted attention across the technology industry.

The company has become one of the biggest winners of the AI revolution, with its chips powering everything from ChatGPT-style applications to massive AI data centres used by technology companies around the world.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR INDIAN TECH PROFESSIONALS

The trend is especially significant for Indian engineers working in the United States.

According to USCIS-linked data cited in the report, Indians account for roughly 71% to 73% of all approved H-1B

beneficiaries. That means any increase in H-1B hiring is likely to benefit Indian professionals more than any other nationality. The timing is also important.

For many foreign workers in the US, losing a job can trigger immigration uncertainty.

Under H-1B visa rules, workers typically get only 60 days to find another employer willing to sponsor their visa after losing their job. Failing to secure new employment within that period can force them to leave the country.

With layoffs continuing across parts of the technology sector, Nvidia's hiring plans could offer a rare opportunity for engineers looking to remain in the US technology industry.

SALARIES UP TO RS 4.64 CRORE

One of the most striking aspects of Nvidia's hiring drive is the level of compensation being offered. Federal filings reviewed by NDTV show that the company is willing to pay some of the highest salaries in the industry

to attract AI, engineering and research talent.

A software engineer at Nvidia can earn up to \$391,000 annually, or around Rs 3.72 crore in base salary.

Research scientists can receive as much as \$356,500, equivalent to roughly Rs 3.39 crore.

Product managers can earn up to \$379,500, or around Rs 3.61 crore, while hardware engineering managers can make nearly Rs 3.50 crore annually.

The highest salaries are reserved for senior technical and leadership roles.

Architecture directors can earn up to \$488,750, translating to around Rs 4.64 crore a year in base salary alone.

Distinguished AI algorithms engineers can receive up to \$471,500, or roughly Rs 4.48 crore, while principal systems software engineers can earn as much as Rs 4.10 crore.

These figures do not include stock awards and bonuses, which can significantly increase overall compensation.

NVIDIA'S AI BET

CONTINUES TO PAY OFF

Nvidia's hiring push reflects its growing confidence in the artificial intelligence market.

The company has emerged as one of the world's most valuable businesses thanks to the explosive demand for AI chips and infrastructure.

Its hiring focus spans AI research, software engineering,

semiconductor design, cloud infrastructure and customer-facing technical roles.

The company is led by Jensen Huang, who was born in Taiwan and immigrated to the United States. Huang has repeatedly highlighted the role immigrant talent has played in Nvidia's growth and success.

H-1B UNCERTAINTY REMAINS

Despite Nvidia's aggressive hiring plans, uncertainty continues to surround the broader H-1B visa landscape.

Recent policy changes, stricter compliance requirements and increased scrutiny have made many employers more cautious about sponsoring foreign workers.

For thousands of Indian professionals dealing with layoffs, visa concerns and a challenging job market, opportunities remain limited.

That is one reason Nvidia's hiring plans are drawing attention. At a time when much of the technology sector is focused on reducing costs and trimming headcount, the company is continuing to expand and compete aggressively for skilled talent.

For Indian engineers hoping to build careers in the United States, Nvidia's approach offers a reminder that the AI boom is not only reshaping technology companies but also creating new opportunities for highly skilled workers.

New York Senate adopts Indian Independence Day resolution

The New York State Senate adopted Resolution J1935, urging Gov. Kathy Hochul to proclaim Aug. 15, 2026, as India Independence Day in the State of New York and paving the way for statewide celebrations of India's Independence Day.

As the Senate discussed Resolution J1935, many senators spoke about India's civilizational heritage, democratic traditions, Mahatma Gandhi's enduring message and the remarkable contributions of the Indian American community to New York and the United States.

The resolution, which was subsequently adopted by the Senate, was sponsored by Indian American Democratic New York

State Sen. Jeremy Cooney. Cooney, who was adopted from an orphanage in Kolkata, India, and raised by a single mother in the city of Rochester, made history in 2020 as the first Asian American elected to state office from upstate New York.

Highlighting the significance of his resolution, Cooney said in the Senate, "Across the globe, Indians are making lasting impacts in their communities, and this is an opportunity to join together and celebrate and reflect on our shared history, culture, and heritage."

Reacting to the resolution, the Consulate General of India in New York said in a statement, "The remarks reflected the deep

people-to-people bonds between India and the United States and the growing role of the Indian American diaspora in strengthening communities across New York."

It added, "The Consulate General of India, New York, expresses its sincere gratitude to Senator Jeremy Cooney for sponsoring the adopted resolution. The Consulate also thanks the Hon'ble Senators and the New York State Senate for their warm recognition of India's rich heritage and the invaluable contributions of the Indian American community to New York." Also in support of the resolution was State Sen. John C. Liu, noting, "Madam President, India has

been around for thousands of years. It has been a civilization. It has been a country. It has been a model of democracy for actually a lot longer than our country. But we celebrate the contributions of Indian Americans to our communities right here in New York and in the United States." In a display of bipartisan support, the resolution was also hailed and supported by Republican state Sens. Steven D. Rhoads and Jack M. Martins.

In his Senate address, Sen. Rhoads said, "I am proud to represent a district that is enriched by a dynamic and growing Indian population whose culture, traditions, entrepreneurship, and community

spirit really strengthen our neighborhoods every single day." Echoing similar sentiments, Sen. Martins said, "There are large Indian American communities throughout New York State. They have become integral to our communities, not only participating as business owners and civic leaders, but also academically excelling in our schools. They truly are the path to the future."

CGI New York hailed the resolution and noted that it "deeply appreciates this recognition by the New York State Senate, which reflects the close bonds of friendship, democracy and shared values between India and the United States."

Move Over Mango Shakes: Mango Beer Is India's New Summer Obsession



As mango season sweeps across India, the country's microbreweries are finding new ways to celebrate the beloved fruit. From Bengaluru and Pune to Hyderabad, Goa and Gurugram, seasonal mango-infused craft beers are becoming a summer staple, drawing consumers eager to swap predictable pints for limited-edition brews packed with tropical flavour.

What was once a niche experiment has evolved into a seasonal ritual. Much like pumpkin spice season in the West, mango season is increasingly becoming a cultural moment for India's craft breweries, one that consumers actively anticipate year after year.

The trend arrives at a time when India's beer market is projected to cross \$800 billion by 2034, with the craft beer segment growing significantly faster than traditional categories. As consumer tastes evolve, seasonal brews are emerging as one of the industry's most effective tools for attracting new drinkers, encouraging repeat visits, and creating memorable experiences.

Summer Is Now A Brewing Season

For years, summer menus in India revolved around aam panna, cold coffees and fruity cocktails.

Today, microbreweries are adding a craft twist to the season through limited-edition beers inspired by the country's favourite fruit.

Whether it's Alphonso-infused wheat beers, tart raw-mango sours, or hazy ales layered with tropical notes, these seasonal creations are becoming crowd favourites among young urban consumers looking for fresh and

experimental drinking experiences.

According to industry insiders, summer has become one of the most creatively active periods for breweries. Unlike year-round offerings, seasonal releases create anticipation because they are available only for a limited time, making them highly shareable and conversation-worthy.

"Mango is often referred to as the 'King of Fruits' in India, and every summer brings with it nostalgia, joy and familiarity. Paired with craft brewing, it creates a unique drinking experience that strongly resonates with today's consumers, especially millennials and Gen Z who are always looking for new flavours and experiences," says Ishan Varshnei, CEO of Latamarcem Brewers.

At Maka Di Beer, fruit-forward and refreshing styles consistently perform well during warmer months, reinforcing how seasonal ingredients are becoming central to brewery innovation.

Why Mango Works So Well In Craft Beer

Few ingredients carry the emotional connection that mangoes do in India. Beyond their popularity, they also offer brewers remarkable versatility. Depending on the variety, mangoes can create flavour profiles that range from sweet and creamy to tart, citrusy and refreshingly sharp. Alphonso mangoes often lend smooth tropical notes to wheat beers, while raw mangoes are increasingly finding their way into sour beers designed for hot-weather drinking.

Some breweries are even experimenting with chilli-mango

combinations, creating beers that balance sweetness, spice and acidity in unexpected ways. The seasonal nature of mangoes also aligns perfectly with the craft beer philosophy of small-batch experimentation and local sourcing. Unlike mass-produced beers, craft breweries thrive on innovation, making summer fruit infusions a natural extension of their creative approach.

India's Craft Beer Consumers Are Becoming More Experimental. India's craft beer audience has matured significantly over the past few years. Consumers are increasingly willing to explore unfamiliar styles, local ingredients and limited-edition releases.

Where beer preferences were once largely limited to lagers and strong beers, today's consumers are embracing wheat beers, ciders, sours, fruit ales and barrel-aged brews.

