

O HERALDO

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Hands Off! is a bold stand against Trump's vision for America

Thousands of Americans have shown that together, the voice of the people can speak truth to power and shake the foundations of any high seat – even if that seat is that of the President of America. Thousands have gathered across US cities like Washington DC, Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles, and in world capitals like London and Paris to voice their dissatisfaction with the Trump administration's policies. Appropriately called the 'Hands Off!' movement, it has been organised by a coalition of pro-democracy groups, and going by the scale of the protests, the movement marks a significant moment in the resistance to President Donald Trump and his influence on American society.

The protests were not just an isolated reaction to a single policy, but a broad condemnation of what many see as the Trump administration's attack on American democracy, rights, and freedoms. The overarching message was clear: Americans are fed up with the erosion of their rights, the dismantling of public services, and the unchecked power of billionaire elites like Elon Musk, whose influence over Trump's policies has become an increasingly divisive issue.

In Washington DC, where one of the largest rallies took place, protesters carried signs decrying Trump's attacks on immigrants, civil liberties, and public services. Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland perfectly caught the sentiment of the crowd when he compared Trump's political strategy to that of authoritarian regimes, saying, "No moral person wants an economy-crashing dictator who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing."

While the protests were largely peaceful, the potential for violence remains a concern. In Lafayette, Indiana, tensions escalated when a man brandished a firearm after a confrontation with protesters. It is a reminder that while protests are a fundamental part of democracy, they can also be a flashpoint for conflict

Moreover, Trump's harsh stance on immigration and his controversial rhetoric about annexing countries like Greenland and Canada have stoked fears of rising nationalism and authoritarianism. The protestors' chants of "Hands off Canada" and "Hands off Ukraine" highlighted the international concern over Trump's erratic foreign policy decisions. The Hands Off! protests also served as a platform for voices from marginalised communities, including immigrants, LGBTQ+ individuals, and civil rights advocates. In Boston, protests were driven in part by the recent raids on university students, which saw international students like Rumeysa Ozturk detained by ICE agents.

However, it wasn't just the policies that ignited these protests, but the lack of accountability for Trump's actions. The President spent the day golfing in Florida, with no public engagements to address the concerns of millions of Americans. The White House's response was to double down on Trump's position, defending his actions while accusing Democrats of misrepresenting his policies. This dismissive attitude towards the protests only served to fuel the fire.

The timing of these protests is also significant. In the wake of a turbulent week for the Trump administration, including a special election loss in Florida and the surprising victory of a Democratic candidate in Wisconsin's Supreme Court race, the protests represent a moment of resistance at a critical juncture in American politics. Some hope that this nationwide uprising will gain momentum, ultimately shaping the outcome of the 2026 congressional elections and sending a clear message that Trump's policies and influence are no longer welcome.

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Leaving aside such tense moments, the Hands Off! movement has shined a light on the widespread discontent with Trump's presidency and has provided protesters with a platform for collective action and a chance to reclaim power. As Rep. Ilhan Omar stated at the Washington protest, "If you believe in a country where we take care of our neighbours, look after the poor and make sure our children have a future they can believe in, we have to fight for it."

Once he's done with his round, Trump might find the grass not so green on the other side of the course. The growing unrest across the United States and around the world is a wake-up call. As the movement continues to gather steam, and as protesting voices get louder, one thing is clear: the fight for democratic rights is far from over.



ROBIN ROY

Delhi makes jumbo moves in Lanka as dragon's shadow lurks

Even as Sri Lanka President Anura Kumara Disanayake had been on a four-day visit to China between January 14 and 17, 2025 and the two countries inked around 15 pacts and reinforced its focus on economic and technological development... it may be recalled how Sri Lanka's economic dependence on Beijing has already led to a "debt-trap" situation for the island country.

It may be recalled how in October 2023, when scientists from Sri Lanka and China had conducted joint research on-board Chinese vessels.

