



## BANGLADESH TELLS PAKISTAN, SAY SORRY

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ New Delhi/Dhaka

Bangladesh has demanded a formal public apology for the "atrocities" committed by Pakistan during the 1971 Liberation War and raised pending financial claims during the first Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) meeting in 15 years. Bangladesh has also sought \$4.52 billion from Pakistan as part of its share of pre-1971 assets. After the 1971 War, East Pakistan split from West Pakistan to form an independent Bangladesh.

This came up at FOC meeting between Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Jashim Uddin and visiting Pakistani counterpart Amna Baloch, ahead of Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar's visit to Dhaka on April 27 and 28.

Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch led the Pakistani delegation while Foreign Secretary Md Jashim Uddin represented Bangladesh. Bangladesh and Pakistan are trying to rebuild their strategic ties after one-and-a-half decades to remain engaged on pending issues.

"We have raised the historically unresolved issues with Pakistan. These issues need to be resolved to establish a solid foundation for our bilateral relations," Md Jashim Uddin told reporters after the meeting. He said the issues included "the repatriation of stranded Pakistanis, equitable distribution of undivided assets, transfer of foreign aid funds sent for the victims of the 1970 cyclone, and a formal public apology for the genocide committed by the then Pakistani military in 1971."

"We said this is the right time to settle the historical unsettled issues," Md Jashim Uddin said, adding these issues needed to be resolved for having a "solid foundation of our relations" for mutual benefits and interests.

Asked what was the Pakistani side's response to the call, Uddin said they would

like to "remain engaged" with a positive outlook to discuss the unsettled issue in future.

After the talks at the State Guesthouse in Padma, Baloch called on Bangladesh Interim Government Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus and Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain separately.

According to the Foreign Secretary, Dhaka also asked Pakistan to pay up the unpaid \$200 million foreign donation for victims in the then East Pakistan after the 1970's cyclone.

Asked if the money devaluation over the decades was taken into consideration in quoting the amounts, the officer said the issue was tabled during the FOC and its details are expected to come up during the subsequent talks.

**During the first Foreign Office Consultations meeting held in 15 years, Bangladesh has demanded \$4.52 billion from Pakistan as part of its share of pre-1971 assets**

The Foreign Secretary said the FOC fixed April 27 and 28 for Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar's planned Bangladesh visit. The talks come amid a thaw between the two countries after the ouster of Sheikh Hasina in August last year.

The Yunus-led government appears to be playing down the role of Hasina's father Mujibur Rehman in Bangladesh liberation in 1971. The Indian Army took over 90,000 Pakistan soldiers as Prisoners of War.

The Pakistani Army's crackdown on the Bengali population of East Pakistan in March 1971 has been a sore point between the two nations since the formation of Bangladesh. During the Pakistani Army's 'Operation Searchlight', around 30 lakh Bengalis were believed to have been killed, and scores of women raped.

The two sides also discussed the launch of direct flights between Bangladesh and Pakistan. Bangladesh also raised the issue of the repatriation of more than 3 lakh Pakistanis stranded and living in relief camps in Bangladesh.

Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch also met Muhammad Yunus and Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain separately on Thursday.

**India's rebuke to Dhaka: Focus on your own minorities**

India on Friday rejected remarks by Bangladeshi officials on violence in West Bengal and asked Dhaka to focus on protecting the rights of its minorities instead of indulging in "virtue signalling".

"We reject the remarks made by the Bangladesh side with regard to the incidents in West Bengal," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. "This is a barely disguised and disingenuous attempt to draw a parallel with India's concerns over the ongoing persecution of minorities in Bangladesh where the criminal perpetrators of such acts continue to roam free," he said.

Jaiswal was responding to media queries regarding comments made by Bangladeshi officials on the developments in West Bengal. "Instead of making unwarranted comments and indulging in virtue signalling, Bangladesh would do better to focus on protecting the rights of its own minorities," he said.

The sharp reaction came after Shafiqul Alam, the Press Secretary to Bangladesh Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, on Thursday called on New Delhi and the West Bengal government to take "all steps to fully protect the minority Muslim population". "We condemn attacks on Muslims that caused loss of lives and properties," he had said. "We urge the Governments of India and West Bengal to take all steps to fully protect the minority Muslim population," Alam had added.

Detailed Story on >> P4

## Vice President of India attacked by Opposition

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ New Delhi

A day after Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar's remarks on the higher judiciary, Opposition parties severely criticised his stand whereas the ruling BJP rallied behind the Rajya Sabha Presiding Officer while accusing the Opposition of "political hypocrisy".

Leaders of the Congress, TMC, DMK, Shiv Sena (UBT), RJD and several legal experts and advocates voiced concern and accused Dhankhar of "undermining Supreme Court's authority that potentially bordered on judicial contempt".

BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said there was no need to learn 'constitutional propriety' from a Party that says it won't implement a law passed by Parliament. "They mocked the Vice President's posture, protect rioters in the name of votebank politics, and find no time to visit Hindu victims in Bengal," the BJP said.

Addressing Rajya Sabha interns on April 17, Dhankhar had described Article 142 - which allows the Supreme Court to ensure "complete justice" - as "a nuclear missile against democratic forces" that is available to the judiciary round the clock. He also raised concerns about the Court mandating timelines for President of India's assent to State Bills and the judicial process surrounding absence of an FIR against the then Delhi High Court Judge from whose official residence here a stash of burnt currency notes was found.

Dhankhar's reaction vis-a-vis the higher judiciary came days after the Supreme Court fixed timeline for the President to grant assent to the State Bills reserved for her consideration by a Governor of a State.

Congress Rajya Sabha MP Randeep Singh Surjewala cited the Supreme Court's April 8 judgment that entails a three-month deadline for the President to act



on Bills sent by Governors. "Only the Constitution is supreme in our democracy. No authority, including the Vice President, can override constitutional checks and balances," Surjewala said.

TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee condemned the Vice President's "objectionable" tone that he termed a sign of "repeated disregard for constitutional institutions". He emphasised that as a high-ranking constitutional figure, Dhankhar should uphold and not question the authority of the higher judiciary.

DMK leader Tiruchi Siva labelled the comments "unethical," stressing that no one - regardless of office he or she holds - has the right to indefinitely stall legislative processes under the guise of constitutional power.

Siva said, "Under the (doctrine of) separation of powers as per the Constitution, the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary have distinct powers."

Senior Advocate and Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal also joined the debate, questioning Dhankhar's objection to Article 142 of the Constitution. "The

Constitution empowers the Supreme Court to deliver complete justice. It is not about curtailing the powers of the President; it is about ensuring justice in its truest sense," he said.

Sibal asserted that the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chairman should remain equidistant from the Opposition and the ruling party, and cannot be the "spokesperson of any party". "Everyone knows that the Lok Sabha Speaker's chair is in between. He or she is the Speaker of the House, not the speaker of one Party. They also don't vote - they only vote when there is a tie. The same is the case with the Upper House. You are equidistant from the Opposition and the ruling Party," Sibal said at a press conference.

Sibal also recalled the 1975 Supreme Court judgment that invalidated then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's election. "People would remember that when the Supreme Court's decision came on Indira Gandhi's election, only one judge - Justice Krishna Iyer - gave the decision," he said.

## The ByStander



## Crackdown on illegal meat shops and dhabas in residential areas of Delhi

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa on Friday ordered a crackdown on illegal meat shops and dhabas operating in residential areas of the national capital, directing officials to demolish such establishments and disconnect their water and power supplies.

During an inspection in West Delhi's Rajouri Garden Assembly constituency, Sirsa highlighted widespread civic violations and pollution concerns, stressing that unauthorised commercial activities in residential localities will not be tolerated.

During the inspection, the Minister observed that illegal and unlicensed raw meat shops, dhabas, polluting tandoors, illegal denim factories and dyeing units,

and other polluting industrial units operating in residential areas are significant contributors to pollution.

He said thousands of illegal meat shops and dhabas are operational in residential areas, making life difficult for the city residents. These pose difficulties in the movement of residents.

"In a single lane, there are over 40-50 illegal dhabas and meat shops running without permission. These pose a serious threat to public health and cause inconvenience to residents," said Sirsa, asserting that no illegal establishment will be spared.

Sirsa asked officials to take stern action, stating, "Illegal activities will not be tolerated." Officials were advised to close down the illegal raw meat shops, dhabas and illegal polluting establishments.

"Today, I have instructed the District Commissioner and the Additional Commissioner to take action and demolish all these illegal dhabas. They will be sealed, and their water and electricity connections cut," he said.

Sirsa said strict steps be taken to ensure that such unlawful activities are completely stopped across the national capital. The Minister observed that "meat shops must operate with valid licences in designated areas and maintain hygienic standards".

