



Shrinking Doors: What Global Migration Curbs Mean for India

By Uday Kumar Varma

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The world's most sought-after work visa is suddenly out of reach. In an unprecedented breakdown at U.S. consulates across India, H-1B interview appointments — lifelines for thousands of Indian tech professionals — have been pushed back by months, leaving careers, salaries, research projects, and family plans suspended mid-air. The disruption has struck at the worst possible moment: at a time when the United States has sharply raised H-1B fees and when wealthy nations across the world are hardening their borders in a synchronized tightening of migration rules. India, the single largest supplier of global talent, is feeling the shock more sharply than anyone.

The immediate crisis arrives against the backdrop of a larger global shift in migration policy. As *The Economist* recently noted, governments across the rich world have tightened migration pathways in a remarkably synchronised fashion. The United States has sharply increased costs: new applicants for the H-1B “high-skilled” visa category must now pay an upfront fee of \$100,000, part of a broader trend of fee hikes, premium-processing escalations, and anti-fraud surcharges. Britain has cut its post-study work visa from two years to 18 months and is considering a 6% levy on university fees; Canada has capped foreign-student intakes.

These measures are already reshaping global mobility. According to the OECD, long-term work migration to wealthy countries fell by 20% in 2024, and student mobility declined by 13%. For India, the implications are profound. The country supplies 70% of all H-1B applicants, around 30% of international students in the U.S., 25% in the U.K., and nearly 40% in Canada. At present, 1.8 million Indians are studying abroad, making them the single largest mobile student cohort in the world. But Indian government figures show that the number of Indians heading to the “big four” English-speaking destinations — the U.S., U.K., Canada, and Australia — has fallen by roughly a quarter over the past year, reversing the surge after the pandemic.

It is into this tightening global environment that the current visa chaos in India has erupted.

A sudden breakdown in consular schedules

The U.S. Department of State attributes the unexpected cancellations to a new rule mandating an “online presence review” — essentially, deep social-media and digital-footprint vetting — for all H-1B and H-4 applicants beginning mid-December. Consulate officials say the additional scrutiny has sharply reduced the number of applicants they can process each day.

The result: December appointments have been rescheduled into March, April, and in some cases mid-2026. For applicants, these delays are not mere inconveniences. Many had travelled to India specifically for stamping, timing trips around the holiday season or family events.

Flights have been cancelled, onboarding dates deferred, and living arrangements thrown into uncertainty. Dependents — especially H-4 visa holders relying on their work authorisation — face similar consequences, including potential loss of employment.

Personal, financial, and professional turbulence

The stories emerging from visa applicants are strikingly similar: disrupted holidays, extended unpaid leave, children unable to return to school in the United States, and mounting financial costs. The recent fee hikes amplify the stress — with total H-1B costs now reaching tens of thousands of dollars once employer filings, attorney fees, and premium processing are included.

For U.S. employers, especially in the tech sector, the delays pose serious operational challenges. Companies awaiting critical hires are being forced to slow project timelines, redistribute work, or seek interim staffing. For industries reliant on Indian engineers, data scientists, and AI specialists, the visa backlog represents not just logistical trouble but potential competitive loss.

A perfect storm of structural bottlenecks

Immigration experts point out that the current disruption stems from several converging factors. The new digital-vetting requirement, adding time to each application, reduced availability of interview waivers, forcing more applicants into consular queues, and Consular capacity that has not scaled to meet record-high visa demand from India are proximate factors. Global tightening of migration pathways, which has reshaped the flow of students and skilled workers, concentrating pressure on certain categories — particularly the H-1B further deepens the crisis. Together, these have created a bottleneck that has overwhelmed the system.

Ripple effects for India

The crisis may produce counterintuitive long-term effects. With uncertainty rising abroad, India may see a form of “brain retention”, as skilled professionals reconsider moving overseas. Domestic startups, IT services, and innovation ecosystems could benefit from greater availability of high-quality talent.