Despite concerns from India and the US, Sri Lanka granted the nod, however, later Sri Lanka had imposed a one-year moratorium on allowing foreign research vessels to operate in its waters. This move was aimed to prevent potential diplomatic conflicts and also to avoid geopolitical issues.

Now, India is stepping up its presence in Sri Lanka to counter Beijing's growing influence after it launched key energy and defence projects in partnership with the UAE.

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Colombo, India, the UAE, and Sri Lanka inked a major pact to develop an energy hub in Trincomalee, a strategic port city on Sri Lanka's eastern coast. The move is seen as a direct response to China's \$3.2 billion oil refinery deal in Hambantota.

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Importance of Trincomalee

The real time scenario also holds importance given China's bid to hold more power in the Indian Ocean Region. Also, Bangladesh Chief Advisor Mohammed Yunus' recent plea asking China to increase its arms to Bangladesh has been enough reason for India to worry.

Meanwhile, PM Modi has promised Disanayake full support in rebuilding as Sri Lanka

continues to battle a crippling economy. The trilateral project in Trincomalee is significant to New Delhi's efforts to beef up its presence in the country especially at a time when China continues to enhance influence through large-scale infrastructure projects.

"Sri Lanka has a special place in both our Neighbourhood First Policy and Vision 'MAHASAGAR'. In the last four months, since President Disanayake's visit to India, we have made significant progress in our cooperation," PM Modi had said.

Growing Presence

India's growing presence in Sri Lanka comes as Colombo tries to recover from a severe financial crisis. India was the first country to step in with a \$4 billion support. New Delhi has also helped Sri Lanka finalise a debt restructuring process involving loans worth \$1.36 billion from Indian banks.

Defence Deal

India and Sri Lanka signed a landmark defence cooperation agreement and later President Disanayake said, "Sri Lanka will not allow its territory to be used in any manner that could threaten India's security interests."

The defence pact is widely seen as part of India's larger effort to push back against China's growing footprint in the Indian Ocean Region. China already controls the Hambantota Port on a 99-year lease, raising enough concerns for New Delhi.

By strengthening economic, energy and defence ties, India is making it clear that it intends to remain Sri Lanka's closest and most reliable partner — and attempting to limit China's influence.

Importance of Katchatheevu

Katchatheevu, the 1.15-square-kilometre uninhabited island located in the Palk Strait between India and Sri Lanka keeps haunting the political discourse.

At a time when China is looking to expand its presence, Katchatheevu assumes great strategic significance for India.

India, Lanka claims

Historically, Katchatheevu belonged to the Ramnad Zamindari, which was established in 1605 by the Nayak dynasty of Madurai. It consisted of 69 coastal villages and 11 islets, including Katchatheevu.

Katchatheevu was a source of revenue for the Sethupathi dynasty as it leased the island first to the Dutch in 1767 and to the British East India Company in 1822.

This is how India has a historical claim to the barren island.

In its counterclaim, Sri Lanka says that the Catholic Church on the island comes under the Jaffna Diocese. That was the basis of the Sri Lankan claim on Katchatheevu.

However, after India's Independence, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru did not give much importance to the island and was of the opinion that the issue would lead to an unnecessary dispute with Sri Lanka, according to the External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

While the Indo-Sri Lankan Maritime Boundary Agreement of 1974 gave away the island to Sri Lanka, Indian fishermen were still allowed to access Katchatheevu.

Two years later, in 1976, the maritime boundary line in the Sethusamudram region between the two neighbors was divided, ending the Indian fishermen's visits to the island.

Katchatheevu and the adjoining seas fell within the jurisdiction of Sri Lanka.

Threat of China

There is always the fear that China could gain a foothold closer to India because of Katchatheevu and Hambantota is testimony of that following the vulnerability of Sri Lanka and its economic condition.

Of late, India has attached a great deal of significance to the islands in the IOR.

With the rise in Beijing's ambition over the last decade, China's potential hold in Katchatheevu and the entire Palk Strait is also being feared.