Sirsa emphasised that meat shops must be licensed, hygienic and confined to designated commercial zones. "Polluting and illegal establishments cannot function within residential colonies. This endangers public health and the wellbeing of area people," he added.

## Seelampur murder probe: 'Lady don' in Delhi Police crosshairs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi Police is probing the role of a woman alias 'Lady Don', who worked as a bouncer for jailed gangster Hashim Baba's wife, after the fatal stabbing of a 17-year-old youngster in north-east Delhi's Seelampur area. There is a heavy police presence in the narrow lanes of Seelampur as the murder sparked protests in the area. Even as the police is investigating the crime, the name of a 'Lady Don' has now cropped up in the case.

The fatal stabbing of the 17-year-old in north-east Delhi's Seelampur also triggered a war of words between the ruling BJP and opposition AAP on Friday. Both

blamed each other for the "deteriorating law and order" in the city. The youngster was stabbed on Thursday at J Block in New Seelampur. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said the youngster's family will get justice. "I have talked to the Commissioner of Police. The police is making all efforts and I hope the accused will be arrested soon. It will be ensured that the bereaved family gets justice," she said.

Police have identified two suspects - Sahil and Rehan - after scanning CCTV footage, Joint Commissioner of Police (Eastern Range), Pushpendra Kumar, said.

The deceased youth's family, meanwhile, claimed that Zikra, a local woman known as 'Lady Don' in the area was pre-

sent when Kunal was killed, the officer said. Police have since detained Zikra for questioning, sources said, though she has not been formally arrested.

"We have identified the accused who will be nabbed soon. Ten teams have been formed to crack the case, and they are looking at all possible angles. We have detained a few people for questioning. The case will be solved soon," Kumar said.

Zikra, who goes by the name 'Lady Don' on Instagram, once worked for a gangster's wife but now leads her own gang of around 10 to 15 young men. She often posts videos brandishing weapons on her social media platform. Last month, she posted a video on the social media, wherein she was

allegedly flaunting a country-made pistol. She has more than 15,000 followers on Instagram. Zikra worked as a bouncer for jailed gangster Hashim Baba's wife Zoya, before the latter's arrest by Delhi Police in a drugs case. She was reportedly living with Zoya before the latter was jailed. It is believed that Zikra was trying to form her own gang after Zoya's arrest, sources said.

According to locals, she is frequently seen roaming the area brandishing a pistol and filming reels for the social media. She was also seen with a gun during Holi celebrations. The videos, however, led to a First Information Report (FIR) under the Arms Act against her and a brief jail term.

## Wanted Punjab terrorist held in US, had links with ISI, BKI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York/Chandigarh

Gangster-turned-terrorist Harpreet Singh alias Happy Passia, wanted in connection with multiple terror attacks across Punjab and an alleged collaborator of Pakistan's ISI and Khalistani group BKI, has been arrested in the US, officials said Friday.

Passia alias Jora, who had illegally entered the US, was arrested by the FBI and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Enforcement and Removal Operations in Sacramento, the US federal law enforcement agency said. "Today, Harpreet Singh, an alleged terrorist responsible for terror attacks in Punjab, India, was arrested by the #FBI & #ERO in Sacramento. Linked to two international terrorist groups, he entered the US illegally and used burner phones to evade capture," FBI Sacramento said in a statement on X.

Agents from the FBI's Legal Attache office in New Delhi informed Sacramento that Passia was wanted in connection with multiple terror attacks across Punjab, FBI Sacramento said. "He had been evading capture by using untraceable burner phones and encrypted applications. This case reinforces the importance of international cooperation in apprehending those who threaten global security," it said.

Official sources in Punjab said Passia is wanted for orchestrating 16 terror attacks, including 14 grenade strikes in the State and is also suspected to have collaborated with Khalistani terrorist group Babbar Khalsa International (BKI).

In January, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) had announced a cash



Harpreet Singh, an alleged gangster turned terrorist, after his arrest by the FBI and ERO, in Sacramento, California, USA

reward of ₹5 lakh on Passia in connection with a hand-grenade attack on a house in Chandigarh in September last year. Passia and Pakistan-based designated BKI terrorist Harwinder Singh Sandhu alias Rinda were among the four named in a charge sheet in the case by the NIA. Punjab Police investigation had allegedly found that Passia provided the accused with explosives, weapons and logistical support through his local associates. The September 2024 attack was intended to target a retired Punjab Police officer who the assailants believed was an occupant of the house in Sector 10, Chandigarh.

A total of 33 FIRs have been registered at different police stations and 10 Lookout Circulars have been issued against Passia, according to a dossier prepared by Punjab Police. Hailing from village Pashia in Amritsar district, Passia had left for Dubai in April 2018 and returned to India in February 2019.

## Manuscripts of Bhagavad Gita, Natyashastra added to UNESCO register

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Manuscripts of Bhagavad Gita and Bharat Muni's Natyashastra are among 74 new documentary heritage collections that have been added to the UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a social media post on Friday, described the inscriptions as "a proud moment for every Indian across the world".

"The inclusion of the Gita and Natyashastra in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register is a global recognition of our timeless wisdom and rich culture. The Gita and Natyashastra have nurtured the (human) civilisation and consciousness for centuries. Their insights continue to inspire the world," he said. Entries on scientific revolution, women's

contribution to history and major milestones of multilateralism from 72 countries and four international organisations are included in the Register, according to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

The Register consists of books, manuscripts, maps, photographs, sound or video recordings as a documentary heritage of humanity. The development comes on World Heritage Day on April 18.

Preserved at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute and codified around the 2nd century BC, the Natyashastra is "an epitome of Natyaveda, an oral body of knowledge of performing art containing 36,000 verses known as the Gandharvaveda," the UNESCO said in its citation list about the new inscriptions. Bharat Muni makes a "groundbreaking statement in Natyashastra, asserting that

'no meaning can blossom forth without rasa', a profound contribution to world literature," it said.

**The inclusion of the Gita and Natyashastra in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register is a global recognition of our timeless wisdom and rich culture**

- NARENDRA MODI, PRIME MINISTER

The Natyashastra embodies a comprehensive set of rules that define natya (drama), abhinaya (performance), rasa (aesthetic experience), bhava (emotion), sangita (music), among others, thus articulating the character of Indian theatre, poetics, aesthetics, dance and music. The Manuscript collection of Bhagavad

Gita: Ancient samgraha grantha of Indian thought with worldwide readership and influence also now finds a place in the coveted UNESCO register.

"The Bhagavadgita, containing 700 verses in 18 Chapters, is embedded within the Bhismaparva of the epic Mahabharata. It takes the form of a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna with armies lined up for the great war intended to free Arjuna of dejection (visada)," the citation read.

Bhagavad Gita is a central text in the continuous, cumulative ancient intellectual Indian tradition, synthesising various thought movements such as Vedic, Buddhist, Jain and Carvaka, it said.

"Due to its philosophical breadth and depth, the Bhagavad Gita has been read for centuries across the globe and translated into many languages," the UNESCO cita-

tion added. Union Home Minister Amit Shah hailed the development, and said that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bharat has made incessant efforts to enshrine its cultural wisdom at the centre of global welfare. Shah also said that the world treasures Bharat's wisdom.

"Congratulations to every Indian on the grand occasion of the Gita and Natyashastra getting included in the UNESCO Register," he said in a social media post.

The Home Minister said the scriptures depict the ancient wisdom of Bharat that has showed light to humanity to make the world better and lives more beautiful since time immemorial.

"Under the leadership of PM Shri @narendramodi Ji, Bharat has made incessant efforts to enshrine our cultural wisdom at the centre of global welfare. This is a great

recognition of these efforts," he said. Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat also took to the social media, saying this was a "historic moment for Bharat's civilisational heritage." This global honour celebrates India's "eternal wisdom and artistic genius," the Minister said.

"These timeless works are more than literary treasures - they are philosophical and aesthetic foundations that have shaped Bharat's worldview and the way we think, feel, live, and express. With this, we now have 14 inscriptions from our country on this international register," he posted and shared some images of the two texts.

On Thursday, UNESCO added 74 new documentary heritage collections to its Memory of the World Register, bringing the total number of inscribed collections to 570, the world body said.







Notice: It is informed to the general public that Sharanjeet Singh S/o Sh. Avtar Singh S/o...

Public Notice: This is to inform that Sh. Sukhdev Singh alias Sh. Prabhakar Singh...

Public Notice: No.HH/EM/PLK/2025/1352 DATE: 16.04.2025 Sh. Manoj Kumar...

Public Notice: I, Ankit Sharma S/o Akshay Sharma R/o H. No. 64, Goidindgah Farm...

