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Trump should think hard before he speaks on Kashmir

It was a short and tense military standoff between India and Pakistan, but once the ceasefire was agreed upon by the two nations, a certain Donald J Trump — who refuses supporting credits in any narrative, military, diplomatic or otherwise — emerged as the wrecker-in-chief. The American President announced the cessation in hostilities before anyone else, bragged about US brokering the deal, made an unwarranted offer to work with both countries to find a solution to the Kashmir problem after a “thousand years”, and, last heard, was talking about stopping nuclear conflict just in time.

In an alternate universe, Captain America would have been proud of Trump.

However, in this real world, Trump's flurry of pronouncements — and his complete disregard for carefully established diplomatic protocol and propriety — have elicited a mix of horror, consternation and alarm in New Delhi. Finally, on Monday evening, Prime Minister Narendra Modi pushed back in a nationally televised address, asserting that any dialogue with Pakistan, “will be on terror and PoK only... Terror and trade cannot go hand in hand; water and blood cannot flow together.”

On May 10, Trump took to social media with a dramatic announcement: the United States had facilitated a “full and immediate ceasefire” between the two nuclear-armed neighbours following four days of escalating military tensions, which included drone strikes, missile exchanges, and the tragic deaths of over 60 people. Trump lauded the “historic and heroic” decision made by both countries and expressed eagerness to “work with you both to see if, after a thousand years, a solution can be arrived at concerning Kashmir”.

The celebratory tone of the announcement seemed jarringly disconnected from the reality on the ground — and from India's longstanding position. Hours after Trump's statement, the Indian government issued a clarification: the ceasefire was the outcome of direct talks between the Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMOs) of India and Pakistan, not a result of foreign mediation. In fact, India made no mention of the United States' involvement at all. The silence was intentional.

For New Delhi, Trump's remarks represent more than just a diplomatic misstep. They amount to a serious oversimplification of one of the most complex and emotionally charged disputes in modern geopolitics. The Kashmir issue cannot be reduced to a misunderstanding between neighbours needing a foreign referee. It is a matter deeply rooted in the subcontinent's post-colonial history, identity, and national sovereignty.

Trump's offer, couched in vague optimism about peace, fails to recognise this reality. His suggestion to “solve Kashmir” as though it were a mere territorial dispute ignores the layers of history, trauma, and political stakes involved. More dangerously, it feeds into Pakistan's long-standing efforts to internationalise the issue and present Kashmir as an unresolved global dispute rather than an internal matter between two sovereign states governed by the 1972 Simla Agreement, which explicitly states that all bilateral issues must be resolved through direct negotiations.

India's refusal to engage with Trump's mediation narrative is consistent with this principle. Even during past crises such as the Kargil War of 1999 or the 2008 Mumbai attacks India has fiercely guarded its position against external involvement. Any perception that India has ceded control of the narrative — or worse, accepted third-party mediation — could damage India's international standing and revive a problematic “India-Pakistan hyphenation” that it has worked hard to dismantle. As the world's fifth-largest economy and an emerging global power, India's aspirations cannot be viewed through the same lens as a struggling Pakistani state perpetually seeking international intervention.

Trump's offer also raised eyebrows among opposition leaders and foreign policy analysts within India. The Congress, along with other voices across the political spectrum, demanded a clear explanation from the government about the sequence of events and the role of the United States. Their concern is justified. Even the appearance of accepting external mediation on Kashmir could undermine decades of foreign policy consistency and embolden Islamabad's propaganda machinery.

While Pakistan was quick to thank Trump and his administration for their “leadership”, India's quiet rebuttal should not be mistaken for indecision. Rather, it reflects a deliberate diplomatic strategy: avoiding public escalation while refusing to validate attempts at internationalising the issue. In the delicate dance of foreign policy, silence can sometimes speak louder than rhetoric.

What Trump fails to grasp is that Kashmir is not just about lines on a map. It's about a people, a history, and the ideological foundations of two nations that were born out of partition and pain. Attempting to “solve” Kashmir without acknowledging these dimensions is not only naive but risks exacerbating tensions rather than resolving them. Kashmir is not a bargaining chip for global showmanship. And while New Delhi must remain open to diplomatic dialogue, it must also defend its red lines.

comment



ROBIN ROY

PROUD TO BE DESI

On the National Technology Day on May 11 that is on Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi remembered the 1998 Pokhran nuclear tests and said India is emerging as a global leader in different aspects of technology.

