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Yamuna: India's major river, the lifeline of Delhi, must be saved, action plan suggested



**TACKLING POLLUTION
IN THE RIVER IS THE
BIGGEST CHALLENGE**

REAL ISSUE

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The Yamuna is one of the major rivers in the country and though huge funds have been spent to clean it, the river remains polluted.

The 22-km stretch of the Yamuna in Delhi, barely 2 per cent of the total length of the river basin, contributes over 80 per cent of the pollution load in the entire river. There is no water in the river for almost nine months in a year – what flows in it is just sewage and waste from Delhi's 22 drains. The Yamuna ceases to exist after it enters Delhi at Wazirabad.

This is mentioned in the assessment report, titled, 'Yamuna: The Agenda for Cleaning the River'.

In view of the situation, there is need to set up action plan on priority and save the river from pollution and sewage.

"It is time to act and think differently as we move ahead," says CSE's DG Sunita Narain. In the four years between 2017 and 2022, the Delhi government spent more than Rs 6,856 crore on cleaning the Yamuna.

"We must realize that cleaning the Yamuna will require much more than money. It will need a reworked plan which will guide us towards thinking and acting differently", she says.

Vast areas in Delhi depend on desludging tankers for removing their excreta and these tankers then discharge into river or drains : The current plan does not prioritize 100% interception from tankers through regulations on GPS and ensuring that this is then taken to STPs for treatment and reuse.

Delhi has 22 drains that are supposed to carry treated, clean water back into the Yamuna. But the untreated sewage also flows into these same drains through unsewered colonies or tankers that transport faecal sludge and wastewater – as a result, the entire effort of treating the wastewater is negated.

Delhi's 37 STPs can treat over 84 per cent of the generated sewage. According to the Delhi Pollution Control Committee, almost 80 per cent of the generated sewage is being treated. The focus is now on improving the capacity of existing STPs and building new plants to meet future demand.

More stringent standards have been introduced since the STPs in Delhi came into operation: the norm now is 10 mg/l, compared to the national standard of 30 mg/l. According to a 2024 DPCC report, 23 of Delhi's 37 STPs are not meeting the effluent discharge standard. This means existing plants have to be upgraded and refurbished at additional cost. The Delhi government's Interceptor Sewer Project aims to trap 1,000 million litres per day of sewage from

the city's drains and divert it for treatment. Delhi has 28 approved industrial areas – effluents from 17 are treated in common effluent treatment plants. But quality of treatment is a matter of concern; it is unclear where the treated effluents are discharged.

CSE report recommends five point action agenda: First is to ensure that all fecal sludge is collected from non-sewered areas and treated. Key step is to ensure that all desludging tankers are registered and their movement is monitored so that all septage is taken to treatment plants. Secondly, to ensure that treated water is not discharged into drains, where it gets mixed with untreated wastewater. As STPs are not located near the river, treated wastewater from the plants is discharged into the same drains that are already polluted with untreated wastewater. This 'mixing' negates impact and the money spent on treatment goes waste. Thirdly, full utilization of treated wastewater so that it doesn't add to pollution load. Fourth is upgrade of STPs based on reuse of treated water plan. Investment is needed to refurbish the current STPs to meet the standards. Rework plan for two drains--Najafgarh & Shahdara that cause 84% of pollution load into river. The interceptor drain plan is not working for these drains; despite investment, pollution is increasing. Delhi needs to rework & focus on drains that contribute bulk of pollution in Yamuna.

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[Photo: Shantanu Goyal, Pexels]

Donald Trump's visit to Arab world can be a big game changer in Middle East politics!

Deals aside, deaths continue in Gaza; hundreds more killed within days

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Donald Trump's visit to Middle East has drawn attention all over the world, especially, due to the trade deals he has made with the oil-rich Arab nations. Trump visited Saudi Arab, United Arab Emirates and Qatar. Red carpets rolled for him, lucrative deals were announced even as figure of deaths kept increasing in Gaza as Israel stepped up attacks. Analysts talked about how the Arab states courted US president, and the latter's supporters were ecstatic back home that how he manages to charm all and is able to secure such hugest investment to America. Definitely, Trump's visit to the countries, seems good for both sides and it shows how Gulf states are able to position themselves well. The 'isolation' of Israel and the changing political landscape, has also been discussed in the analyses. However, the fact remains that despite the bonhomie and the spectacle, Gaza continues to bleed.