Public Notice: I, Satinder Kaur W/o Sh. Amarjeet Singh D/o Sh. Phuman Singh Alias PS Rai...

Public Notice: I, Manoj Kumar S/o Ram Prakash is owner in respect of property...

Public Notice: The General Public is hereby informed that the last page of...

Court Notice: Criminal Courts, Ludhiana IN THE COURT OF Dr. Jasveer Singh...

JM FINANCIAL ASSET RECONSTRUCTION COMPANY LIMITED Corporate Identity Number: U67190MH2007PLC74287

Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002...

Table with columns: Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s), Demand Notice Date and Amount with NPA Date, Description of secured asset (Immovable property)

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to JM as aforesaid, JM shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act and the applicable Rules...

Date: 19-04-2025 Place: Haryana JM Financial Asset Reconstruction Company Limited

नगर निगम सूचना: सर्वसम्मान को सुनिश्चित करने हेतु नगर निगम, रोहताक को...

सर्वसम्मान को सुनिश्चित करने हेतु नगर निगम, रोहताक को कर श्रावण के सम्बन्धित कर तिथि में नई प्रगति अर्द्धित...

PUBLIC NOTICE: This notice is issued as per instruction given by HfDC Bank Ltd...

It is notified that the Election of Governing body of Indraprastha Education College, Rohtak for the post of President-1, Vice President-1...

PUBLIC NOTICE: That Mr. Pawan Kumar S/o Pritu Ram S/o Karma R/o Mohalla Gujran...

That Mr. Pawan Kumar S/o Pritu Ram S/o Karma R/o Mohalla Gujran, P.O. Nurmahal, Tehsil Nakodar...

सर्वसम्मान सूचना: सर्वसम्मान को सुनिश्चित करने हेतु नगर निगम, रोहताक को...

सर्वसम्मान को सुनिश्चित करने हेतु नगर निगम, रोहताक को कर श्रावण के सम्बन्धित कर तिथि में नई प्रगति अर्द्धित...

Court Notice: Criminal Courts, Ludhiana IN THE COURT OF Dr. Jasveer Singh...

Next Date, Purpose of case, Orders and Judgments as well as other case information is available on http://courts.gov.in

STATE BANK OF INDIA

NOTICE U/S 13 (2) OF THE SECURITIZATION & RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS & ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 HERE AFTER CALLED "ACT"

A notice is hereby given that the following Borrowers(Borrower/Co-Borrower) have defaulted in the repayment of Principal and Interest of the Loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non Performing Assets (NPA)...

Table with columns: Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s), Details of the Movable/Immovable Properties, Date of NPA, Date of Demand Notice, Liability Outstanding

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above Borrower(s) are hereby called upon to make payment of amount within 60 days from the date of publication of this notice...

DATE: 19.04.2025 PLACE: BATHINDA AUTHORIZED OFFICER

Karnataka Bank Ltd.

Regional Office: Delhi Plot No 8-B first floor Rajendra Park Pusa Road New Delhi - 110060.

GOLD AUCTION FOR MORTGAGES AT BANK: Whereas, the authorized officer of BANK issued sale notice(s) calling upon the borrower to clear the dues in gold loan availed by him...

Table with columns: Sl. No, Borrower - LAN and Gross Weight, Date of EMD, EMD amount

Please contact E-Procurement Technologies Limited (Auction Tiger) on 9099013705, 6351896640 or gold@auctiontiger.net for more information.

FEDERAL BANK

YOUR PERFECT BANKING PARTNER The Federal Bank Ltd., LCDR Chandigarh Division.

Where as the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Federal Bank Ltd. under the Securitisation & Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002...

POSSESSION NOTICE

The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act...

The borrower in particular and public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Federal Bank Ltd.

Description of the Immovable Property: All the piece and parcel of plot admeasuring 9 marlas 3 Sarsah situated with building existing and all other improvements thereon comprised out of Khata No. 430/460, Kharsa No. 40/24/12 (1-1), Survey No. 57049474 situated at Village, Chahal, Hadbast No. 494, Tehsil and District Hoshiarpur Punjab State, bounded on East: Gautam Kaur, West: Nishan Singh, North: Reliance Factory and South: Road.

Authorized Officer under SARFAESI Act (The Federal Bank Ltd)

नगर निगम सूचना

सर्वसम्मान को सुनिश्चित करने हेतु नगर निगम, रोहताक को कर श्रावण के सम्बन्धित कर तिथि में नई प्रगति अर्द्धित...

PUBLIC NOTICE

Through this information every common & special person is informed that Sh. Shyam Sunder S/o Sh. Amresh Chander, Rashabh Gupta Sh. Shyam Sunder & Anvaya Deed 1620 dated 20.07.2015...

नगर निगम सूचना

सर्वसम्मान को सुनिश्चित करने हेतु नगर निगम, रोहताक को कर श्रावण के सम्बन्धित कर तिथि में नई प्रगति अर्द्धित...

PUBLIC NOTICE

This notice is issued as per instruction given by HfDC Bank Ltd one customer Smt. Sheela Raju W/o Sh. Sant Kumar and Smt. Shikha Aggarwal W/o Sh. Deepak Aggarwal...

नगर निगम सूचना

सर्वसम्मान को सुनिश्चित करने हेतु नगर निगम, रोहताक को कर श्रावण के सम्बन्धित कर तिथि में नई प्रगति अर्द्धित...

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that the last page of the original Sale Deed No. 9134 dated 04-03-2009 registered with Sub Registrar, Karnal...

नगर निगम सूचना

सर्वसम्मान को सुनिश्चित करने हेतु नगर निगम, रोहताक को कर श्रावण के सम्बन्धित कर तिथि में नई प्रगति अर्द्धित...

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Court Notice

Criminal Courts, Ludhiana IN THE COURT OF Dr. Jasveer Singh Judicial Magistrate - 1st Class, Ludhiana

Next Date, Purpose of case, Orders and Judgments as well as other case information is available on http://courts.gov.in

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Court Notice

Criminal Courts, Ludhiana IN THE COURT OF Dr. Jasveer Singh Judicial Magistrate - 1st Class, Ludhiana

Editor's TAKE

## Searing Summer, Soaking Monsoon

IMD forecasts an above-average monsoon — a silver lining with a dark cloud: floods

As India braces for a searing summer, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has offered a glimmer of hope: this year's south-west monsoon is expected to bring above-normal rainfall, with the country likely to receive 105 per cent of the long-period average. While this forecast may bring a sigh of relief to the agricultural sector and rural economy, it also comes with a note of caution — because with abundant rain often comes devastating floods.

For a country where nearly 60 per cent of agriculture is rain-fed, the monsoon is nothing short of a lifeline. A good monsoon translates to better crop yields, improved groundwater recharge, replenished reservoirs, and stable food prices. It plays a critical role in the livelihoods of millions, especially in rural India, and drives growth in allied sectors like food processing, transportation, and retail. This year's monsoon is predicted to benefit regions like Marathwada and parts of Telangana — areas that have historically suffered from water scarcity. States like Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh are also expected to receive normal to above-normal rainfall, offering much-needed respite for farmers and boosting kharif crop prospects.

Yet, the same monsoon that nourishes our farms can wreak havoc on our homes and cities. Floods are a recurring nightmare, leading to massive loss of life, destruction of infrastructure, and displacement of communities. Year after year, cities like Mumbai, Chennai, Patna, and Guwahati come to a standstill due to waterlogging and poor urban drainage systems. Rural regions are not spared either. Unregulated riverbanks, deforestation, and encroachments worsen the impact of heavy rainfall. Low-lying districts near rivers often face catastrophic flash floods and landslides.

As the IMD also warns of below-normal rainfall in parts of Tamil Nadu and the Northeast, the risk of regional imbalances — where some areas drown while others dry — becomes very real. It is time we stopped treating floods as a surprise and started seeing them as an annual certainty.

Projects like river interlinking can redistribute excess water from flood-prone regions to drought-hit areas. While controversial and logistically complex, such initiatives, if executed sustainably, could balance water distribution across states. Constructing more check dams, especially in vulnerable areas, and upgrading existing ones with modern sensors can help manage water flow during peak rainfall. However, dams should be operated scientifically, with real-time data guiding water release schedules.

IMD's forecasting has improved significantly, but local authorities must act promptly on early warnings. Investments in community awareness and disaster response training can save countless lives. Besides, natural buffers like forests and wetlands absorb excess rainwater and reduce runoff. Reviving these ecosystems will go a long way in reducing the impact of flash floods. Our cities need a radical revamp of their drainage systems.