“Best wishes on National Technology Day! This is a day to express pride and gratitude to our scientists and remember the 1998 Pokhran tests. They were a landmark event in our nation's growth trajectory, especially in our quest towards self-reliance,” Modi said in a post on X.

“Powered by our people, India is emerging as a global leader in different aspects of technology, be it space, AI, digital innovation, green technology and more,” he said.

In this article let's look at the naval armory India has stockpiled to add to its defence muscle power.

In his address in January this year, PM Modi expressed pride in the indigenous construction of these combatants — INS Surat, INS Nilgiri and INS Vaghsheer, saying, “It is a matter of pride that all three frontline naval combatants are made in India. Today's India is emerging as a major maritime power in the world.”

The Indian Navy has around 67,252 active personnel and 75,000 reserve personnel. It has a fleet of 150 vessels and submarines and 300 aircraft



As India positions its strategic posture in a rapidly shifting Indo-Pacific, the Indian Navy has emerged as a critical pillar of the country.

The Navy has made major strides over the past decades which is in response to the increasing assertiveness of other powerful nations in the region.

To reiterate what the PM said about Make in India, let's look at our naval stable.

INS Surat was the fourth and final ship of the P15B Guided Missile Destroyer

Project. It is equipped with BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles and long-range Surface-to-Air Missiles. It has an indigenous content of 75% and is equipped with state-of-the-art weapon-sensor packages and advanced network-centric capabilities.

INS Vikramaditya and the newly added INS Vikrant are the navy's flagship aircraft carriers, showcasing India's ability to project its air power from sea. INS Vikramaditya is said to be one of the biggest ships of the Indian Navy, with a maximum beam of 60 m, spanning an area equal to about three major soccer grounds. It stands 20 storeys tall from its keel to its highest point. INS Vikrant can carry an air group comprising 36 aircraft and has a STOBAR configuration along with anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare abilities.

INS Nilgiri is the first ship of the P17A Stealth Frigate Project that has been designed by the Navy's Warship Design Bureau. INS Nilgiri is a major advancement over the Shivalik-class frigates, incorporating significant stealth features and reduced radar imprint through state-of-the-art technology.

INS Vaghsheer, the last submarine of the P75 Scorpene Project highlights India's growing capabilities in the sub design and build. Built in partnership with France's Naval Group, it reinforces the Navy's undersea warfare capabilities.

INS Kolkata is a part of the Kolkata class, also known as Project 15 A, of the guided-missile destroyers built for the Indian Navy. This section has two more ships all constructed by Mazagon Dock Limited. They are said to be one of the biggest destroyers operated by the Indian Navy. INS Visakhapatnam is the first stealth-missile guided missile destroyer of the Visakhapatnam class, and was commissioned in November, 2021.

The Indian Navy has Shivalik-class frigates, known for their stealth and advanced weaponry, and the Kamorta-class corvettes, designed for anti-submarine warfare, play crucial roles in coastal defense. Manufactured by the Mazagon Dock Limited from 2000 to 2010,

these frigates have been named after a Himalayan mountain range. While the Talwar class frigates were developed under a joint Indo-Russian venture.

Meanwhile, Corvettes are smaller, agile warships designed for coastal defence and quick strikes. Manufactured indigenously by the public sector shipyard Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers, India's most modern corvettes, namely INS Kamorta, INS Kadmat, INS Kiltan and INS Kavaratti, were inducted into service in the mid and late 2010s.

The subs section include INS Chakra, INS Arihant, INS Kalvari, INS Khanderi and INS Karanj. INS Chakra is a nuclear-powered attack submarine of the Indian Navy. The construction of this sub began in Russia in 1993. It was leased to India in 2011, and after many trials, it was commissioned into service as INS Chakra on April 4, 2012. INS Chakra returned to Russia in 2021. INS Arihant (SSBN 80) is a nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine and also the lead ship of her class.

Amphibious Warfare Ships are required for transporting troops and equipment and thus in the Eighties, India decided to build its own landing ships.

The Indian Navy's recently concluded Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise TROPEX 2025 offered a window into its operational preparedness. The biennial exercise involved over 75 warships, 50 aircraft, and 15 submarines and was conducted across the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal.

The exercises included aircraft carrier operations, long-range missile firings and anti-submarine warfare drills in coordination with the Indian Air Force and Army.

TROPEX 2025 reaffirmed the Indian Navy's commitment to being a Combat-ready, Credible, Cohesive, and Future-ready Force.