Seasonal mango beers have emerged as an accessible gateway into craft beer because of their light, fruity and easy-drinking appeal. Their familiarity makes them approachable for newcomers, while their limited-edition nature keeps enthusiasts coming back for more.

This shift is especially visible in cities with thriving brewery cultures, including Bengaluru, Pune, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Gurugram, where consumers actively seek out seasonal menu drops and exclusive releases.

The Rise Of Beer Experiences Over Just Drinking

The popularity of mango brews reflects a much larger shift in urban social culture. Consumers are no longer visiting

breweries solely for the beer. They are increasingly seeking immersive experiences that combine food, entertainment, design and community.

Across cities, breweries are curating mango-themed brunches, live music evenings, rooftop sundowners, beer-pairing menus and tropical-themed spaces that complement the summer mood. Craft beer is becoming deeply intertwined with lifestyle, aesthetics and social discovery.

"Drinking is very much about experience for the young generation," says Prem Dewan, Chairman and Managing Director, Devans Modern Breweries Ltd. Whether it's a dinner outing, a concert, a party or a Korean barbecue experience, the beverage is becoming part of the occasion rather than the sole focus of it. With younger consumers showing little loyalty to traditional alcohol categories, breweries have an opportunity to experiment with formats and flavours that feel modern, approachable and culturally relevant.

Social media has further accelerated this trend. Bright yellow beers, tropical garnishes, colourful brewery interiors and limited-edition menus naturally lend themselves to visual storytelling, making seasonal brews particularly popular online.

Beyond The Beverage: A Reflection Of Urban Lifestyle Trends

The growing popularity of seasonal beers mirrors broader lifestyle shifts among India's younger consumers.

There is a growing preference for hyperlocal experiences, artisanal products and curated social spaces. Consumers increasingly value storytelling as much as the product itself, whether it involves the origin of the mangoes, the brewing process or the inspiration behind a seasonal menu.

This has encouraged breweries to position themselves as cultural hubs rather than simply drinking venues. Food, music, art and community are becoming just as important as the beer on tap.

"Seasonal craft brews are reshaping consumer behaviour, driving business growth and elevating the entire craft beer experience across the nation,"

says Naresh Sharma, CEO, IRHPL (Group of Companies). According to Sharma, today's consumers actively seek locally crafted products that celebrate culture, tell stories and create meaningful connections. Seasonal brews built around indigenous ingredients are helping breweries create authentic experiences while simultaneously showcasing India's agricultural heritage and brewing innovation.

What This Means For The Future Of Craft Beer

For many breweries, seasonal releases have become far more than a short-term marketing strategy. They are increasingly central to how brands build loyalty, attract new audiences and remain culturally relevant. "In India, summer and mangoes go hand in hand, making mango a natural flavour inspiration for seasonal craft beers," says Anirudh Khanna, Managing Director, Independence Brewing Company.

Khanna notes that consumers are becoming increasingly adventurous and open to exploring styles beyond conventional lagers. This growing appetite for innovation inspired the brewery's seasonal mango offering, King Jovial, a distinctive Graf-style beer that combines elements of beer and cider while highlighting the tropical character of mango.

What makes seasonal brews especially powerful, he explains, is their ability to create anticipation. Consumers look forward to them because they capture a specific moment in time and offer something unavailable during the rest of the year.

As India's craft beer culture continues to mature, seasonal brews inspired by local ingredients are expected to play an even larger role in consumer decision-making.

Mango beers are no longer just a summer novelty. They have become a reflection of how India's craft beer culture is evolving, towards experimentation, storytelling, community and experience-led consumption.

This summer, the humble mango is no longer limited to milkshakes, desserts and cocktails. Across India's microbreweries, it has found a new identity, one that is crisp, refreshing and best enjoyed fresh on tap.

MUSKISM: A Guide for the Perplexed



Who on earth is Elon Musk and what is he doing? Is he a hero, a villain, or does he swing constantly between those two poles? According to the constant media gush driven by his every act and pronouncement, Musk is best understood in personal terms. This book argues differently. Rather than seeing Musk as an individual, it sees him as an avatar of something called a playbook for our new postliberal age.

It's not that Musk himself holds a coherent set of beliefs; you

could say his life is one long improvisation. And he's certainly never used the word Muskism – just as, a century ago, Henry Ford never used Fordism to define his own post-liberal modernity. In exploring the forces that have shaped Musk, from South Africa to Silicon Valley, Space X to DOGE, Quinn Slobodian and Ben Tarnoff outline the motifs and practices that have come to dominate our own crisis-ridden world.

Muskism, they show, speaks the language of crisis and emergency

to invoke a less human where humans are purged from the productive process and, through social media and video games, merged with the machine. This is a worldview in which the technocrat is king; which piggybacks on the state to achieve supremacy; and in which only a select few deserve salvation. If you enter, this book warns you, you will grind and you will live in the shadow of one man – but the rewards could be priceless and the alternative might be extinction.

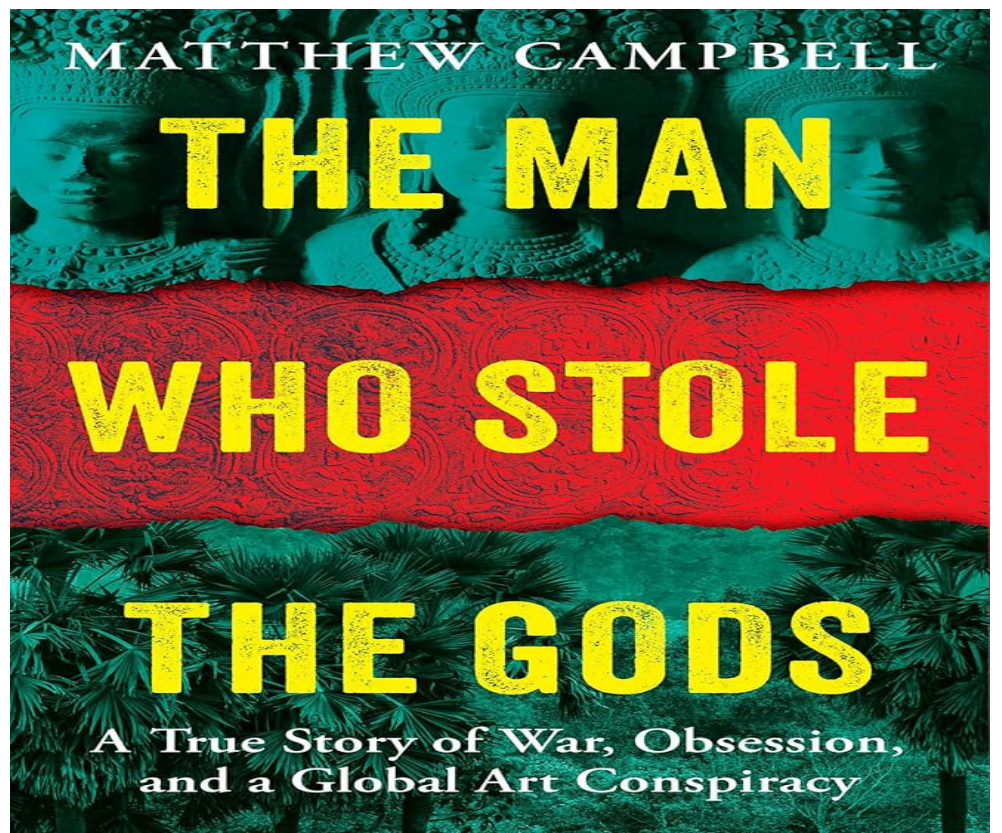
THE MAN WHO STOLE THE GODS

A TRUE STORY OF WAR, OBSESSION, AND A GLOBAL ART CONSPIRACY

The ugly truth behind ancient artifacts. In the 1980s, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City began acquiring stunning sculptures from the Khmer Empire, most famous for building the 12th-century temple complex at Angkor Wat in northern Cambodia. A decade earlier, Cambodia fought a bloody civil war with Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge guerrillas, who had murdered roughly two million people. In his disturbing account, Campbell, a reporter for Bloomberg Businessweek, writes of Douglas Latchford, a young British expatriate art dealer who, taking advantage of the chaos from his high-rise in Bangkok, paid temple looters to bring him a steady stream of artifacts to put on the global market. Among them was a two-ton statue of Ganesha, the Hindu elephant god, that wound up in the collection of a Netscape co-founder. Latchford, who had "a passing

resemblance to the actor Roger Moore," used his connection with the Met's "eager" buyers to burnish his reputation as the world's foremost expert in Cambodian art and legitimize his illicit trade, creating what the author describes as a network of "comfortable professionals in Bangkok, Paris, London, and New York who'd taken advantage of a poor country in crisis—and, in some cases, made a great deal of money through pillaging its history." In a fast-paced narrative, Campbell expertly handles a complex story of art theft, violent history, implicated cultural institutions, and law enforcers in Cambodia and the U.S. struggling to repatriate looted treasures. After reading the book, you may never again look at ancient artworks in quite the same way.