Rainwater harvesting should be made mandatory in urban planning, and old stormwater drains must be widened, cleared, and maintained regularly. A lot of talk has gone down the drain to make smart cities. It is time that those cities are made functional at least. Providing efficient drainage systems is not rocket science. If Harappan people could do it, we can do it too.

The monsoon, India's annual gamble with nature, holds immense power, both to nurture and to destroy. As IMD's forecast signals a wet season ahead, it's time to plan not just for reaping its bounty but for mitigating its fury. We cannot stop the rain, but we can — and must — learn to live better with it. Let us not treat monsoon as a once-in-a-lifetime phenomenon — it occurs every year and thus is no surprise. All we need is planning rather than acting shocked when the country submerges and nobody has any clue why that happened.

# Fundamentalism in Bangladesh

Once hailed for secularism and cultural vibrancy, Bangladesh now finds itself at a critical crossroads. Islamist fundamentalist groups like Jamaat-e-Islami are regaining prominence, with alarming implications

Is Bangladesh moving once again towards becoming a cradle of Islamist fundamentalism and terrorism? Fundamentalism does not always mean terrorism, but it does create a discourse that facilitates the rise of extremism through the promotion of intolerance, leading to hatred towards those considered infidels and violence against them. Now, is Islamist fundamentalism waxing in Bangladesh? One needs to ask this because fundamentalist organisations like the Jamaat-e-Islami (Jamaat) and Hefazat-e-Islam (Hefazat) are having a ball. The Jamaat had fully cooperated with the Pakistani Army during the liberation war of 1971 and was complicit in the latter's mass murders, rapes and other atrocities. Besides, its members and leaders — as well as those of affiliated bodies like Al-Badr, Al-Shams and Razakars — perpetrated unspeakable atrocities themselves. On 1 August 2013, Bangladesh's High Court had cancelled its registration as a political party, upholding a writ petition by an organisation called the Tariqat Federation, saying that the Jamaat was a religion-based political party which did not believe in Bangladesh's independence and sovereignty. It further claimed that the country's Representation of People Order did not allow the registration of a communal outfit as a political party.

The High Court had also observed that the Jamaat had no moral right to be in the country's political arena, given the atrocities it had perpetrated during the liberation war. Following the order, Bangladesh's Election Commission issued a gazette notification on 28 October 2018, cancelling the party's registration. On 19 November 2023, Bangladesh's Supreme Court dismissed the Jamaat's appeal against the High Court's verdict, as its counsels did not appear at the hearing. As a result of the High Court's order, the Jamaat could not participate in the parliamentary elections of 2014, 2018 and 2024. Besides, four of its top leaders — Abdul Quader Mollah, Kamaruzzaman, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid and Motiur Rahman Nizami — were executed, and several others given long prison terms, following convictions in cases related to genocide and war crimes by the International Crimes Tribunals established in 2010 and 2012 under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act of 1973, as amended in 2009. Finally, Sheikh Hasina's government banned the Jamaat and its students' organisation, Islami Chhatra Shibir (Shibir), on 1 August 2025 under the Anti-Terrorism Act 2009. The grounds cited were



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Muhammad Yunus, reversed the order, saying that there was no proof that the Jamaat and the Shibir were involved in terrorist activities. On 23 October 2024, the Appellate Division of Bangladesh's Supreme Court restored the Jamaat's appeal, which the Supreme Court had rejected on 19 November 2023.

Meanwhile, the Jamaat is now politically fully active — holding meetings, demonstrations, meetings with other parties and foreign diplomats, and projecting itself as a major force to be reckoned with in the forthcoming elections, whenever they are held. Its ideology is quite clear. Its website says, "Jamaat performs as a spiritual party as spiritual life is important in Islam. Jamaat performs in political arena because Islamic law can't be implemented without political force." The Hefazat-e-Islam was formed in 2010 to oppose the Awami League government's women's development policy, promising women equal rights to property. It has considerable power to mobilise in the streets. Its intensely anti-India orientation was reflected in its violent protests against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Dhaka on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence on 26

March 2021. Thirteen persons were killed and scores injured in clashes between its supporters and members of the security forces and Awami League's supporters. The Hefazat is a hard-core Islamist organisation. This is clear from its 13-point charter of demands in support of which it held a rally in Dhaka on 5-6 May 2013. The Hefazat's 13-point programme includes the enactment of an anti-blasphemy law with provision for the death penalty; exemplary punishment to all bloggers and others who "insult Islam"; cancellation of Bangladesh's policy for women's development; bans on the erection of sculptures in public places, the mixing of men and women in public, candlelight vigils, and "shameless behaviour and dresses"; besides declaring Ahmadiyas as "non-Muslims." Nadia Sarmin, covering its rally for ETV, was mercilessly beaten for daring to be a woman "in a men only" event. Grievously injured, she was rescued by other journalists.

The rally in May was extremely violent. A BBC report dated 6 May 2013 cites one witness as saying that the demonstrators "were very aggressive, some people were throwing stones and the situation quickly became violent". The interim government has close and warm relations with the Hefazat. It has lifted the ban on the organisation. The Adviser for Religious Affairs, AFM Khalid Hossain, is the latter's Nayebe-Amir. Chief Adviser Mohammad Yunus had a long and cordial meeting on 31 August 2024 with Mamunul Haque, the organisation's head. The Hefazat is holding rallies and processions all over the country. Doubtless, neither the Jamaat nor the Hefazat has been resorting to terrorist violence. Their elevated salience, however, gives a certain respectability to fun-

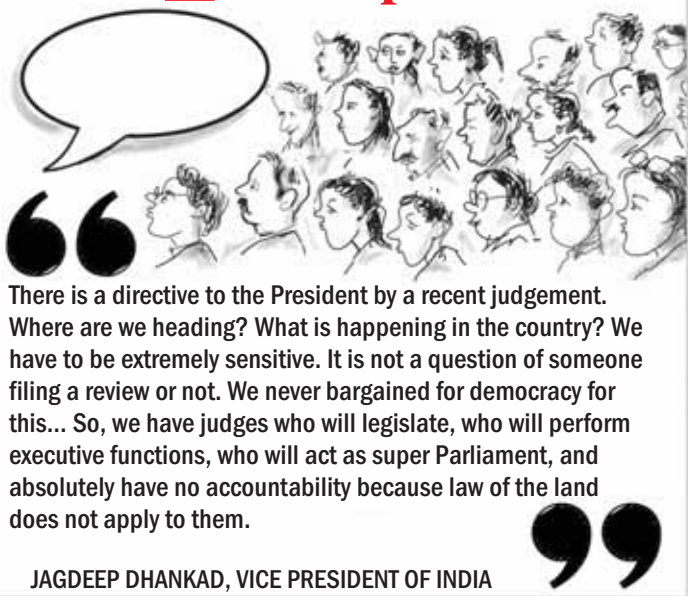
damentalist doctrines and encourages other fundamentalist organisations to flex their muscles. One of their principal targets is Bangladesh's moderate and liberal ethos — shaped by its rich literary and philosophical heritage, shaped by Rabindranath Tagore and the country's highly talented writers, poets and performing artists. A spiritual leader, philosopher, mystic poet and social reformer, Lalou articulated a weltanschauung, which encompassed the essence of the Bhakti cult and Sufism, rejected all distinctions of caste, class and creed, and opposed theological conflicts and racism. A gathering of sadhus and a Lalou fair was to be hosted in Madya Narsingpur, Kashipur Union Parishad in Narayanganj, on 22 November 2024.

The district administration, however, ordered its cancellation. According to a report in The Daily Star (23 November 2024), Hefazat-e-Islam leader Maulana Abdul Auwal had warned the administration to stop the event or face intervention by protesters. The celebration of Pehela Baishakh, the first day of the annual Bengali calendar, has been an important part of Bangladesh's cultural scenario. However, a stage constructed for the purpose was vandalised on 13 April 2025 in Chittagong city. Earlier, the district administration had permitted the organisers to hold the celebrations but reduced the timings and requested them not to include any song that would be deemed "controversial".

In Dhaka, a theatre group was all set to stage a play titled Shesher Kobita on 13 and 14 April. The authorities of the auditorium concerned, however, decided to cancel the programme on the 13th after receiving a threatening letter from a mob. The police offered protection following a public outcry. The show scheduled for 13 April was shifted to 15 April. Earlier, on 10 February 2025, a group calling itself "Towhidi Janata" attacked a publishing house's stall at Bangladesh's celebrated Amar Ekushe Boimela for displaying Taslima Nasrin's books. Instead of taking action against the attackers, police shut down the stall and detained the publisher, Shatabdi Bobo, at the fair's control room. Whither Bangladesh?