Lifting sanctions on Syria, made international news. Saudi Arabia that has grand plans for future and is investing heavily in infrastructure, promised hundreds of billions of dollars' investment to Trump. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has also committed a huge amount and continues to strengthen its ties with the United States. A major step was in the field of semiconductor exports. Security deals were also signed. However, what was clearly missing was that there was no progress on the issue of the deaths Gaza. During Biden's era, Israel continued its attacks and faced no pressure from United States. The situation remains the same even now. Hundreds were killed in Gaza even when US president was in the Middle East & residents in



Gaza were starving. The Arab countries may have positioned themselves well and could have felt a rise in their international clout but the fact that investment & diplomacy failed to make any effect. This doesn't change the

situation on the ground and has no affect as far as saving innocents' lives in Palestine is concerned. Gaza battles every day for its survival and here lies the failure of the States in the region. editor@asiantribune.net

Gaza: Starvation, Air strikes & Deaths

In one week, Gaza has seen 370 deaths due to the air strikes by Israel. Such was the situation that in one night alone, 120 killings were reported. The figure of deaths that includes large number of children, continues to go up. Meanwhile, UN has also warned about ethnic cleansing in the region. The international bodies have said that thousands of children have been killed so far and the deaths due to lack of medicines and food has turned it into one of the worst manmade tragedies in the world in this era. Human Rights Watch said that the Israel plan is inching close towards extermination. Shockingly, the entire region and world community fails to stop Israel's aggression, atrocities and the blockade.





Irresponsible Media: TV channels' role in clubbing religion with nationalism is unfair

By **Asad Mirza**
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We have recently seen an unprecedented escalation of tension between two nuclear powers--Indian & Pakistan. The situation was exacerbated after the Pahalgam attack in which 26 civilians were killed. India carried out Operation Sindoor on the night of May 6-7. Subsequently, Pakistan launched a series of drone attacks & was involved in heavy shelling along the Line of Control (LoC).

India responded to this aggression on the second and third day, too and a ceasefire was declared on the fourth day i.e. May 10.

The country's political and military leadership adopted a principled stand of not tolerating any terrorist activity on the Indian soil, and showed its commitment of giving a fitting Reply to any such offensive, further boosted by its diplomatic outreach.

However, another pillar of any functioning democracy i.e. the media – particularly the electronic media showed its immaturity by broadcasting often inaccurate and speculative information, in addition to completely unnecessary analyses. Despite a circular issued by the government not to report sensational and unconfirmed news, TV channels have now scripted a completely new ecosystem of reporting. It is devoid of journalistic standards.

In this they were helped by the dime a dozen defence and strategic affairs experts, who while offering an insight or analysing the given situation offered their own biased and sensational insights of the unfolding events. Following the TV channels was the social media, which in India has evolved its own unique ecosystem of peddling unconfirmed and largely false news, besides every lay man posing as a security expert offered own twisted interpretation of the unfolding events.

One such issue being discussed on some TV channels, most social media platforms and even in some newspapers was the question that which country is going to favour whom or in other words, which Islamic countries are going to support Pakistan, if a war really starts between two nuclear powered countries. These experts or pundits with no clue of the warfare or the geo-political realities, transformed the whole question of support, based on religion, i.e. which Islamic country is going to support and help Pakistan and which will help India.



This is a representative image.

There is a fine line that exists between journalism and tabloid style reporting that focuses on bold headlines or angry and shouting people, raising issues just to catch attention, without giving any importance to authenticity.

Some of these 'experts' clubbed all Muslim majority nations as Islamic countries. Many Arab countries support India. In real sense, international diplomacy is a nuanced arena where overt alliances often mask complex strategic calculations. For instance, while countries like Turkey and China have supported Pakistan at multilateral forums, their positions are also driven by broader geopolitical rivalries and their own regional interests.

These experts also wondered whether countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE, Turkey, Iran, Oman, Qatar will support Islamabad in the name of Ummah or the global community of Muslims?

They forget that there is no Ummah in this political sense. The bigger question was whether the Islamic countries will nurture their own economic and geopolitical benefits by standing aloof and limit their support to rhetoric? Based on their regional aspirations and geopolitical interests their responses varied but the messaging was the same. In the current conflict, Saudi Arabia – the so-called leader of the Islamic world chose diplomacy as the ultimate tool.