Thought-provoking true crime on a grand scale.



Rasputin: The Downfall of the Romanovs

RASPUTIN THE DOWNFALL OF THE ROMANOVS



ANTONY BEEVOR

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF RUSSIA AND STALINGRAD

When Russia's Dowager Empress was pregnant with the future Tsar, she dreamed that a peasant would one day kill her son. The idea terrified her, and for the rest of her days she 'lived under the pressure of the prophecy'. Rasputin had no official position. A barely literate moujikh from Siberia, he had no forces at his command. He was a devoted monarchist, not a revolutionary. And yet, through his uncanny seduction of the imperial household, he contributed more than any other individual to the collapse of the greatest autocracy in the world. 'This man was unique', observed one writer. 'Like a character out of a novel, he lived in legend, he died in legend, and his memory is cloaked in legend.'

In this extraordinary new work, Antony Beevor, master of narrative history on the grandest scale, sharpens his focus to pierce the fog of fantasy that has only grown denser over time. The result is an unparalleled portrait of one of history's most dubious masterminds.



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Your Next Holiday Could Be Creating Jobs In Small-Town India



For years, travel has been viewed primarily through the lens of leisure, a chance to escape routine, explore new destinations, or tick off a bucket-list experience. But across India, domestic tourism is increasingly proving to be much more than that. It has become a powerful economic engine, quietly generating jobs, supporting local businesses, and reshaping regional economies far beyond the country's major metropolitan centres.

As disposable incomes rise and travel becomes more accessible, Indians are exploring their own backyard with renewed enthusiasm. From spiritual circuits and heritage towns to wildlife escapes and weekend retreats, domestic travel is witnessing unprecedented momentum. While travellers may be seeking experiences, local communities are often gaining something equally valuable: economic opportunity.

The Ripple Effect Of Every Journey

The impact of domestic tourism extends far beyond hotels and airlines. Every trip generates demand across a complex ecosystem that includes local transport providers, restaurants, artisans, guides, retail businesses, cultural performers, and countless small entrepreneurs. Unlike many industries where growth is concentrated in urban centres, tourism has the unique ability to distribute economic benefits across geographies. According to Rahul Deb Banerjee, COO, The Clarks Hotels & Resorts, domestic tourism acts as a powerful driver of inclusive economic growth by creating employment, supporting small-scale enterprises, and accelerating regional development.

"When people travel to unexplored small towns, it creates a ripple effect," he explains. The economic benefits often extend well beyond the tourism sector itself, helping create entrepreneurial opportunities while strengthening local

economies.

This is particularly significant for destinations that have historically remained outside mainstream tourism circuits. Increased visitor footfall often encourages infrastructure development, improved connectivity, and investment in local services, creating long-term benefits for residents as well as travellers.

Small Towns, Big Opportunities

One of the most transformative aspects of domestic tourism is its ability to shine a spotlight on emerging destinations.

As travellers increasingly seek authentic experiences over crowded hotspots, smaller towns and lesser-known regions are finding themselves on India's tourism map. This shift is creating new opportunities for communities that may previously have had limited avenues for economic growth.

For many regions, tourism serves as both an income generator and a catalyst for broader development. Better roads, improved public amenities, enhanced digital connectivity, and increased private-sector investment often follow rising visitor demand.

The result is a more balanced model of economic participation, one that allows growth to extend beyond traditional urban centres.

Luxury Travel's Expanding Role

The rise of domestic tourism is also changing the dynamics of India's hospitality industry, particularly within the luxury segment.

According to Pardeep Siwach, Deputy General Manager, Mayfair Spring Valley Resort, Guwahati, the increasing emphasis on domestic tourism is creating significant opportunities across multiple sectors while simultaneously boosting demand for premium hospitality experiences.

"When travellers choose to explore destinations within the country, the

benefits extend far beyond hotels," he says. Local retailers, transport providers, artisans, craftspeople and service businesses all become part of the tourism value chain.

At the same time, a growing number of Indian travellers are seeking immersive, experience-led stays rather than conventional accommodation. This trend has fuelled demand for luxury resorts, boutique properties and heritage hotels that offer

a deeper connection to local culture and place.

Rather than functioning merely as accommodation providers, many of these properties are becoming ambassadors for their destinations, helping introduce travellers to regional traditions, cuisine, crafts and cultural experiences.

Preserving Culture Through Tourism

Economic development and cultural preservation are often viewed as

experiences or indigenous wellness practices, tourism can transform cultural assets into sustainable economic opportunities.

A More Resilient Travel Economy

Domestic tourism also offers an important layer of resilience. Unlike international travel, which is often vulnerable to currency fluctuations, geopolitical events and global economic uncertainty, domestic travel tends to remain more stable and accessible. It allows destinations to maintain visitor flows even during periods when international tourism may slow down.

Banerjee notes that for travellers, domestic tourism is often a more affordable and practical option, while for regional economies, it provides a reliable source of economic activity and employment.

This balance makes domestic tourism an increasingly important pillar of India's long-term economic growth story.

The Road Ahead

As India continues to invest in infrastructure, connectivity and destination development, domestic tourism is poised to play an even larger role in shaping regional prosperity.



competing priorities. Tourism, however, has the potential to support both simultaneously.

As interest in experiential travel grows, many travellers are actively seeking authentic cultural encounters, traditional crafts, indigenous cuisines and wellness experiences rooted in local heritage.

This growing demand creates incentives for communities to preserve and showcase traditions that might otherwise struggle to survive in a rapidly modernising world. Siwach believes this trend is particularly important for India's cultural and wellness tourism sectors, where increased visitor interest can contribute to both economic sustainability and heritage conservation. Whether through traditional handicrafts, local festivals, regional culinary

What makes its impact particularly powerful is its inclusivity. Every hotel booking, train journey, road trip, local meal or heritage walk contributes to an ecosystem that supports livelihoods, nurtures entrepreneurship and strengthens local economies.

The future of domestic tourism, therefore, is not just about where Indians choose to travel next. It is about how travel itself is becoming a tool for economic empowerment, cultural preservation and sustainable regional development.

Because sometimes, the most meaningful journeys are not only the ones that take us somewhere new, they are the ones that help entire communities move forward.

This Hidden Valley In Uttarakhand Could Be India's Next Big Adventure Tourism Destination



Uttarakhand tourism has unveiled the Tons Valley as one of India's most promising adventure tourism destinations, opening the doors to a region that combines world-class whitewater rafting, pristine Himalayan wilderness, high-altitude trekking, rich biodiversity and authentic local culture.

The move shines a spotlight on a little-known corner of the western Himalayas that has long remained off the mainstream tourist map despite offering some of the most spectacular outdoor experiences in northern India.

For decades, adventure seekers heading to Uttarakhand have flocked to familiar names such as Rishikesh, Auli and Chopta. But nestled in the state's far northwestern reaches, the Tons Valley presents something increasingly rare in modern travel: a landscape that still feels unexplored.

Where Is Tons Valley?

The Tons Valley lies in the upper reaches of Uttarkashi district and is named after the mighty Tons River, the largest tributary of the Yamuna.

Surrounded by dense deodar forests, alpine meadows, remote Himalayan villages, and snow-clad peaks, the valley stretches across a rugged landscape bordering Himachal Pradesh. Despite being only a few hours from Dehradun, it remains one of Uttarakhand's least-visited regions.

The area encompasses destinations such as Mori, Netwar, Sankri, Osla and Kalap, villages that offer a glimpse into traditional mountain life while serving as gateways to some of the state's most scenic trekking routes.

A Rafting Destination

Waiting To Be Discovered

One of the valley's biggest draws is the Tons River itself. Widely regarded by adventure operators as one of India's finest whitewater rivers, it offers thrilling rapids that attract experienced rafters looking for challenges beyond the more commercial stretches of the Ganga.

The river cuts through deep gorges and forested landscapes, creating a rafting experience that combines adrenaline with dramatic

Himalayan scenery.

The village of Mori, located on the banks of the Tons, has already earned recognition as a hub for rafting, fishing and trekking. According to Uttarakhand Tourism, water-based adventure activities remain among the region's biggest attractions.

A Paradise For Trekkers

If rafting brings visitors to the valley, trekking is what makes them stay. The region serves as a gateway to several iconic Himalayan trails, including the Rupin Pass trek.