But while this could strengthen India’s tech landscape, it also reduces remittance flows and constrains the global exposure that has traditionally fuelled India’s professional mobility.

Consequences for the United States

For the U.S., the backlog poses strategic challenges. American tech and research sectors have been built on a steady pipeline of Indian talent. Slowing this flow may limit access to critical skills in AI, computing, engineering, and healthcare: and diminish the U.S.’s competitive advantage against countries with smoother visa regimes. It will encourage companies to shift operations abroad or invest heavily in automation. Significantly, it will also strain U.S.–India people-to-people ties, a cornerstone of the bilateral relationship. As other destinations streamline their immigration processes, the U.S. risks ceding ground in the global competition for talent.

A decisive moment for global talent flows

The December 2025 visa delays in India are more than a seasonal disruption; they reflect a turning point in global migration policy, with both India and the United States positioned at the centre of the storm. For now, thousands wait — their lives, careers, and families suspended — as policy, security, and geopolitics reshape the contours of opportunity across continents.

Whether the U.S. can maintain its position as the world’s premier magnet for talent will depend on how it resolves crises like these — and how it balances security with openness in a rapidly evolving world.

The cascading visa delays of December 2025 are, in truth, more than a consular scheduling failure. They signal a deeper shift in how rich nations perceive immigration — and how India's place in the global talent order may evolve. Whether the United States chooses to remain open, predictable, and welcoming to those who power its laboratories and companies will determine not just individual futures, but the arc of innovation itself. For now, thousands of Indian professionals wait in crowded airports, family homes, and temporary rentals — holding on to job offers, dreams, and travel folders — as the world's most powerful immigration system decides which way history will bend.

The Threat of Digital Tradecraft in Terrorism | Explained

By Kripa Nautiyal

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A car explosion near Delhi's Red Fort on November 10, killing at least 15 people and injuring over 30, has revealed the use of advanced digital tradecraft in terrorist attacks. This is a sobering reminder that the next frontier in counter-terrorism is not just on the physical terrain, but also in encrypted, and deeply private digital spaces

The unfolding investigation into the recent car explosion near Delhi's Red Fort has exposed a chilling dimension — modern terror modules are no longer merely exploiting ideological or logistical networks, they are also leveraging advanced digital tradecraft to plan and coordinate such attacks. While law enforcement agencies continue to verify all leads, emerging revelations from the probe reify well-established academic research on how violent actors exploit encrypted platforms, decentralised networks, and spy-style communication to evade surveillance.

What happened?

On November 10, a car exploded near Gate No. 1 of the Red Fort Metro Station. The blast killed at least 15 people, and over 30 others were injured, making it one of the deadliest terror incidents in Delhi in recent memory. Indian authorities moved quickly to treat the incident as a terrorist attack, rather than a mere accident, and handed over the investigation to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) under counter-terrorism laws.

Central to the probe are three doctors allegedly connected to the terror module: Dr. Umar Un Nabi, Dr. Muzammil Ganaie, and Dr. Shaheen Shahid, all linked to the Al Falah University in Faridabad. According to investigators, these individuals were deeply involved in the operational planning of the attack.

What were the major findings?

So far, some of the more alarming aspects uncovered include:

Encrypted communication: The trio is alleged to have communicated via the Swiss messaging app Threema, a platform known for its high privacy design. Threema does not require a phone number or email to register; instead, it assigns users a random user ID unlinked to any personal identifier. Investigators suspect that the three accused may have established their own private Threema server, creating a closed, isolated network through which they shared maps, layouts, documents, and instructions. The server may have been hosted either within India or abroad (investigations are ongoing as to its origin). Threema's architecture is particularly useful to evade detection because it offers end-to-end encryption, no storage of metadata, and allows message deletion from both ends. These features make it extremely difficult for digital forensics teams to reconstruct full communication chains.