(The author is the Consulting Editor of The Pioneer. Views are personal)

## Leaderspeak



There is a directive to the President by a recent judgement. Where are we heading? What is happening in the country? We have to be extremely sensitive. It is not a question of someone filing a review or not. We never bargained for democracy for this... So, we have judges who will legislate, who will perform executive functions, who will act as super Parliament, and absolutely have no accountability because law of the land does not apply to them.

JAGDEEP DHANKAD, VICE PRESIDENT OF INDIA

## Inside the Mind of a Champion

### SECOND Opinion

BY RAVI VALLURI

What is the difference between the brain and the mind? While the brain is a vital physical organ within our body, the mind is the seat of consciousness — it is where thoughts, feelings, and emotions arise. And it is the mind, not just the body, that defines the greatness of an athlete. "On your marks, set, go!" — with a gunshot, the world watches as Usain Bolt blazes down the track. In the span of a few electrifying seconds, he leaves behind the competition and makes history.

What sets these titans apart from the rest? Beyond talent and training, it is the strength of their minds — their inner power — that elevates them. Their minds are like that of Ajatashatru, a Sanskrit term for one who has no enemies, at peace with oneself and the world. This mental clarity and focus distinguish champions from others who falter under pressure or accept mediocrity as the norm. Why do many athletes freeze on the world stage?

Why do some settle for simply qualifying, for placing somewhere between fourth and tenth, rather than striving for the podium? It's not just physical preparation that separates winners from the rest — it's the mind. The mental resilience to endure, to persevere, and to focus with unflinching determination is what produces Olympic champions. We can draw

inspiration from Arjuna, the legendary archer of the Mahabharata, whose single-minded focus, humility, and faith in his mentor Dronacharya and friend Lord Krishna made him peerless.

Arjuna was not born a master; he became one by surrendering ego, trusting his training, and silencing doubt. His mind was his greatest ally — free from clutter, fear, and distraction. He truly embodied the spirit of Ajatashatru. Contrast that with India's disappointing performance at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Despite fielding the largest contingent in our history, we finished 71st in the medal tally. The hunger to win, to dominate, or even to express the agony of defeat, often seems missing. The spirit of Citius, Altius, Fortius — faster, higher, stronger — is diminished when we don't instil in athletes the burning desire to climb the podium draped in the tricolour, national anthem playing, igniting pride across the country. A victory at the Olympics is not just personal — it has national significance. It inspires, uplifts, and can have a ripple effect across society, including in areas like the economy, education, and youth development. But for that, we need to foster not just skill but vision.

So, what are we lacking? First, a cultural shift. India is not a sporting nation. Parents often discourage children from pursuing sports, fearful of the risks and uncertainty. We lack adequate infrastructure, visionaries who can scout talent, and political will to support sports beyond cricket. How many politicians have championed the building of world-class facilities like Gachibowli Stadium in Hyderabad for other sports? Cricket dominates every sphere of Indian sports — the media, spon-

sors, public imagination. Yet even in this bleak scenario, some institutions like the Indian Railways have provided much-needed support. In Paris 2024, India secured six medals — one silver and five bronze. Shooter Manu Bhaker stood out as the first Indian woman to win an Olympic shooting medal. Her mental fortitude, her ability to thrive under pressure, was nothing short of Ajatashatru-like. This mindset must become the norm, not the exception.

To nurture it, the Ministry of Sports must undergo a radical overhaul. We need public-private partnerships, active involvement of the armed forces and Indian Railways, and a robust CSR-driven funding model to create a sustainable ecosystem for sports. Administrators must also change their mindset. Instead of bureaucratic inertia, we need leaders who are flexible, visionary, and willing to take bold decisions. A daily regimen that includes yoga, pranayama, Sudarshan Kriya, and meditation can help in building mental strength, resilience, and focus. Countries like China and several East Asian nations already use such practices, alongside ancient philosophies and texts like Sun Tzu's Art of War, to cultivate winning mindsets in athletes. Buddha once said, "Endurance is one of the most difficult disciplines, but it is to the one who endures that the final victory comes." Victory is not accidental — it is earned by those who prepare relentlessly, physically and mentally. It is time we prepare for the Los Angeles Olympics 2028 — not tomorrow, but today.

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## Letters to the Editor

### MGNREGA: A lifeline undermined

Madam — On April 17, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge strongly criticised the Modi government, labelling it "anti-poor" and accusing it of systematically oppressing MGNREGA workers. He demanded an increase in the minimum wage to ₹400 per day and an extension of guaranteed employment to 150 days annually under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS).

Despite recommendations from both the Joint Parliamentary Committee and the 2023 high-level committee led by Amarjeet Sinha, the government has failed to raise the daily wage meaningfully. Instead, it continues to impose restrictions — such as mandatory Aadhaar-based payments — and has allocated the lowest MGNREGA budget in the last decade relative to the overall Union Budget. MGNREGA was originally introduced by the Congress Party as a safety net for the poorest families in rural India.

Today, that legacy is under threat. If the government genuinely cares for rural India, it must adopt the two key demands: ₹400 per day as minimum wage and 150 days of guaranteed work per year.

In conclusion, the government must act decisively to uphold MGNREGA's founding purpose. Adopting the demands for ₹400 daily wages and 150 workdays annually is essential to protect rural livelihoods and restore dignity to India's poorest. Anything less would betray the scheme's intent — and the people it aims to serve.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

### Funding threatens academic freedom

Madam — As someone who closely follows the intersection of politics and education, I find former President Trump's decision to freeze over \$2.2 billion in funding to Harvard University deeply troubling. The freeze was triggered by Harvard's refusal to comply with the White House's demands — to monitor pro-Palestinian protests, revise diversity policies, and scrutinise foreign scholars.

Harvard, led by President Alan Garber, rightly resisted, citing violations of academic freedom and the First Amendment. This isn't just about one university; it's about the growing use of state power to intimidate academic institutions.

When funding is used as a weapon to enforce political conformity, we edge dangerously close to authoritarianism. While concerns about hate speech or foreign influence are valid, they must be addressed through balanced, lawful means — not by bulldozing university autonomy. Campuses should foster debate, not silence.

True leadership is measured by its tolerance for dissent — not its impulse to crush it. In threatening Harvard's funding, the government undermines academic freedom and sets a chilling precedent for all universities. Disagreement must not be silenced by coercion.

In a democracy, campuses must remain spaces for open inquiry, not instruments of political control. Freedom of thought is not negotiable — it's foundational.

BHAGWANTHADANI | MUMBAI

### The shame of trafficking

Madam — The Supreme Court's recent expression of dismay over a newborn trafficking case is a sobering reminder that "son preference" continues to plague Indian society. In this case, a newborn was purchased for ₹4 lakh simply because the buyer "wanted a son." The Court rightly stated that hospitals must face immediate licence cancellation in such cases.

This mindset fuels child trafficking, sex-selective abortions, and violence against women. With India's sex ratio at birth (933 girls per 1,000 boys) still alarmingly skewed, we are witnessing the long-term damage of systemic gender bias.

Add to that the daily average of 1,200 crimes against women in 2022, and the picture turns bleak. There is a lesson to be learned from South Korea, which successfully normalised its skewed sex ratio through emotionally resonant campaigns like Daughters Are More Compassionate.

Public messaging, school curricula, and media initiatives helped shift mindsets — not just laws. India must embrace a similar strategy — one that reshapes hearts and minds. Women like Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, and Delhi CM Rekha Gupta prove that daughters are not burdens — they are the nation's future.

SRINIVAS MADHAV | HYDERABAD

### WAQF AMENDMENT ACT: A MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR DIALOGUE

The Supreme Court's observations regarding the Waqf Amendment Act, 2025, have brought much-needed legal scrutiny to what has largely been a media-driven, politically charged issue. For months, we were bombarded with claims that the original Waqf Act of 1995 led to unchecked land acquisition by the Muslim community, necessitating urgent amendments.

However, the discourse lacked depth. There was little to no engagement from legal scholars or constitutional experts. Instead, television debates fuelled fear and division, with repeated claims that Waqf properties endangered national interests. Though passed by Parliament through procedural means and majority strength, the Amendment Act seems more symbolic than substantive. It has triggered a surge of petitions in the Supreme Court — and rightly so. Legislation of this nature should be grounded in law, not in populist fervour. The real tragedy is the deepening communal divide this has caused. A mat-

ter of such sensitivity could have been resolved through inclusive dialogue and mutual understanding. Instead, we are left with increased polarisation and unrest. As Mark Twain once said, "Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it's time to pause and reflect." In conclusion, the Waqf Amendment Act, 2025, stands as a cautionary tale of what happens when legislative action prioritises political optics over constitutional rigour. The Supreme Court's involvement offers a glimmer of hope that legal reason will prevail over populist narratives.