Beyond the established routes, visitors can explore alpine meadows, shepherd trails, dense forests and high-altitude grasslands that remain relatively untouched by mass tourism.

Researchers studying the Tons River basin have noted the area's significant potential for trekking, camping and mountaineering, citing its snow-capped mountains, grasslands and remote villages as major assets for adventure tourism.

Adventure initiatives such as the recently completed Total Tons Expedition—which combined rafting, trekking and wilderness camping—have further highlighted the valley's potential as a world-class outdoor destination.

Rich Biodiversity And Untouched Landscapes

Unlike many crowded mountain destinations, the Tons Valley remains remarkably pristine. The landscape is defined by ancient deodar forests, glacial

streams, alpine pastures and river valleys that support a diverse range of Himalayan flora and fauna.

The wider Uttarakhand Himalayas are known for their rich biodiversity, and the Tons Valley forms part of this ecologically significant mountain ecosystem.

For nature enthusiasts, the region offers opportunities for birdwatching, wildlife observation and immersive wilderness experiences far removed from the bustle of commercial hill stations.

A Window Into Himalayan Culture

The appeal of Tons Valley extends beyond outdoor sports. Many villages in the valley have preserved cultural traditions, architecture, festivals and customs that have remained largely unchanged for generations.

Studies on the Tons River basin describe the area as a culturally rich landscape where local fairs, processions and traditional celebrations continue to play an important role in community life. Villages such as Kalap have become examples of community-led tourism, where visitors stay with local families, experience regional cuisine and gain insight into mountain traditions. The village is known for its traditional Garhwali architecture and stunning views of the surrounding Himalayan ranges.

Why Tourism Officials Are Betting On Tons Valley

The unveiling of Tons Valley aligns with Uttarakhand's broader push to expand beyond pilgrimage tourism and position itself as a leading adventure tourism destination in Asia. State authorities have increasingly focused on promoting sustainable, low-impact tourism that generates livelihoods for local communities while protecting fragile mountain ecosystems.

Tourism experts believe the valley's greatest strength lies in its balance of adventure and authenticity. Unlike destinations that have become heavily commercialised, Tons Valley still offers travellers the chance to experience untouched wilderness, meaningful cultural interactions and outdoor adventures in a single journey.

The Next Big Name In Indian Adventure Travel?

As travellers increasingly seek destinations that are less crowded and more immersive, Tons Valley appears perfectly positioned to meet that demand. With its powerful river, dramatic trekking routes, rich biodiversity and vibrant mountain culture, the valley offers many of the ingredients that have transformed other Himalayan regions into tourism success stories. The difference is that Tons Valley is only beginning its journey. For now, that means visitors can still experience a side of Uttarakhand that feels raw, authentic and largely undiscovered—a rarity in an age when hidden gems rarely stay hidden for long.

Escape The Summer Heat: 8 Southern Hemisphere Countries To Visit Right Now

When temperatures soar across much of India, many travellers start dreaming of cooler weather and refreshing escapes. One of the best ways to swap scorching summer days for pleasant temperatures is to head south of the Equator. Since the Southern Hemisphere experiences opposite seasons, several countries enjoy cooler autumn or early winter weather when the Northern Hemisphere is in peak summer. Australia: Australia's

southern cities, including Melbourne and Sydney, are much cooler during the middle of the year. You can enjoy scenic drives, cozy cafés and outdoor attractions without the intense summer heat.

New Zealand: Known for its breathtaking landscapes, New Zealand offers snow-capped mountains, crystal-clear lakes and dramatic fjords. It's an excellent choice for nature lovers seeking cooler weather and

stunning scenery.

South Africa: Winter in South Africa is generally mild and pleasant. Explore Cape Town, enjoy wildlife safaris and take in spectacular coastal views without battling extreme temperatures.

Argentina: The cooler months are ideal for discovering Argentina. From the vibrant streets of Buenos Aires to the dramatic landscapes of Patagonia, the country offers a mix of culture, food and natural beauty.

Chile: Stretching along South America's western coast, Chile boasts diverse landscapes ranging from mountains and glaciers to vineyards and coastal towns. The cooler weather makes sightseeing more comfortable.

Uruguay: For travellers seeking a quieter getaway, Uruguay offers charming colonial towns, beautiful beaches and a relaxed atmosphere. Its mild winter temperatures make it a pleasant escape from the heat.

Namibia: The dry season in Namibia brings cooler temperatures and excellent wildlife-viewing opportunities. The country's dramatic desert landscapes feel even more magical during this time of year. Peru: While parts of Peru can be chilly, the cooler season is often considered one of the best times to visit famous attractions such as Machu Picchu. Clear skies and pleasant daytime conditions make exploring easier.

How Walking 10 Minutes After Every Meal May Help Control Belly Fat

The visible deposition of fat around the belly area that expands the waistline is one of the hardest to lose through dietary interventions. Belly fat is a major health concern that affects a significant portion of the Indian population, which needs to be controlled, as it increases the risk of chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. While overall lifestyle choices dictate the deposition of fat around the belly, there is a simple habit that requires no equipment that can help you.

One such habit that is backed by science, as per the Scientific Reports research, is walking 10 minutes after consuming a meal. The findings indicate that a normal-paced walk after every meal can result in a slower glucose spike spread across the next two hours after consuming the meal.

The simple practice of walking after meals has a positive impact on blood glucose, which in turn affects the deposition of fat storage around the belly area. The mechanism behind these positive effects is that walking has the ability to improve metabolism, burn calories, prevent fat storage, and support insulin sensitivity.

5 Health Benefits Of Walking 10 Minutes After Meals

1. Boosts Digestion

Digestive function and its pace play a role in fat storage around the stomach area. If, after eating, you want to give your body the best chance of digesting the food without fat storage around the belly, then walking is strongly advised. The physical movement also helps reduce bloating, which is a common problem that can be triggered by food combinations and the timing of eating meals.

2. Controls Blood Sugar Levels

The research published in the International Journal of General Medicine confirms that even an immediate walk after a meal can be effective when it comes to weight loss. But waiting for 10 minutes can help the food move into the digestive system



before starting the physical movement for better absorption in the body. This habit is ideal for diabetics and those diagnosed with prediabetes, as it can control blood sugar spikes after eating.

3. Helps Burn Belly Fat

When you consume a meal, the body works to break down the nutrients and extract the benefits they can provide. The release of fats and how they are stored affects the deposition of belly fat, which is what needs to be avoided. A walk after meals also keeps the metabolism active to help the body break down the food consumed.

4. Reduces Bloating And Gas

Right after eating a meal, digestive issues such as bloating and gas are common. A walk after meals can serve as a gentle physical activity that can reduce the discomfort that these issues cause. While the varying effects of digestive issues may require further medical intervention, minor or momentary experiences of bloating or gas can benefit from physical movement that can be comfortably performed.

5. Improves Heart Health

This effect has been researched and published in the BMC Cardiovascular Disorders Journal wherein walking after meals supports blood circulation throughout the body. It can even reduce the risk of metabolic diseases that can affect belly fat. The amount of belly fat that you have needs to be effectively utilised by the

body to make sure the fat doesn't turn into problematic diseases with multiple health complications.

When And How To Walk After Meals

Tapasya Mundhra, Clinical Dietitian and Holistic Nutritionist, explains, "Walking after meals helps prevent blood sugar spikes and improves metabolism, which may reduce fat storage over time."

You need to follow simple tips to make sure that your post-meal walk controls the amount of belly fat. Here is what you need to know:

Wait 10-15 minutes after eating to make sure the food moves into the digestive system.

Walk at a slow to moderate pace to make sure you don't overdo your post-meal walk.

The ideal duration should be 10-15 minutes.

You need to avoid intense exercise immediately after eating, as it can make you throw up.

Who Should Try This Habit?

This habit should be a staple in the daily routine of individuals who meet the following criteria: People with belly fat concerns need to tweak their lifestyle and dietary choices to reduce it visibly.

Office workers and those with a sedentary lifestyle need to follow this habit.

People with blood sugar issues should definitely make post-meal walking a staple.

Those struggling with digestion problems should introduce post-meal walking for better relief.

How Long Before You See Results?

The results on your belly can be seen in varying degrees, as

multiple factors affect how much belly fat you can lose and the pace of losing it.

The initial benefits can be seen within 1-2 weeks.

While visible changes in belly fat can be noticed within 4-6 weeks with consistency.

The habit works best with a balanced diet and daily hydration, as belly fat is stubborn to tackle once it develops.