The exercise successfully tested operational strategies, integrated joint-force capabilities, and ensured India's maritime security and defense preparedness.

(Writer is senior journalist and former Senior Associate Editor, O Herald, Goa)

people's edit

BUMPY RIDES ARE DAMAGING OUR BRIDGES

RAGHAV GADGIL

Whenever I pass over any bridge (I pass over the Mandovi bridge often), I experience a bump either on entering the bridge deck or at the place connecting the decks. Usually, two decks connect above the pier (columns supporting the bridge) through an expansion joint. Bridges expand and contract with daily temperature swings. Expansion joints absorb this size change, preventing cracks in the deck and piers.

In theory, vehicles should glide over them seamlessly. But every driver has felt the sudden jolt traversing through their body, triggering a ‘tch’ expression. When concrete bridges are layered with asphalt, these expansion joints are spared and thus create a narrow groove across the bridge length, typically just 2-5cm deep, that concentrates each wheel load into a sharp impact. Bike riders face the maximum brunt: the vertebra is damaged with each bump. What many don't realise is that these bumps are doing more than annoying commuters; they are slowly degrading the bridge itself. Neglected expansion joints can turn every axle into a hammer, sending vibrations through concrete and steel that accelerate structural fatigue and shave years off a bridge's intended lifespan.

Such induced vibrations conflict with the natural vibration frequencies of the bridge. The 50-year-old Borim bridge also has a bumpy road, which possibly transmits trillions of jolts through its body, calling for major repair works. Common people can be charged a fine for overspeeding, but the establishment that caused these bumps or grooves is never questioned. This is also applicable to potholes on bridges.

Research in bridge or road engineering is replete with warnings of the effects of such bumps. Lab work on reinforced-concrete spans shows that an 8 mm joint misalignment can triple the wheel impact force. A vehicle wheel bumping at high speeds produces extra load vibrations on the bridge structure, leading to the development of microcracks that grow under every cycle of traffic. Even though any bridge drives its foundations into the toughest rock down there, the deck starts developing cracks. This makes the water easily penetrate and rust the iron rods inside, weakening the structure. Another threat is the sprouting of weeds, dropped most likely by birds, in such cracks and sinking their roots into the bridge, which causes biological wedge weathering.

Authorities defend speed enforcement by citing safety statistics. They rarely admit that pavement quality and joint upkeep are equal pillars of safety. Speed limits have to be maintained for a reason: slower traffic generates gentler dynamic loads on the bridge. Imagine a giant metal block moving at a constant low speed, with its weight getting uniformly distributed over the bridge deck. If it increases speed, as a direct consequence of physics laws, its load-impact causes unequal distribution on the bridge.

This causes rapid deterioration of the load-bearing capacity of the structure. The bridge is built to absorb some vibrations. But, bumps on the bridge cause additional vibrations that could be more than the bearing capacity, deteriorating the life of the bridge.

A smooth joint at 60 kmph is gentler than a 5cm bump at 40 kmph. Authorities seem unwilling to grasp that truth.

The way two-wheeler riders develop back pain due to such bumps, the bridge also succumbs to the hammer-like blows. Human back vertebrae suffer vertical compression due to incessant jerks, small jerks every day over several years, collectively making the spine weak. The older Zuari bridge was extremely uneven; the wear and tear of the bridge must have been mainly due to this roughness. Overloaded or speeding vehicles hitting a rough joint are a double threat—higher impact and more frequent crossings.

Apart from issuing fines to the speed limit-breakers, RTO should take active steps in the maintenance of the road quality by appropriately communicating with other government departments. The maintenance budget must treat surface smoothness as seriously as structural cracks. Smoothness is cheap insurance. When authorities enforce speed limits, they must simultaneously ensure that the road itself is worthy of those limits. Only then can we be confident that our bridges will stand safely for the next hundred years.

Has Trump & Co mediated the ceasefire?

The ceasefire between India and Pakistan, after a fortnight of confrontation has brought a big relief especially for Pakistan as it suffered casualties in terms of men and materials. The ceasefire may be fragile in view of the historical legacy of conflict between the two countries, and Pakistan's record of provocations, but indications are that it is likely to hold for now.

However, the US President Donald Trump claimed credit for helping stop hostilities between the two warring nations. The development was all the more surprising as Trump had earlier shown his unwillingness to intervene when the two nations went hostile after the Pahalgam terror attack.