True progress lies not in reactionary amendments, but in fostering inclusive conversations that respect both religious rights and national interests. As citizens, we must demand more thoughtful governance — one that seeks unity, not division. Let this moment serve as a reminder that justice, not majoritarian sentiment, must remain the cornerstone of a healthy democracy.

AVINASH GODBOLEY DEWAS

# The Saudis: Peacekeepers or power brokers?

In a transformation as ambitious as it is paradoxical, Saudi Arabia is rebranding itself from an austere theocracy to a cosmopolitan architect of global diplomacy. This evolution raises a fundamental question: can a state rewrite its past without reckoning with it?

FIRST Column

The transformation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from a puritanical theocracy to an aspiring architect of global peace is one of the most paradoxical and politically engineered evolutions of the modern era. Far from the deserts where Wahhabism first struck its austere roots, the Kingdom now positions itself as a mediator between global powers, a patron of modernity, and a crucible of cross-cultural aspiration. Yet beneath the glistening architecture of NEOM and the diplomatic smiles of peace summits lies a stratified narrative — one obscured by revisionist theatre and gilded silence.

Saudi Arabia's foundation in 1932 under King Abdulaziz Ibn Saud was not merely a unification of tribal territories; it was a theological consolidation. The strategic pact with Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, brokered generations earlier, transformed Islam into an instrument of statecraft. As the CIA Handbook observed in 1972, "The Saudi Government is a monarchy based on a fusion of secular and religious authority, with the King at its apex." The same report stated, "The royal family dominates both the political and economic life of the country," a candid admission of dynastic monopolisation. Governance was less institutional than charismatic, mediated through familial bonds, tribal allegiances, and theocratic endorsement.

The Kingdom's export of Wahhabism, particularly from the 1960s onward, became one of the most under-scrutinised forms of ideological colonisation. Flush with petrodollars after the 1973 oil embargo — an embargo that King Faisal declared in defence of Arab dignity, stating, "Our oil is our weapon, and we will use it to protect our Arab rights" — Saudi Arabia embarked on a global proselytisation project. Mosques, madrasas, and clerical scholarships were funded from Islamabad to Jakarta, Sarajevo to Khartoum, shaping generations in an image that often opposed indigenous Islamic traditions. A lesser-known revelation from a declassified 1981 US State Department cable noted: "Saudi financial support to Islamic institutions in Southeast Asia has significantly altered the religious landscape, prioritising doctrinal rigidity over cultural synthesis."

The domestic reality, too, remained draconian under the veneer of religiosity. The 1979 Grand Mosque seizure by a fundamentalist group paradoxically catalysed a more regressive clampdown, as the royal family tightened its alliance with the religious establishment to legitimise its authority. It is telling that King Fahd, who in the 1980s declared, "We will build the future without abandoning our past," presided over an era where ministries functioned as courtiers rather than administrators. As noted in a 1972 CIA internal report, "Much of the bureaucracy remains inefficient, with key decisions often bypassing formal channels and handled by royal intermediaries."

The paradox deepens when juxtaposing Saudi Arabia's financing of foreign conflicts with its self-portrayal as a stabiliser. The Kingdom, directly or through proxies, has been implicated in the fomen-



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

tation of conflict zones including Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, and Libya. In Yemen, particularly, its military intervention since 2015 has left an indelible humanitarian scar. UN estimates suggest over 375,000 deaths, mostly from indirect causes. Despite this, Riyadh now courts global opinion as a peace broker, hosting summits that purport to end the very conflicts it helped perpetuate. This performative peacemaking is a diplomatic palimpsest, rewriting its culpability in real time.

Yet perhaps nowhere is the ideological volte-face more pronounced than under the stewardship of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS). A man who rose to prominence not through military conquest or scholarly erudition but via internal court

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calculus and the invocation of modernist necessity, MBS has become the emblem of Saudi Arabia's neo-nationalist rebranding. His statement in 2017, "We will not waste 30 years of our lives dealing with extremist ideologies. We will destroy them now and immediately" serves as both mea culpa and strategic distancing. It is a rhetorical exfoliation of the kingdom's historical role in incubating the very ideologies it now condemns.

What makes this transformation most paradoxical is the simultaneous consolidation of autocracy. The same MBS who champions futuristic cities and cultural liberalisation also orchestrated the arrest of dissenting clerics, feminists, and businessmen — a campaign sanitised by the euphemism of anti-corruption.

The chilling assassination of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018 inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul became a gruesome watermark of the state's coercive architecture. This contradiction was prophetically foreshadowed by King Faisal decades

earlier, who once mused, "Injustice cannot be concealed, and one day it will speak."

In global diplomacy, Saudi Arabia is no longer content with petrodollar influence; it now seeks epistemic legitimacy. The launch of NEOM, a city touted as the world's first cognitive metropolis, symbolises this ambition — yet, emblematic of the new Saudi state, it is erected upon contested land and enforced silence. Beyond NEOM, the Kingdom's financial outreach has extended to international media, sports, universities, and even Hollywood, buying not just partnerships but narratives. This is cultural laundering masquerading as soft power.

Saudi Arabia's overtures toward mediating the Russia-Ukraine conflict, brokering a rapprochement between Iran and Arab states, and its increasing engagement with China and Israel signify not merely a regional aspiration, but a superpower mimicry. In February 2023, Riyadh hosted talks to ease tensions in Sudan, while simultaneously continuing arms imports that fuel its military-industrial complex. As a 2022 report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute noted, "Saudi Arabia remains one of the top five global arms importers, despite its increasing involvement in peace dialogues."

This dualism is not new but is now consciously choreographed. The kingdom no longer hides its contradictions; it flaunts them as strengths. It wishes to be judged not by the tenets of liberal democracy, but by a self-fashioned rubric of efficacy, vision, and global brokerage.

And in this, it has found unlikely endorsements. Elon Musk, after touring Saudi ventures, declared them "an exciting vision for civilisation". Goldman Sachs and SoftBank speak of "unprecedented opportunities". Even sceptics are drawn to the economic gravity Riyadh exerts.

But can a state undergo ontological transformation without historical accountability? Can it broker peace while archives of complicity remain sealed? The Kingdom's diplomatic epistles, such as the declassified 1973 letter from the US President to King Faisal praising him as "a voice of wisdom and reason," read today as documents of strategic appeasement, not genuine admiration. The phrase, "Your personal efforts to bring moderation and stability to the region are of great significance," thinly veils the realpolitik that underpinned Western support for autocracy.

Indeed, what Saudi Arabia seeks now is not reinvention but redemption. It seeks to transmute petrodollar moral hazard into soft power prestige. In doing so, it exploits the cognitive dissonance of the global order: that authoritarianism, when efficient and well-funded, can be tolerated, even admired. Perhaps this is the Kingdom's most radical export yet — a model where ideological elasticity replaces democratic legitimacy.

(The writer is a Colombo-based journalist. Views are personal)

## The cost of the skies: The risk and reality of fighter flying

The recent crash of an Indian Air Force (IAF) fighter jet, which tragically claimed the life of a young pilot, has once again stirred public concern and debate over flight safety and the risks faced by those in uniform

A few days ago, the Indian Air Force (IAF) suffered a devastating loss when a fighter jet crashed during an operational sortie. The tragic accident claimed the life of a young fighter pilot, a promising individual in the prime of his life and career. The exact cause of the incident is still under investigation by a Court of Inquiry, and conclusions will only be drawn after a thorough examination.

While we collectively grieve the loss of a brave soul and extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and comrades, the incident has once again ignited public debate — particularly on social media — about the IAF's safety record. Many have questioned why, after decades of technological advancements and operational experience, such accidents continue to occur. With each modern fighter aircraft costing upward of ₹500 crore, the financial burden is immense. Yet, even more valuable are the human lives put at risk and, at times, tragically lost.

This article attempts to offer readers an insight into the world of fighter pilots — a world often viewed as glamorous from afar but fraught with danger, discipline, and unyielding demands. It also seeks to dispel the widespread misconception that the Air Force forces its personnel to fly outdated or poorly maintained aircraft.

### Fighter Flying Is Dangerous

To begin with, fighter flying is among the most high-risk professions in the world. Pilots operate incredibly powerful machines weighing up to 40,000 kg and powered by engines capable of producing over 25,000 kgf of thrust.

Achieving maximum performance from such a complex aircraft requires seamless coordination between the pilot, the aircraft, and multiple supporting agencies on the ground. Even a minor error in judgment or execution can have catastrophic consequences, especially during air combat.