Gulf nations have invested billions of dollars in India to diversify oil-based economy, so its commitment to India and to safeguard the Indian interest are much larger, and it showed in support to India. Saudi Arab has invested more in India, compared to Pakistan. Millions of Indians are employed in Gulf.

plans for India rather than Pakistan, in addition to employing over 2.6 million Indians working in the country. In fact, when the Kashmir attack unfolded, PM Modi was in Jeddah to discuss the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor and advance an investment deal worth \$100 billion. Further, on Thursday (May 8), Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir made a surprise visit to India to meet External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

Similarly, UAE has already announced plans to Iran made its intentions clear by sending Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi to Pakistan and India to hold talks and de-escalate the tension. At present, India is delivering on an agreement to develop and operate the Shahid Beheshti terminal at Chabahar Port, including a \$120 million investment and a \$250 million credit line for infrastructure development. In this background Iran cannot jeopardise its interests with India.

A campaign was seen against Turkey, as Pakistan used some of the Turkish-made drones in its attacks against India. But this fact does not prove that Turkey would have supported Pakistan in its every military campaign. In fact, India's trade with Turkey, has seen significant growth in recent years, with bilateral trade reaching \$10.43 billion in FY2023-24, whereas Turkey's trade with Pakistan reached a historical high of \$1.4 billion only last year. The bold stand taken by India made it very clear that it will not tolerate any further terrorist threat. This stand was further supported by the diplomatic outreach by India, and after briefing the UK and US about the Operation Sindoor, it raised the issue with Saudi Arabia, Iran, UAE & other countries, most of whom supported India as evidenced by the priority given by both Saudi Arabia & Iran by involving their foreign ministers to initiate a dialogue between the two countries.

The lessons are very clear that the media – particularly electronic media needs to regulate and improve itself while following the journalistic ethos and norms. Just TRPs or eye balls will not help gain credibility. Govt did well by deploying Col Sofia Qureshi as MoD's spokesperson and acknowledging the contribution of every soldier who was martyred. India, as an emerging power with a difference, delivered a clear and assertive message to global powers, that now onwards India will play according to its own playbook. Hope, world takes notice of it positively. [The author is a New Delhi-based senior commentator. The views are his own.]



Bulldozing citizens' houses is no justice, this practice must be stopped at ground level



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In recent years, a controversial trend has emerged—the use of bulldozers by authorities to demolish homes of people linked with an offence or even a protest, often without a court ruling. While local officials defend these actions as lawful crackdowns on illegal encroachments, human rights' groups argue that these demolitions frequently bypass the due process and disproportionately impact the Indian Muslim community. Even, the term bulldozer justice (sic) gained currency after several such incidents in states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Delhi, as bulldozers were used to demolish houses or shops.

One widely reported case was in Prayagraj (2022), where the home of Afreen Fatima's father was demolished following a speech. Under the Indian Constitution, Article 14 guarantees equality before the law. Article 21 ensures right to life and personal liberty, including shelter, while Article 300A states that no person shall be deprived of their property except by authority of law. Additionally, under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNS) and municipal by-laws, demolition of illegal constructions must follow a structured process: Issuance of a written notice, time allowed for appeal or regularization & opportunity for property owner to respond, with final execution only after legal confirmation. Many recent demolitions seem to ignore these steps & raise questions about legality and fairness. The Supreme Court of India has repeatedly emphasized due process in *Olga Tellis v. BMC* (1985), it ruled that eviction without notice violates Article 21. In *MCGM v. Sunbeam High Tech* (2023), it reiterated the illegality of demolitions without proper legal procedure. In the Jahangirpuri demolitions (2022), the Supreme Court intervened to halt bulldozers mid-action and demanded an explanation from the municipal authorities, calling for restraint and legality. "Rule of law cannot be sacrificed at the altar of public Perception or administrative

pressure." - SC Bench, 2022. There is impact on communities, especially, working-class Muslim families. Due to lack of prior notice, there is destruction of belongings & documents, psychological trauma, loss of shelter and livelihood enforcement and a lack of similar action in other case. Suggesting a selective targeting & politicization. An official in Maharashtra apologized, claiming that he was not aware of law. But house had been demolished. Can apology help? Even when a person is not held guilty and other family members too live in the house. How can such collective punishment be given without court verdict! SC decision to demote an erring official for bypassing law, brings a ray of hope.