Tips To Maximise Belly Fat Loss

You can lose belly fat by following scientifically proven methods that can help you do so. Here is how:

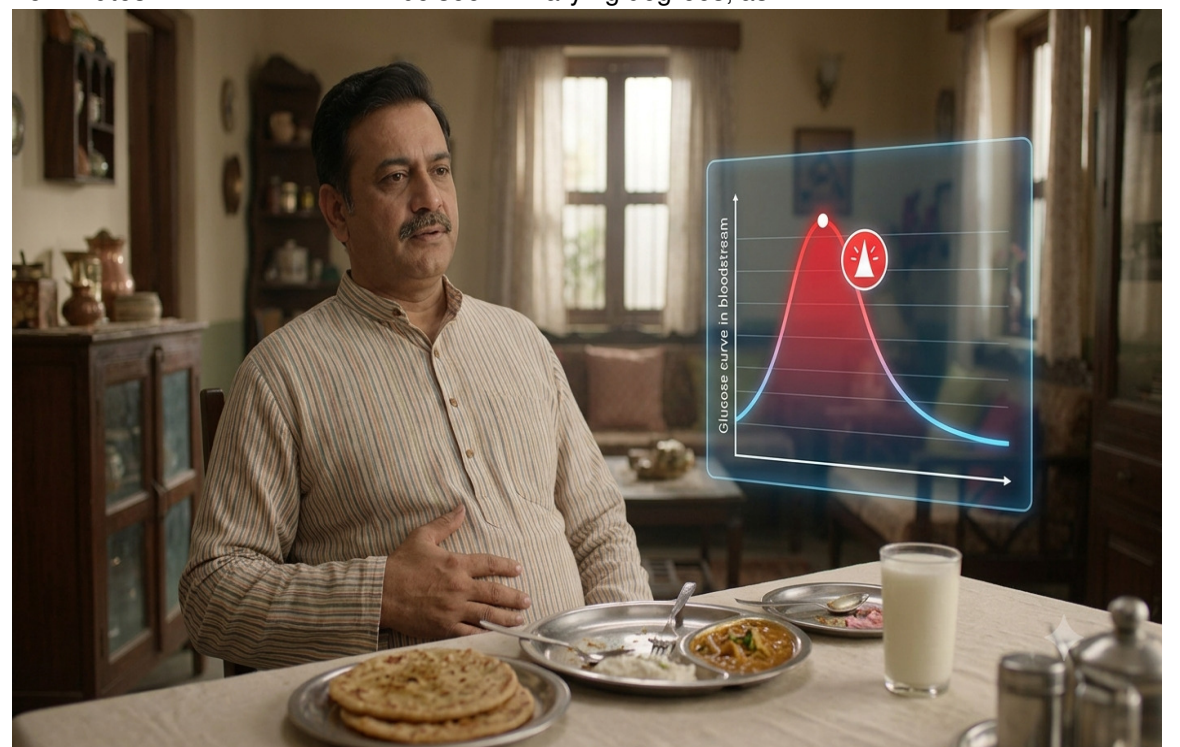
Combine it with high-protein meals for maximum impact on belly fat.

Avoid sugar-heavy foods that can cause glucose spikes and lead to fat storage in the belly area.

Stay consistent after every major meal to see visible results, but your overall lifestyle and dietary choices can influence it.

You need to add a daily step goal of at least 7,000-10,000 to see positive effects visibly.

Taking a walk after consuming a meal is a small habit that has a big impact on the body. The consistency matters more than the intensity with which you practise it. You just need to start doing this today to avoid belly fat altogether. If you do have it, then you need to consult a nutritionist or dietician to make sure you take the right approach.



Are You Applying Sunscreen Correctly? The '2-Finger Rule' Every Dermatologist Wants You To Follow



The rising summer heat has increased the exposure to ultraviolet rays that can damage the skin barrier. Most people don't apply enough sunscreen on their face, neck, and other directly exposed areas to escape the potential effects of sun damage. Skin is an incredibly sensitive ecosystem that requires consistent and scientific skincare practices to preserve it. Due to this common mistake of not applying enough sunscreen, research published in the International Journal of Cosmetic Science highlights that sunscreen needs to be applied daily to reduce the acute and chronic effects of ultraviolet ray exposure.

This is especially true for those who have a smaller amount of melanin in their skin, as well as those with darker skin tones. As everyone needs to choose a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) varying as the concentration of the sun's rays and its exposure have dramatically increased due to

climate change and erratic weather patterns.

What Is The 2-Finger Sunscreen Rule?

The simple 2-finger sunscreen rule involves squeezing sunscreen along two fingers (index and middle), as this amount is needed for the face and neck. Most people tend to apply sunscreen on their faces but forget their necks, which can lead to skin issues such as pigmentation, sun tan, and other skin-related ailments that can cause visible damage to the skin barrier. This rule has been scientifically researched in the Clinical, Cosmetic, and Investigational Dermatology Journal.

The rule works for creams, lotions, and gel-based sunscreens, but you need to adjust the exact sun-protective factor or SPF as per the time of day and duration of the direct sun.

Why The 2-Finger Rule Matters

The 2-finger rule matters when it

comes to reducing skin health-related issues, especially types of skin cancers that affect the Indian population despite having melanin in their skin. The potential DNA and cellular damage that occurs on the skin barrier can vary and affect people in various ways that need to be controlled.

Multiple research papers and reviews, such as the Brazilian Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences journal, detail why applying enough sunscreen that covers the entire face and neck is necessary. If you use too little sunscreen, then the potential damage due to ultraviolet rays can be reduced.

But with the right SPF usage, Indians can prevent the following issues that may occur after sun exposure:

Sunburn

Tanning

Premature ageing

Skin damage

How To Apply Sunscreen Correctly

You need to squeeze sunscreen on your index and middle fingers and make sure your hands are clean when you do so. It is also important to make sure that the skin is dry and clean, as the pores need to absorb the sunscreen applied to it.

It needs to cover the face, neck, and ears, both front and back, to make sure all surface area is covered.

The right time to apply sunscreen

is 15-20 minutes before exposure to the sun.

You need to reapply sunscreen every 2-3 hours to make sure your skin barrier remains protected under the sun.

Dr Gurveen Waraich, Dermatologist from Gurgaon, explains, "The ideal amount is about 1.6 to 1.8 mg per square centimetre, which roughly translates to two fingers' worth of sunscreen for the face."

Common Sunscreen Mistakes You Might Be Making

The simple skincare practice of applying sunscreen can be riddled with mistakes if you happen to:

Use too little product that doesn't cover your entire face, neck, and ears.

Don't reapply sunscreen every two to three hours when under the direct sun.

Skipping ears, neck, and hands, as they are directly exposed.

Mixing sunscreen with moisturiser (reduces effectiveness) - the first step should be sunscreen, and then moisturiser.

Assuming SPF in makeup is enough, as the coverage in it can dissolve with the facial oils as time passes by.

Who Should Be Extra Careful? Sunscreen application should be taken seriously by people who have the following:

Sensitive skin, as the skin barrier is weaker and reacts to sun damage visibly much more than

other skin types.

Acne-prone skin, as the skin is known to trap oil in the pores, and sun exposure can irritate it further.

Pigmentation issues that can visibly worsen when exposed to the sun.

Outdoor workers or commuters in India should be especially careful, as the time they spend under the sun should factor into their sunscreen application routine.

Which SPF Should You Use?

The Journal of Cosmetic Dermatology suggests that, depending on the Indian climate and skin tone, a minimum SPF 30-50 is needed. This is true for people who spend most of their time under the sun as well as those with limited outdoor exposure, as the sun's rays tend to permeate through the skin.

You need to make sure that your sunscreen offers broad-spectrum protection (UVA and UVB) to give your skin barrier the best chance of protection.

Dr Gurveen Waraich explains, "If sunscreen is not applied in the right quantity, its SPF level drops significantly, meaning your skin does not get full protection."

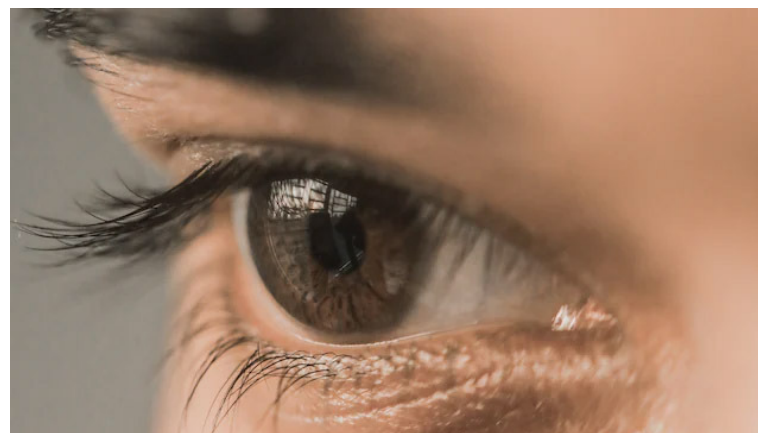
When it comes to sunscreen usage, the correct quantity matters more than brand, but testing it on your skin type is essential. You need to make sunscreen application a part of the daily routine.