The question now arises whether New Delhi has been able to extract a promise that Pakistan will not repeat the Pahalgam episode again? The circumstances point to the prodding of both countries by the US. The ceasefire will no doubt be tested on a daily basis, but the US has driven its point home: It has big stakes in the region and can't afford to let two nuclear-armed neighbours spark a wider conflict. Nonetheless, the government should break its silence on the claim made by US leaders.

Gregory Fernandes, Mumbai

Electricity tariff and services

Today electricity is an essential

letterstotheeditor

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service in corporate and domestic consumption. Generators cannot be used as backup due to pollution and expensive fuel. The use of inverters is limited in scope. We in Porvorim were informed of a shut down of power in the whole of Bardez on May 10 from 6 am to 2 pm but power resumed in our area only around 2.30 pm!

These are extremely torrid hot days, there was an emergency escalation of military conflict going on with Pakistan and such long periods of shut down during critical times are unheard of in frontline nations with today's technology.

Just think of the tremendous damage to cold storage items, all equipment dependent on power and the consequences! In forward nations, even shutting down for a minute is frowned upon and unacceptable. Yes there are power outages and breakdowns, but not planned shutdowns for such long periods! Instead of cutting down on AT&C losses, increasing efficiency and government working towards low cost supply to consumers, they seem to be finding ways and means to raise tariffs and burden the common man further in these days of increasing high prices!

In fact, they have proposed a 5.95% hike! For a government planning space exploration and sending a person on the moon, let us improve our ease of living

and basics on earth?

John Eric Gomes, Porvorim

Pre-poll promises must be kept

This refers to “Consumers feel betrayed as free water scheme gets the axe”. The withdrawal of the popular free water scheme will hit around 60,000 consumers. In the first place, anything that comes free is misused. Examples are water, electricity and food grains. The withdrawal of the zero water bill immediately brought down wasteful consumption of water by consumers.

However, the Apex Court must take a serious view of pre-poll promises which are a hoax on the voters. Pre-promises got a big boost in 2014 with the Rs 15 lakh joke which saw the BJP coming to power with a thumping majority. The Apex Court must ban pre-poll promises 6 months before an election. Alternatively, the Apex Court must compel the govt to make good on its promises.

Robert Castellino, Calangute

Sigh of relief for Pondaites

It is learnt that after two-and-a-half years, the Goa government has finally appointed a surgeon at the Ponda Sub-District Hospital. It is unimaginable that a government hospital which caters to

thousands of patients has been functioning without a surgeon for two-and-a-half years following suspension of the previous doctor.

Patients had to reportedly seek surgical services at the Goa Medical College (GMC) Hospital in Bambolim, at the South Goa District Hospital or private hospital. Imagine for patients having to travel such a long distance from Ponda for anything from major surgeries to minor ones. Physicians and surgeons are often considered pillars of a hospital. They play a crucial role in providing medical care, making diagnoses, and performing surgeries. They are essential for the functioning of a hospital and are often seen as the core of patient care.

Surgeons are indispensable in hospitals because they perform operations to treat illnesses, injuries, and complications, often requiring complex procedures to save lives. They are responsible for leading surgical teams, ensuring procedures go smoothly, and managing postoperative care.

General surgeons are particularly vital in emergency and trauma situations, handling a wide range of surgical needs. The surgical profession is one of responsibility and leadership. When Goa boasts of a robust healthcare system and of making the state a hub for healthcare and medical tourism, the absence of a sur-

geon at a government hospital for more than two years tells a different story. The other key demands of the Ponda Sub-District hospital like CT scan facility, a blood bank and other essential emergency services also needs to be looked into.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Hoax bomb threat email at North Goa

Recent bomb threats at North Goa collector's office via email raises serious concerns about administrative security in the region. Email bombing is a tactic that typically aims to disrupt operations and conceal malicious emails, potentially setting the stage for further social engineering attacks.

Since this threat has caused widespread panic and impacted the lives of people, the rise of cyber crime has become a pressing concern for policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and the public. Despite significant efforts to combat this modern menace, numerous challenges persist, making it difficult to curb the growing threat of cyber crime effectively. Hoax threats are not a joke, and they can have devastating consequences—both for the public and for the perpetrators. Such hoax bomb threats are dealt with in accordance with the cyber terrorism provisions to enable harsher punishments for those behind such threats. Goa is a progressive state and some elements are repeatedly trying to tarnish this image.

K G Vilop, Chorao