"The Indian Ministry of Defence must strengthen INS Parundu naval air base at Uchipuli and Thanjavur Air Force (Tamil Nadu) to thwart the growing Chinese presence near the Sri Lankan island of Katchatheevu and Northern Province of Sri Lanka," said a 2020 paper 'China's Rising Missile and Naval Capabilities in the Indo-Pacific Region' in the Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs of the American Air and Space Forces.

(Writer is Senior Journalist and Former Senior Associate Editor, O Herald, Goa.)

Govt needs to step in, save hotel Mandovi

In a development that may have shocked many Goans, the era of the iconic Mandovi Hotel in Panaji, reputed to be Goa's first star-rated hotel, could come to an end as the hotel is set to go under the hammer.

Following a prolonged financial dispute, the concerned bank has reportedly announced plans to auction the property. It is learnt that the hotel, once a thriving landmark located along the picturesque Mandovi River, has remained closed for several years due to ownership controversies and unresolved financial liabilities.

The hotel, which has hosted countless visitors and dignitaries over the decades, holds historical significance for Goa's hospitality industry. Built in 1952, it is Goa's first hotel that matched international standards. It was a truly fine hotel, combining the Goan tradition of hospitality and convenience.

The hotel was well equipped to take care of business meetings and conferences with their professional and experienced team that ensured appealing banquet presentation, quality food and reliable service. Now all this will be history. Probably very few Goans will be in a position to take part in the auction which reportedly starts with a base price of Rs 4 crores. The successful bidder could be a businessman from Delhi or any other state. The state government needs to step in and take over

the hotel and save it from going to a non-Goan bidder as the hotel represents the true spirit of Goan hospitality.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Stop conversion of paddy fields

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant while speaking after inaugurating the Multi-purpose Cyclone Centre by the Water Resources Department at Aquem-Margao on Saturday last week has asserted that his government will not allow any development in No Development Zones and low-lying fields in the state. He has also made a fervent plea to the people of Goa not to fill up their paddy fields to set up shops and scrap yards just to earn Rs 50,000 and destroy them for the next 100 years.

Well, today most Goans are seen casually filling their ancestral low-lying paddy fields, converting them into private commercial properties overnight by first planting a few trees to bluff people around and then slowly constructing illegal structures with the full backing of some panch members and then selling the converted properties to outsiders.

The government should bring in strict laws at the very earliest to stop conversion and sale of paddy fields.

Jerry Fernandes, Saligao

letterstotheeditor

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All letters must contain correct postal address and telephone number. Letters are liable to be edited for brevity.

Charity begins at home

There was a time in the not so distant past when India would periodically make big noises about deserving to have a permanent seat in the UNSC. Then there was bluff and bluster about being a 5 trillion dollar economy, a big hoo-haa about being a peacemaker and a wheeler-dealer at the international level. Being a member of Quad, G15, and an honorary member of G20 etc, the list of tall claims is an endless one.

On the other hand, our scorecard on the ground is dismal to say the least. A young IAF pilot got killed in an ageing plane that crashed, he sacrificed his life by not bailing out so that the plane could go down in an unpopulated area. The Chief of Air Staff has complained publicly that his squadrons are at least two generations behind and no new hi tech 5G (China is on to 6G) planes are in the pipeline. India has also gotten rid of the time tested traditional army recruitment by foisting the Agniveer sham. No one knows what the long term implications are, and no one seems to care; or is too scared to voice their opinion.

You cannot have any kind of impact on the global front if you are not strong in anything, militarily or otherwise. After the initial years when Modi hollered

about 'Atmnirbharta' ie self sufficiency, the notion was binned and India has been a net importer of everything that is crucial. For all that gas about us being a super power in information technology, India has not invented a single software product of our own, we are proud to work as cyber coolies for international technology companies. We must understand that as the most populous country in the world, it is best if we take care of ourselves first. We should solve our energy needs, achieve food security, housing needs, upgrade medical and education infrastructure, and jettison this absurd notion of becoming a Vishwaguru. As someone said, "charity begins at home."