2 Silent Symptoms Of Fatty Liver Disease You Can Easily Spot Just By Looking At Your Eyes

Your liver is responsible for filtering out toxins from the substances that enter the body, along with extracting nutrients from the food you consume. The liver is a vital organ that is greatly affected by fatty liver disease, which is found in over 38.6% of adults in India. This means that nearly 4 in 10 adults have fatty liver disease. It affects people in varying stages and is reversed when it is in grade 1 through a holistic lifestyle approach.

The International Journal of Hepatology Research mentions that fatty liver disease often doesn't show any visible signs until it reaches a dangerous

stage. So, increasing your awareness about how it can affect the normal human body is essential. Furthermore, the Journal of Translational Medicine details that fatty liver disease can cause symptoms in your eyes. Overall liver health is linked to how the body filters blood and the overall levels of bilirubin. When bilirubin builds up in the liver, then possible yellowing of the eyes can signal liver health issues. The changes in the eyes can sometimes reflect internal issues that need to be addressed in a timely manner to stop the progression of possible fatty liver disease.



2 Silent Symptoms Of Fatty Liver You May Notice In Your Eyes

1. Yellowing Of Eyes (Jaundice Sign)

When there is an excess amount

of bilirubin build-up in the liver due to fat accumulation in the liver cells, then possible yellowing of the eyes can occur. Yellowing of the eyes or jaundice can also signal advanced liver dysfunction

and impaired function. If you notice your eyes are yellowing, then it is imperative that you get a medical check-up and seek immediate expert advice from a liver specialist.

2. Dry, Irritated Eyes

A lack of moisture and dry and irritated eyes can often be a result of impaired liver functioning. The eye issue is also linked to inflammation and metabolic imbalance, which need to be addressed to improve your eye health. When your liver health is in decline, it can indirectly lead to liver health issues and the possible presence of metabolic conditions.

Tamannaah Bhatia Masters Elegant Daytime Dressing In A Flowing Zara Maxi Dress

Tamannaah Bhatia once again proved that understated elegance can make just as powerful a statement as high-octane glamour. Spotted at her jewellery store, the actor embraced a soft, feminine aesthetic in a pastel yellow ensemble that perfectly complemented her polished yet effortless style sensibility. With delicate accessories, flawless beauty choices and luxurious finishing touches, Tamannaah's latest appearance felt like the perfect blend of modern sophistication and old-school charm.

Tamannaah's pastel yellow dress brings effortless summer elegance

For the outing, Tamannaah chose a yellow tiered maxi dress from Zara. Though currently sold out, the breezy silhouette instantly stood out for its flattering fit and romantic detailing. Featuring a fitted bodice, delicate shoulder tie-up straps and dramatic layered ruffles towards the hemline, the dress beautifully balanced structure with movement.

The soft pastel hue added a fresh summer-ready touch, while the body-skimming silhouette enhanced the effortless femininity of the look. Tamannaah has consistently leaned towards

silhouettes that feel graceful without appearing overdone, and this outfit perfectly reflected that aesthetic. The flowy hemline added a hint of drama with every step, making the ensemble ideal for a daytime luxury appearance.

Luxury accessories elevated the monochrome look

Keeping the styling cohesive, Tamannaah paired the dress with Christian Louboutin's iconic Miss Z pumps worth \$1,045. The pointed nude heels subtly elongated the silhouette while adding a refined finish to the otherwise delicate ensemble.

The actor further accessorised the look with pieces from Tamannaah Fine Jewellery, allowing her diamonds and statement pieces to naturally become the focal point of the appearance. She kept her beauty look soft and radiant with glowing skin, nude lips and neatly tied-back hair that highlighted her jewellery choices. The minimal styling approach ensured that every element of the outfit felt balanced and intentional.

Inside Tamannaah Bhatia's growing jewellery venture

Beyond acting and fashion, Tamannaah has also been expanding her entrepreneurial footprint through Tamannaah Fine Jewellery. The brand reflects

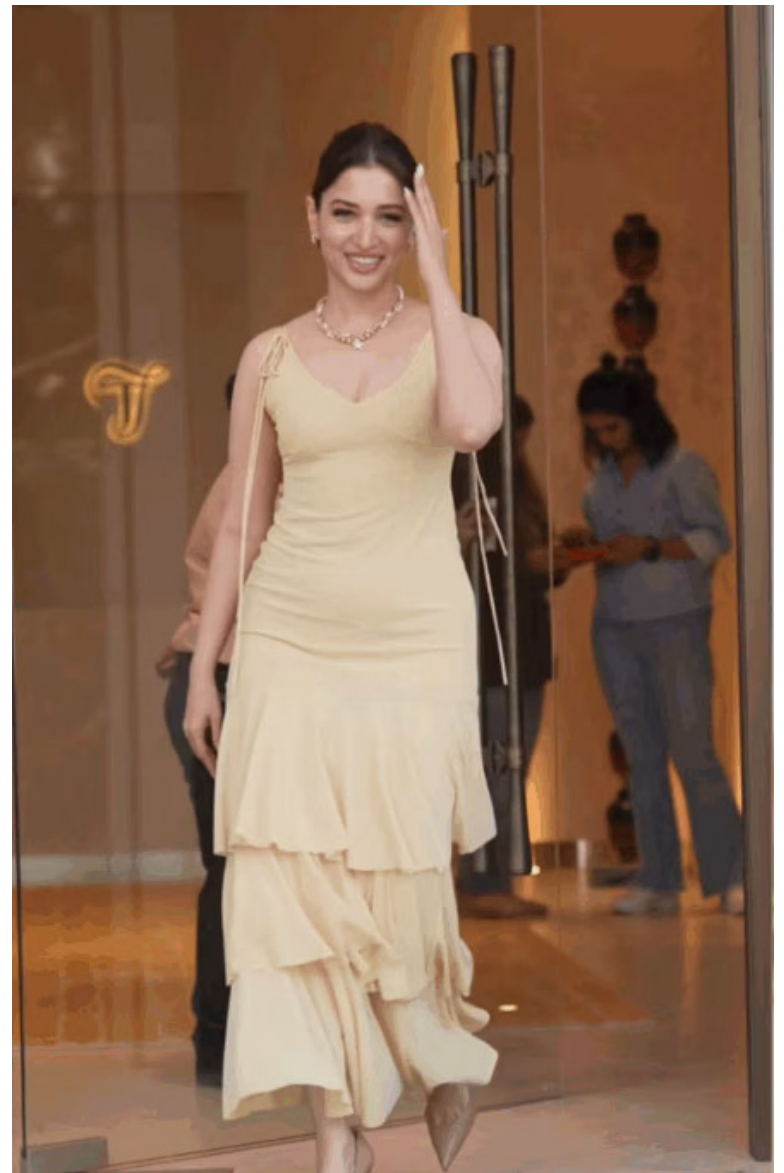
her personal love for timeless, wearable luxury pieces that blend contemporary aesthetics with classic craftsmanship. Over time, the actor has increasingly incorporated pieces from her label into public appearances, subtly using fashion moments to showcase her evolving jewellery identity.

Her latest appearance at the store highlighted not only her signature style but also her growing interest in building a luxury lifestyle brand beyond cinema. Fans have especially appreciated how the actor keeps her jewellery styling elegant and versatile instead of overly extravagant.

What's next for Tamannaah Bhatia?

On the work front, Tamannaah Bhatia has an exciting line-up of projects across Bollywood and South cinema. The actor is set to star in Vvan – Force of the Forest alongside Sidharth Malhotra, a folk thriller that has already generated buzz for its dark fantasy setting and visually immersive world.

Tamannaah will additionally be seen in Ajay Devgn's Ranger and the horror thriller Ragini 3, continuing her recent streak of experimenting with genres beyond mainstream commercial



entertainers.

Alongside films, Tamannaah also continues to strengthen her presence in fashion and luxury

spaces, making her one of the most versatile celebrity entrepreneurs in the industry today.

From Schiaparelli To Louboutin: Decoding Dua Lipa's Chic Wedding Look



When Dua Lipa stepped out of London's Old Marylebone Town Hall after marrying Callum Turner, she didn't choose a traditional wedding gown. Instead, the singer embraced high-fashion bridal tailoring, delivering one of the most talked-about celebrity wedding looks of the year.