Fighter pilots are selected after a rigorous evaluation of their flying skills, temperament, and psychological makeup. Qualities such as mental agility, fast decision-making, situational awareness, and emotional resilience are non-negotiable. Only after years of intensive training are they considered fit for combat missions.

Even during peacetime, these pilots undergo combat training that mirrors the conditions of actual warfare as closely as possible — minus the use of live weaponry. Every day in the cockpit is a test of their physical endurance and mental sharpness.

### Camaraderie and Competition

Flying in formation, especially during combat training, demands absolute trust among pilots. Each member must perform at their best — not just for personal safety but for the team. There's an unspoken



RAJIV HORA

but powerful mix of pride, ego, and responsibility. No one wants to be the weak link, and this drives pilots to push the limits of their aircraft and themselves.

Air combat is binary, there are no partial victories. You either prevail, or you are outmanoeuvred. This stark reality instils a relentless drive for excellence and perfection.

### Fitness: The Hidden Demands

Maintaining peak physical condition is critical. Fighter pilots regularly train to increase their G-tolerance, which is crucial during the high-speed, tight turns of air combat.

Even with G-suits, seasoned pilots can experience forces up to 8-9 times their body weight. The stress on the human body is enormous, and those unac-

customed to it can lose consciousness.

Even minor illnesses such as a cold can impair judgment or sensory performance and are grounds for grounding a pilot. Strict rules govern alcohol consumption and sleep routines — standards summed up by the phrase "12 hours between bottle and throttle." Flight fitness is constantly monitored under the supervision of aero-medical experts.

### Practice and Precision

Each training mission is carefully reviewed post-flight. Advanced tools allow for detailed debriefing, helping pilots analyse their performance, correct errors, and refine tactics. This ensures that when a real combat scenario arises, the pilot is ready for the critical moment when an enemy target appears in the radar scope.

Mistakes in modern warfare can be fatal — not just personally, but collectively. In the era of Beyond Visual Range (BVR) combat, where pilots often engage targets they cannot see, the risk of fratricide, or "blue on blue" incidents, increases. Identifying targets cor-

rectly in a high-pressure, information-dense environment demands exceptional clarity and focus.

### The Systems in Play

Weather is another unpredictable factor. While missions are authorised based on available weather data, conditions can rapidly change mid-flight, presenting fresh challenges during takeoff, flight, or landing. Thunderstorms, turbulence, or poor visibility are all part of a fighter pilot's reality. To mitigate risks, the IAF, like other global air forces, uses an Operational Risk Management (ORM) system. This considers multiple variables, from pilot experience and aircraft condition to mission type and weather — to determine if a sortie should be authorised.

Even once airborne, the pilot must juggle a host of responsibilities. From interpreting radar and electronic warfare systems to tracking formation positions and navigating terrain at 900 kmph just a few hundred feet off the ground, everything hinges on razor-sharp timing. A single lapse can be fatal. At such speeds, there are no second chances.

### Team Effort Behind the Scenes

A fighter pilot never flies alone in the truest sense. An extensive support ecosystem underpins every mission. Engineers, technicians, air traffic controllers, radar operators, and safety crews work in synchrony to ensure aircraft are airworthy and operations are smooth. Even older aircraft are rigorously maintained to official standards. The notion that pilots are forced to fly "junk" aircraft is baseless and unfair to the dedicated personnel who keep these machines operational. Still, aircraft can develop snags mid-air. Pilots are trained to respond to emergencies calmly and quickly, often practising drills in simulators. In worst-case scenarios, they may have to eject to save their own lives. While it's heartbreaking to abandon a multi-crore aircraft, saving a trained pilot — whose training takes 6-7 years and enormous investment — takes precedence.

### Flight Safety: A Mission

Despite the best efforts, accidents do occur. They are rarely due to a single error; rather, they're often the result of multiple, layered failures — a concept known as the Swiss Cheese Model of accidents. A hole in the system, hidden until it aligns with others, can lead to tragedy.

The IAF maintains a robust flight safety mechanism. Every incident is examined thoroughly, and lessons are incorporated into procedures and even future aircraft designs. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), often forged in the aftermath of loss, are sacred and followed rigorously. Phasing out a fleet of aircraft is a strategic decision, balancing operational needs, cost implications, and national security. Not every accident warrants the retirement of an entire platform. Over time, accident rates do fall — thanks to continuous risk management, technological upgrades, and relentless learning from both successes and failures.

### The Reality of Service

Behind the image of swaggering pilots in sunglasses lies a life of discipline, danger, and determination. Fighter pilots sacrifice comfort, health, and sometimes their lives — not for glory, but for duty. It's important for the public to understand that accidents often happen not due to negligence, but despite stringent precautions.

It is never as simple as flipping a switch or grounding a fleet. As the saying goes, "The safest place for a ship is in the harbour, but that's not where it's meant to be." Similarly, fighter aircraft and the warriors who fly them are meant to be in the sky, safeguarding our nation. Treading safely, always — but boldly.

(The writer is an Air Vice Marshal (Retired). Views are personal)









## Broken, Not Guilty?

What if the truth is buried beneath layers of trauma, power, and silence? Can justice survive?

BY SAKSHI PRIYA

There are plays, and then there are experiences that etch themselves into the psyche, SHADOWed etches. From the moment the first line is spoken, the atmosphere tightens. Something powerful has begun, and once it takes hold, it grips attention and refuses to loosen its hold.

The play compels a closer look at truths often pushed aside. Produced by Samar Sarila, an actor, writer and producer known for his work in both theatre and film, including the acclaimed Viceroy's House and Turning 30 and Vidushi Mehra, an acclaimed actress and theatre director who has also made

her mark in films like Raees and No One Killed Jessica, SHADOWed is a work of depth and relevance, confronting uncomfortable truths with skill and passion. In a world saturated with headlines and fleeting digital outrage, SHADOWed cuts through with startling clarity.

The courtroom becomes a battleground, not just for justice, but for sanity, vulnerability and memory. Inspired by the 1996 Hollywood classic *Primal Fear*, the production has been adapted for the Indian stage with precision and urgency, rooting itself in the emotionally charged backdrop of contemporary New Delhi. At its core is Aaryan, an 18-year-old, unnervingly calm, accused of murdering his influential uncle, Minister Siddhant Shah. The city reels at the crime, but the real unease lies within the trial. This is no standard legal drama. It is a question: why would someone so young commit such an act? And deeper still—did he?

Victor Roy (Samar Sarila), the defence attorney, arrives not only with arguments but with inner turmoil that simmers just beneath the surface. Battling his past while fighting for his clients

### MEMORY AND IDENTITY

SHADOWed stands as a necessary conversation, a story that grips from the first moment and stays in the mind long after the final scene.

The cast delivers a space for collective reckoning. Theatre like this should not just be watched—it should be talked about, dissected, and remembered.

future, he commands the stage with quiet intensity. Opposing him is Jaya Anand (Vidushi Mehra), composed and firm, a prosecutor determined to uncover the truth. Between them stands Dr Vineeta Varma (Preeti Agarwal Mehta), a clinical psychiatrist whose analysis has the power to sway both the court and the conscience.

The writing is lean, powerful and emotionally resonant. The story pierces deep, asking: Can trauma rewrite memory? Is guilt ever truly clear? What lies beneath the silence of a teenager accused of murder?

Samar Sarila brings gravitas to Victor Roy, inhabiting the role with layered restraint. Vidushi Mehra, in a riveting performance, commands attention with her stillness and strength. Preeti Agarwal quiet power, never backing down, always calculating, yet never cold. Shivam Sahni is chillingly effective. His stillness is disarming. One moment evokes empathy, the next, doubt.

Every aspect of SHADOWed is crafted to focus on the raw emotional core of its characters. There is no softening of themes—sexual abuse, power dynamics, and mental health are addressed with honesty and courage. The audience is not handed easy conclusions. Instead, they are offered a mirror held up to society, asking: where do compassion and accountability meet?

This production is not comfortable. It is not predictable. And that is its strength. In a city known for its cultural offerings, this one rises high on the list. It is one of the most stirring productions seen on stage in recent times. This is the kind of theatre that shakes the ground it stands on.

**SHADOWed | Performance Details**  
**VENUE:** Alliance Française, Lodhi Road, New Delhi  
**PUBLIC SHOWS:** April 19, 20, 26 & 27, 2025  
**4:00 PM & 7:00 PM**

## A Visual that Sings stories



BY TEAM VIVA

There's something instinctive about the way music and art speak to us—wordless, yet deeply understood. Both stir emotion, trigger memory, and offer connection. When the two come together, the impact is immediate. *Bambai Se Aaya Mera Dost* captures this fusion with striking clarity, creating an exhibition that's as evocative as it is unforgettable.