Sharing information using ‘dead-drop emails’: In what is being described as a classic “spy-style” technique, the suspects apparently used a shared email account (accessible to all module members) to communicate via unsent drafts. Instead of sending messages, they would save drafts; another member would log in, read or update them, and delete them — leaving no outgoing or incoming record on conventional mail logs. This method, sometimes referred to as a “dead drop,” is particularly insidious because it generates almost no digital footprint.

Reconnaissance and ammunition stockpiling: As per interrogations and forensic data, the accused conducted multiple recce missions in Delhi before the attack. Investigators allege that ammonium nitrate, a powerful industrial explosive, was stockpiled, possibly via a red EcoSport vehicle that has now been seized. The use of a familiar vehicle, rather than something more suspicious, may have helped the module remain under the radar during logistics build-up.

Operational discipline and external linkages: Sources suggest that Dr.Umar, who was reportedly the driver of the car that caused the blast, “switched off his phones” and cut digital ties after the arrest of his associates, a sophisticated tactic to limit exposure. Moreover, though investigations are ongoing, some sources suggest that the attack has links with the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) or was following a JeM-inspired module. The layered communication architecture — encrypted apps, dead-drop emails — coupled with infrequent but deliberate physical recces, suggests a cell that counts operational security among its highest priorities.

What about academic scholarship?

The tactics reportedly used in this attack directly align with patterns documented in counter-terrorism scholarship. Researchers have long warned that extremist actors are increasingly using end-to-end encrypted (E2EE) tools to coordinate, share files, and plan in relative anonymity.

Apps like Threema, which minimise or eliminate metadata retention, make it significantly harder for surveillance agencies to reconstruct communication graphs. Moreover, by running a private server, the threat actor effectively bypasses centralised infrastructure and associated law-enforcement touchpoints. The use of unsent email drafts is characteristic of old-school spycraft adapted to the digital age. This method leaves no obvious transmission record, thereby thwarting standard surveillance or legal intercepts.

The blending of encrypted apps, anti-trace techniques (like VPNs), and physical tradecraft (recce, minimal digital footprint) suggests a multi-domain approach to operational security — exactly what academic counter-terrorism analysts have been warning about for years.

What are the implications?

As more terror modules adopt privacy-preserving technologies, traditional surveillance such as phone tapping, metadata collection, and email intercepts have become less effective. This should force law enforcement agencies to rethink investigative architectures.

Threema is reportedly banned in India (under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000), yet the suspects seem to have continued using it via VPNs and foreign proxies. This suggests that bans alone may not stem the misuse of such apps, especially by sophisticated operators. Investigators need advanced capabilities such as being able to track private servers, reverse engineer encrypted networks, and apply memory forensics to trace such modules. Standard device seizures may not be sufficient without specialised technical expertise.

Moreover, if a link to external handlers (such as the JeM) is proved to be true, this attack may be part of a wider network. The level of planning and security discipline shown suggests not a lone cell, but a well-trained, possibly transnational, group.

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India at the Centre of the World: A Decade of Confidence, Conviction and Civilisational Leadership

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In a world increasingly fractured by distrust, rivalry and polarisation, India stands today as an unexpected but undeniable centre of gravity. This rise did not happen by accident; it is the cumulative effect of a decade marked by purposeful leadership, democratic stability, cultural confidence, and a foreign policy that has redefined India's place in world affairs. If the previous centuries belonged to geopolitical might, the coming ones will belong to nations with moral authority — and India has emerged as one such nation, powered by an ancient civilisation and a modern, forward-looking State. This decade has been transformative. India is not merely growing; it is guiding. Not merely rising; it is reassuring. Not merely participating; it is shaping global outcomes. At a time when many nations are building walls, India is building bridges — between continents, ideologies, economies, and cultures. The world, torn between superpower rivalries and leadership voids, increasingly turns to India for reason, balance, and hope.