For her intimate civil ceremony, Dua Lipa leaned into vintage glamour and fashion history. At the heart of the look was a custom ivory Schiaparelli Haute Couture skirt suit designed by creative director Daniel Roseberry. Rather than opting for a conventional wedding dress, Lipa chose sharply tailored separates that felt both timeless and fashion-forward. The outfit featured a structured ivory blazer with a sculpted waist, statement gold buttons, and a matching asymmetrical skirt.

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the ensemble was its apparent nod to one of fashion's most iconic brides: Bianca Jagger. Several fashion publications pointed out similarities between Lipa's wedding look and Bianca Jagger's legendary 1971 Saint

Laurent wedding outfit, which featured a tailored white skirt set paired with a dramatic hat.

No element of the look drew more attention than the oversized wide-brimmed hat created by renowned milliner Stephen Jones. The dramatic accessory elevated the entire ensemble from chic courthouse attire to full-fledged fashion moment.

Lipa completed the ensemble with pointed white pumps from Christian Louboutin. The shoes maintained the clean lines of the outfit while adding understated sophistication. Adding a touch of luxury sparkle, Lipa accessorised with Bulgari high jewellery pieces. A Serpenti diamond necklace along with dainty earrings aligned perfectly with the overall aesthetic. While the London ceremony officially marked the couple's marriage, reports suggest a larger multi-day celebration is still expected in Palermo, Sicily. If her courthouse ensemble is any indication, Dua Lipa's wedding wardrobe may end up becoming one of the defining celebrity bridal fashion stories of 2026.



Ananya Panday To Sanya Malhotra: Bollywood Divas Make Animal Prints Their Power Move

Bollywood's leading ladies are serving fierce fashion goals in animal prints and how! From movie promotions, beach vacations to red carpet styles, animal prints are finding its way back in 2026 fashion moments. The iconic leopard prints and the classic zebra prints are being reinvented to suit the contemporary silhouettes.

Take a look at how your favourite divas are celebrating the animal print in their choice of silhouettes.

Sharvari

For the promotions of her latest movie, Main Vaapas Aunga, Sharvari balanced a mix of sheer structure and fluid draping in her recent ensemble. The co-ord set from Ani Clothing features a zebra-style printed mesh bodysuit with the fluid drama of the embellished draped skirt. The abstract print

flows seamlessly into a structured drape enhanced by shimmery detailing. The reflective embellishments add dramatic shimmer to Sharvari's animal print ensemble.

Sanya Malhotra

Sanya Malhotra turns up the heat in a photoshoot wearing a Dolce & Gabbana bikini top paired with high waist bikini bottoms. The design features the iconic leopard print that adds a wild side to Sanya's bold look. Sanya paired the swimwear style with a cropped jacket with leopard print detailing in the lining.

Ananya Panday

Ananya Panday looked fierce and fabulous in the emblematic Chanel tweed jacket and skirt with the leopard motif handwoven by the Maison d'art Lesage, inspired by

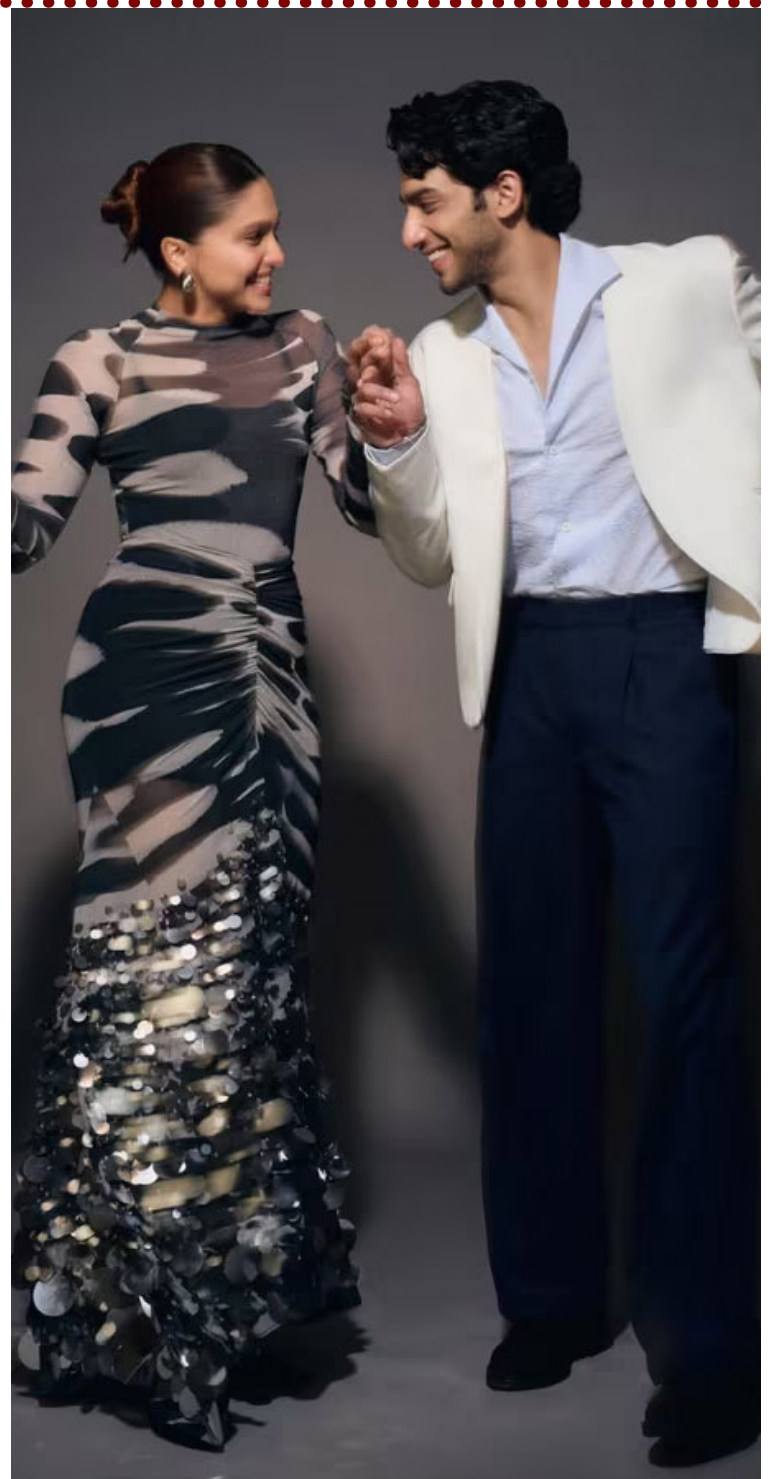
Gabrielle Chanel. Bold yet timeless, the leopard print added a regal touch to Ananya's look. While the look as a whole holds attention, as separates they can definitely do wonders to your style.

Mouni Roy

Serving summer beach vibes in style, Mouni Roy embraces the leopard print in her swimwear. While the bikini set is the perfect look if you adore animal prints, Mouni upped her beach look by styling it with a matching sarong.

Style it Up

Animal prints have been styled on celebrities such as Shilpa Shetty Kundra, Kareena Kapoor Khan, among others. A captivating print that needs a lot of attention when styled.



Ghis Ghis Ghis Goes Viral as Akshay Kumar Unleashes His Craziest Comic Avatar in Welcome to The Jungle

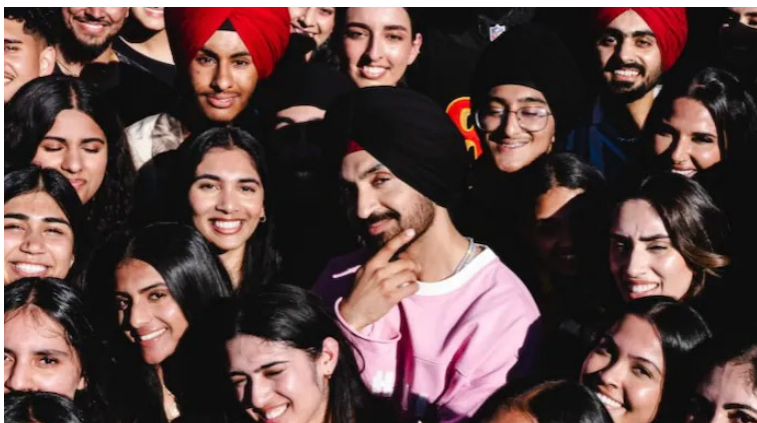
If you were to peek into Akshay Kumar's craziest transformation yet, the actor is once again proving why he remains one of Hindi cinema's most fearless entertainers. With the new track Ghis Ghis, from Welcome To The Jungle, Akshay's character as a Bhojpuri actor is evident.