Titled after the iconic Bollywood song, the show brings Mumbai's creative energy to New Delhi in full force. Curated as a collective voice, it brings together various galleries and artists, not competing, but collaborating to showcase works that explore identity, nostalgia, rebellion, and belonging.

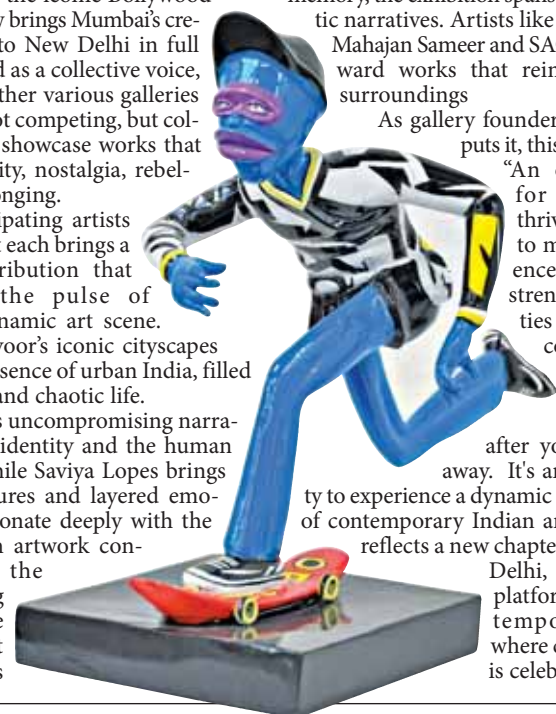
The participating artists are varied, yet each brings a unique contribution that speaks to the pulse of Mumbai's dynamic art scene. Sameer Kulavoor's iconic cityscapes capture the essence of urban India, filled with vibrant and chaotic life.

Mithu Sen's uncompromising narratives explore identity and the human condition, while Saviya Lopes brings intimate textures and layered emotions that resonate deeply with the viewer. Each artwork converses with the next, creating a cohesive narrative that spans across

mediums, ideas, and emotions. This exhibition invites you to feel the stories behind it. Whether it's Gurjeet Singh's powerful, introspective works or Dhruvi Acharya's striking compositions, each piece adds a layer to the broader conversation on memory, history, and belonging. From the urban streets to intimate expressions of memory, the exhibition spans various artistic narratives. Artists like Tyler, Akshy Mahajan Sameer and SAGE bring forward works that reimagine their surroundings.

As gallery founder Sahil Arora puts it, this exhibition is "An opportunity for Mumbai's thriving art scene to make its presence felt in Delhi, strengthening the ties between our communities."

This art that resonates long after you've walked away. It's an opportunity to experience a dynamic cross-section of contemporary Indian art. The show reflects a new chapter for Method Delhi, an evolving platform for contemporary art, where collaboration is celebrated.



## Erosion of History in Art forms

BY SAKSHI PRIYA

Art exhibitions often provide an opportunity to experience the complex interplay of history, identity, and memory. *Kindred Dichotomies*, currently on view at Black Cube Gallery in Hauz Khas, New Delhi, is one such exhibition that invites visitors into a thought-provoking dialogue between two distinct artistic voices—Sudhanshu Sutar and Andrea Zucchi.

The show brings together works that explore the tension between past and present, offering a fresh perspective on historical imagery and cultural symbols.

Curated by Sanya Malik, *Kindred Dichotomies* stands out for its ability to highlight the contrasts and connections between the two artists despite their different backgrounds. Sudhanshu Sutar, hailing from Odisha, India, presents works deeply rooted in his personal and cultural history. His paintings focus on themes of lost royalty and shifting identities, drawing inspiration from the Kanika Palace, a structure once grand, now fading from memory. Sutar's compositions are highly staged, evoking the theatricality of Indian Natak, where figures are stripped of individuality to become symbols of broader concepts of power, kingship, and historical displacement.

As visitors move through the exhibition, Sutar's paintings stand out for their meditative quality. His use of archival photographs and surrealist undertones creates a sense of historical continuity, but it's the way he approaches these images that leaves an impression. The viewer is drawn into a narrative that speaks not only to India's royal past but also to the larger themes of memory, power, and identity that resonate across cultures.

In contrast, Andrea Zucchi's work brings a playful yet critical energy to the exhibition. Zucchi's engagement with 19th-century photographs is marked by an irreverent and almost surreal twist. The works



IT PROVIDES A SPACE WHERE HISTORY IS OBSERVED AND EXPERIENCED. BOTH THE ARTISTS INVITE THE VIEWER TO CONSIDER NOT JUST WHAT HISTORY IS, BUT HOW IT CONTINUES TO EVOLVE

question the authenticity of historical imagery and challenge the viewer to rethink the boundaries between the past and the present.

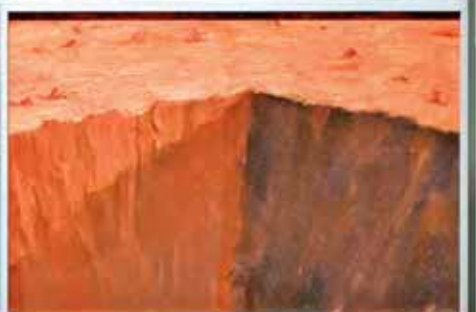
Zucchi's work doesn't simply appropriate the past; it transforms it, creating a disorienting but engaging reworking of historical narratives. The use of bright, almost garish colours and the layering of contemporary elements onto historical images offer a critique of how history is reproduced and recontextualised in the modern world. His art becomes a reflection on memory and the way images are altered and reinterpreted, often without consideration for their original context.

What unites the two artists in *Kindred Dichotomies* is their shared engagement with history—not as a fixed entity, but as a space for reinterpretation. While Sutar's works are grounded in a personal history that focuses on the fading grandeur of royalty, Zucchi's approach to historical imagery is more playful, almost irreverent. Together, they offer viewers a multifaceted look at how history is both remembered and reimagined. The exhibition is a reminder that the past is not static, but rather something that is constantly reshaped by the lens through which we view it.

For anyone interested in contemporary art that explores complex themes with depth and originality, this exhibition that should not be missed.

## FRAGMENTS OF MEMORY AND SPACE

The exhibition explores memory, transformation and the collision of urban and personal spaces, says SAKSHI PRIYA



A walk through *MAGIC ERASE*, the solo exhibition by Hemant Gavankar at Art Centrix Space, is like entering a layered palimpsest of time, space, and fleeting memory. Curated by Sibdas Sengupta and presented under the Art Centrix Painting Grant, the exhibition is an exploration of changing cityscapes and interior geographies, each frame marked by the rhythm of personal and urban transformation.

Gavankar, a visual artist and poet trained at Sir J. J. School of Art, presents his works as complex arrangements of memory, paintings that deliberately blur the boundaries of past and present, real and imagined. In works like *Memories of Water and Glass* and *Blasting and Other Images 2*, oil, charcoal, gouache, and pastels are used to great effect, juxtaposing fragments from different spatial and temporal planes.

One particularly striking piece, *Inauguration of Modern Temple and Other Images*, observes the collision of the sacred and the contemporary. A quadriptych on paper, it balances order and disarray, hinting at the strange dualities of belief and modern architecture. Similarly, *Qasam's Ginni Grandmom's Thumb and Land* and its studies unfold like intimate visual journals, quiet and unsettling in equal measure. The sense of distance and emotional fragility is visible.



LAST NIGHT, RENDERED IN ACRYLIC AND OIL ON PRIMED FABRIC, IS A COMPACT YET EVOCATIVE WORK THAT CAPTURES AN ATMOSPHERE OF QUIET Musing. ITS INTIMATE SCALE DRAWS THE VIEWER IN, ALMOST AS IF OVERHEARING A WHISPERED MEMORY



Gavankar brings abstraction into deeply personal. His layering of mediums mirrors the disorderly nature of memory—partial, unpredictable, and fragmented. Works like *Memory of a Memory 3* and *The Lost Room* intensify this experience, presenting places that feel familiar yet unreachable—scenes glimpsed between waking and sleep.

There is an unmissable contemporary urgency in his interrogation of public, private, and digital spaces. The exhibition's title, *MAGIC ERASE*, points to both disappearance and transformation, a quiet erasure of lines, boundaries, and certainty. Artist art resists finality, inviting viewers to observe, interpret, and reimagine.

The art is bold, unafraid of ambiguity, and intellectually engaging. It challenges conventional visual comfort, yet it is precisely this discomfort that provokes reflection. It is the kind of art that grows on the viewer, revealing it slowly, and layer by layer of deliberate art. This is not an exhibition one walks away from; it unsettles and stays with you.