Misha Sarin, Varca

Let us save the birds

Today, birds are facing a steady decline in their population around the world due to various factors, such as exposed electrical wires, mobile towers, and poor management by concerned authorities. In India, one of the primary reasons causing bird fatalities is exposed electrical wires. Additionally, mobile towers pose a significant threat to birds flying at high altitudes. Countries like Germany and the Netherlands have implemented underground electrical systems, significantly reducing the risk of

people's *edit*

ALL-IN-ONE DOESN'T WORK!

ALISHA MARTINS

Let's get real and straight to the point—why do relationships fail?

Yes, complications, uncertainties, doubts, miscommunication, and a host of other reasons can lead us there. Right? I came across a very useful reel once that explained this quite simply—or at least, it spoke clearly to me. Mind you, you may need to read this twice to fully understand it. We wish to remain in relationships—of any type: parental, romantic, or friendly—with one person, and strive to make them last, so long as they fulfill our every emotional and physical need. We seek love and care from our parents; we don't expect it from everyone else. We expect them to provide, guide, understand, and be okay with everything we do. Similarly, in a romantic relationship, we want one individual to remain faithful to us, be our friend, match our level of creativity, understanding, and financial stability. We want them to either reflect the qualities we possess or fill the gaps we know we don't want to leave empty.

And this—this is when relationships fail. We expect ONE person to give us EVERYTHING.

For instance, consider why one employee's skillset is different from another in a company. If a company could run solely on the shoulders of one individual and still meet its goals, why would it hire different professionals with specific qualifications and skills? We often forget this simple reality: we are human, with varying capacities and desires. Now, as you read this, you might be thinking, "No, in a marital relationship, there's no place for a third person or a fourth, and fulfilling each other's needs is the duty of both partners." That's true—absolutely true—because we're nurtured in a culture, supported by various religions that considers a relationship with one individual as holy, right, and safe. But how does one find all the expected qualities in one person and make them fit seamlessly into our lives? It's much like expecting one electrical socket to fit into another—it just doesn't work that way. Makes sense? Say one person is an extrovert and ends up with someone more reserved. It may appear that their differences drew them together. But if one tries to change the other's personality, that's when the real problem begins. Change may sound good to one person's ears, but it can damage what could've been a very enjoyable, evolving relationship.

Psychological theories suggest that expecting one person to fulfill all our emotional needs can create imbalance. We're naturally meant to rely on a network of support—not just one individual. And trying to change someone often disrupts the healthy tension between individuality and togetherness that relationships actually need to thrive. Honestly, I believe that for any relationship to work, both individuals must commit to staying true and open with each other, keeping things clear, and sharing their differences to build something new. As long as that strengthens the relationship, there's no reason for it to fail. In the end, maybe the key isn't finding the perfect person—but building an honest, imperfect connection that makes space for growth, not pressure.

harm to any living creature. India should learn from them.

Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai

Explosion cannot be treated lightly

The tragic blast at an illegal firecracker godown-cum-factory in Deesa GIDC, north Gujarat, which claimed the lives of 21 workers from Harda, Madhya Pradesh, has raised serious concerns about a deeper, possibly well-connected illegal network. The explosion cannot be treated as a mere tragic accident, but behind it there exists a larger nexus between the operators of the ill-fated Harda firecracker factory — where a similar explosion killed 13 and injured 200 in December last year.

Investigations have revealed a potential Ahmedabad connection in the illegal operation. According to sources close to the investigation, aluminium powder — a key component in firecracker production, was being supplied by an individual from Narol, Ahmedabad. This material was allegedly being used to manufacture firecrackers without any government authorization.

There must be strict penalties for violations, coupled with a robust legal framework that supports swift and decisive action against miscreants. This includes cracking down on the illegal sale and distribution of firecrackers and ensuring that those who flout the ban face significant consequences.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, Chennai