The film brings together a formidable ensemble including Akshay Kumar, Suniel Shetty, Disha Patani, Jacqueline Fernandez, Arshad Warsi, Jackie Shroff, Paresh Rawal, Raveena Tandon, Lara Dutta, Farida Jalal, Johny Lever, Shreyas Talpade, Tusshar Kapoor, Rajpal Yadav, Krushna Abhishek, Kiku Sharda, Daler Mehndi, Aftab Shivdasani, Mukesh Tiwari, Yashpal Sharma, Kiran Kumar, Zakir Hussain,



Vindu Dara Singh, Urvashi Rautela, Hemant Pandey, Brijendra Kala, Feroze Khan (Arjun), Late Pankaj Dheer ji, Puneet Issar, Sudesh Berry, Jeetu Verma, Vrihi Kodvara, Adityaa Singgh, and Bhagya Bhanushali. An Ahmed Khan entertainer, Welcome To The Jungle is presented by A.A. Nadiadwala, Cape of Good Films and Star Studio18 in association with Seeta Films and Rakesh Dang. The film is a Base Industries Group Production, produced by Rakesh Dang and Vedant Vikaas Baali. Produced by Firoz A. Nadiadwallah, Welcome To The Jungle gears up for a theatrical storm on June 26, 2026, releasing in cinemas internationally through Marudhar Entertainment and FunAsia Films.

Diljit Dosanjh's Aroma song leaves bitter aftertaste with use of transgender slur



Singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh is facing criticism over a lyric in his song Aroma. Listeners have accused the track of casually using the term 'chakka' - widely considered a slur for transgender and gender-nonconforming people, while framing it in contrast to an ideal of 'real' masculinity. The debate gained traction on June 1, the start of Pride Month, as social media users questioned the message conveyed by the line and argued that it reinforces harmful stereotypes about gender and masculinity. Aroma, a collaboration between Diljit, Raj Ranjodh and music producer Tru-Skool, was released on April 23. The verse at the centre of the controversy reads: "Oh mardaan di gall hundi yakkyaan di nai... Jurrataan di talk hundi chakkyaan di nai." According to translations shared by listeners on social media, the lines

roughly mean: "This is the talk of men, not weaklings. This is

the talk of courage, not of chhakke (cowardice)." Users have said the lyric uses a term widely regarded as derogatory and appears to equate courage and masculinity while belittling gender-nonconforming identities.

A month after the song's release, several listeners said they had been hearing the track without understanding the meaning of the lyrics. They said they only realised what the verse appeared to mean after translations began

circulating online.

Actor Manish Poonam was among those who criticised the song. In an Instagram Story, he wrote, "Courage and men don't go along each other. Hoping this move would make you more of a man. Shame."

Another Instagram user wrote, "He is working in the entertainment industry, which is built, shaped and sustained by countless queer people. I am so confused, why did nobody question it before its release. Did

no one stop to think about the message it sends. And I hope there is an explanation to this ." Another post said, "Amazing, like in a country where people are just fighting to get their mere share of equality, their huge figures like this use words casually without thinking about anyone's sentiments. We are evolving day by day. Happy Pride Month." The discussion around Aroma continued on social media as users highlighted the reach and influence of major artists.

Badshah's Chandigarh nightclub sealed over building violations

The Chandigarh Administration on Tuesday sealed singer-rapper Badshah's nightclub, SAGO By Badshah, located in Sector 26, over multiple alleged violations of building norms and unauthorised constructions.

The action was carried out by the Enforcement Wing of the Chandigarh Administration as part of its ongoing drive against establishments flouting regulations in the city's popular Sector 26 nightlife hub.

According to officials from the Estate Office, large-scale unauthorised constructions were detected on the ground and second floors of the

premises. These included the creation of cabins and partitions, construction of toilets and kitchens, a cold storage area, covering open courtyards with MS structures and fibre sheets, installation of tin sheds and storage areas, alterations to the sanctioned building plan and changes to the rear elevation of the building. Officials said a show-cause notice had been issued to the

establishment on April 25, 2024, directing it to explain the alleged violations and remove or

regularise the unauthorised structures. However, despite repeated notices, the violations were neither rectified nor



administration to proceed with sealing the premises.

Authorities stated that inspections and scrutiny of the property revealed several compliance-related deficiencies, leading to the enforcement action. The move comes amid a broader crackdown on nightlife establishments in Sector 26. In recent weeks, the Chandigarh Administration has sealed two to three other clubs for similar violations, while notices have also been served to several more establishments. Officials indicated that further action could follow depending on the outcome of ongoing inspections.

Euphoria 3 finale: Not just Rue, the series failed all its women

For seven years, Euphoria sold itself as a story about young women. It gave us Rue's heartbreak, Cassie's insecurities, Jules' longing, Lexi's observations and Maddy's hard-earned self-worth. It was praised for centring female experiences and criticised for packaging them as spectacle. And now that the glitter has settled on one of television's most divisive dramas, its biggest legacy may not be its shocking twists or viral moments, but an uncomfortable question: did Euphoria ever truly understand the women it was portraying?

What exactly was Euphoria trying to say about women? At its best, the HBO series was a sharp portrait of adolescence. It followed Rue Bennett (Zendaya), a teenager battling addiction, alongside equally complicated young women—Cassie Howard (Sydney Sweeney), Maddy Perez (Alexa Demie), Jules Vaughn (Hunter Schafer) and Lexi Howard (Maude Apatow), all trying to make sense of themselves in a world obsessed with defining them.

The show's early success came from rejecting easy labels. These women were contradictory, messy and deeply human. Which is why the final season feels so divisive. For a series built on complexity, many of its women ended up feeling strangely one-dimensional.

Rue: The protagonist who became a tragedy

No character benefited more from Euphoria's emotional honesty than Rue. What made Rue extraordinary was never her



addiction. It was her humanity. She was observant, funny, cruel, intelligent and painfully vulnerable. In the early seasons, addiction informed her story. By the end, it increasingly became her story. (Cue: her tragic end) The complexity remains largely because

Zendaya's performance refuses to let Rue become a cliché. Yet there is an undeniable narrowing of possibilities. The girl who once felt infinite gradually becomes defined by survival, and somewhere Levinson found a way to link her arc with sex workers along with her tangible history with drugs. A lethal combination if you ask, and yet everything is just surface level. While it is understandable why Levinson decided to give Rue the ending that he did, it is also hard to ignore how Rue was seen as a beacon of hope for those dealing with addiction. Also, Zendaya had mentioned during promotions of Season 2 that she hopes the character gets a redemption arc. There is no

doubt that Rue remains the heart of Euphoria. But she also becomes its tragedy.

Cassie: When a character becomes a spectacle

If Rue is the emotional centre, Cassie Howard is Euphoria's greatest contradiction. Cassie began as one of Levinson's most perceptive creations: a young woman who mistook desire for love and attention for validation. It was a painfully accurate portrayal of female insecurity. Which is why her Season 3 trajectory feels so revealing. Her rise as an online adult-content creator makes narrative sense. If desirability has always been her currency, monetising it becomes the logical next step.

The idea is fascinating. The execution is where the discourse begins. Throughout the season, Cassie is repeatedly framed through the lens of consumption, primarily shot through male gaze. Even when she realises how lucrative this business is, the portrayal is designed to titillate men. She never stops seeing herself from a male gaze and that was perhaps the most disturbing part of Cassie in Season 3. 100x zoom on her topless front, wearing baby doll outfits, even posing as a dog, all of these only

for her to never really own herself. One understands the point. Cassie is being objectified. The question, however, is whether the show is critiquing that objectification or participating in it. The most frustrating part is that Cassie once felt like so much more. By the end, she increasingly resembles a metaphor for desirability rather than a fully realised person. And metaphors are rarely as interesting as people.

Maddy: The woman who almost escaped



Which brings us to Maddy Perez. The internet's favourite "boss bitch." What makes Maddy compelling isn't her confidence. It's her self-awareness. Unlike Cassie, she eventually learns that being desired and being valued are not the same thing. She understands beauty and power but refuses to build her identity around either. In a series filled with women searching for themselves, Maddy is one of the few who comes close to finding herself, even if the journey remains unfinished.

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The Euphoria paradox

The first two seasons, for all their excesses, felt genuinely curious about young women navigating identity, sexuality and trauma. By the final season, that curiosity often gave way to spectacle.

What began as an exploration of womanhood increasingly felt like an exercise in watching it. The visual language remained obsessed with bodies, suffering and shock value, often at the expense of the interior lives that once made these characters

compelling. Understanding women requires more than observing them. It requires allowing them complexity beyond their pain, desirability and symbolism. And that may be Euphoria's enduring paradox. For all its brilliance, the show created unforgettable women. Yet by the end, it often seemed more fascinated by watching them unravel than imagining who they could become.

As the final credits roll, one question lingers: Was Euphoria celebrating female sexuality, or simply packaging it for consumption?