The hallmark of India's foreign policy today has been strategic autonomy backed by strategic clarity. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar, India has mastered the art of engaging the world without becoming entangled in its camps. This is not non-alignment of compulsion but multi-alignment of choice — working with all, aligning with none, and speaking for many. Jaishankar captured it succinctly: “India today is recognised as a voice of peace, security and stability. When India speaks, it speaks not only for itself but for many others.” India's relevance comes from credibility. During the Russia–Ukraine conflict, India refused to be bullied into taking sides. It took the path of dialogue, urging an immediate cessation of violence, earning praise from both Moscow and Kyiv. Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba himself acknowledged that India's “authoritative voice is vital for peace efforts.” In West Asia, India alone has managed to maintain steady relations with Israel, Palestine and Iran — a rare diplomatic balance that few nations have achieved. In the Indo-Pacific, India has become the anchor of stability, countering aggressive postures through partnerships built on trust rather than threats. Beyond diplomacy, India's peace credentials are grounded in decades of service. As one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping missions — over 2,50,000 troops across 50 missions — India has demonstrated that peace is a practice, not just a position. From Lebanon to Congo, Indian peacekeepers have protected civilians, rebuilt communities, and earned admiration for professionalism and compassion.

If peace is India's message, prosperity is its method. The last decade has seen India rise from the world's tenth-largest economy to the fifth, and is poised to enter the top three. Sectors from digital infrastructure to space, agriculture to aviation, defence manufacturing to renewable energy have undergone radical expansion. The Atmanirbhar Bharat mission has turned crisis into opportunity by pushing for local innovation and global integration. Today, India is the pharmacy of the world, the tech back-office of the world, and increasingly, the digital backbone of the world. India's vaccine diplomacy during the pandemic set a new global benchmark. While richer nations hoarded supplies, India delivered over 240 million vaccine doses to more than 100 countries under Vaccine Maitri — a gesture that strengthened global health and restored faith in humanity. Whether in earthquakes in Nepal, cyclones in Mozambique, tsunamis in the Pacific or, most recently, the devastating floods in Sri Lanka, India was the first responder. This readiness to help is not strategy; it is civilisational duty shaped by the timeless values of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam — the world is one family.

The G20 presidency in 2023 was perhaps India's most visible moment on the global stage. India broke deadlocks that even powerful nations failed to resolve, brought the African Union into the G20 as a permanent member, and reframed global development debates around equity and justice. The theme "One Earth, One Family, One Future" was not a slogan; it was a worldview. Under India's leadership, the G20 became more representative, more humane, and more attuned to the Global South. Part of India's modern rise comes from the regeneration of its soft power. Yoga is now a global phenomenon celebrated in 180 countries. Ayurveda, Indian cuisine, classical arts, cinema, and philosophy have become cultural ambassadors. But the real soft power revolution is not accidental; it is the result of conscious cultural diplomacy. The International Solar Alliance — championed by India — has emerged as a global climate coalition of hope, proving that environmental leadership can come from developing nations too.

Alongside this, the New Education Policy (NEP 2020) is shaping a new generation that is globally connected yet deeply rooted. It promotes mother languages, Indian knowledge systems, and cultural literacy while embracing modern skills like AI, blockchain, and design. It is an educational renaissance that seeks to bridge India's past and future. Naari Shakti — the empowerment of women — has become a moral and developmental pillar. From higher female participation in STEM and armed forces to the passage of the Women's Reservation Act, India is signalling that a rising nation must rise with its women.

But India's success is not merely about India. It has changed the psychology of South Asia itself. When people speak of the region, they often invoke clichés — poverty, conflict, migration. What they ignore is that South Asia is home to 40 per cent of the world's democracy. Despite imperfections, it is one of the world's most vibrant democratic zones. India's constitutional continuity, gigantic election management, culture of alternation, and acceptance of political loss have inspired neighbours to rethink their own democratic journeys. Losing an election in India does not end politics; it begins renewal. This stability has allowed institutions to mature and citizens to develop expectations about how power should change hands. Neighbours trapped in debt crises — from Sri Lanka to Maldives — now see the resilience of the Indian model: political stability, constitutional continuity, and economic prudence. India has become not just the largest democracy, but also the most successful and instructive in the region.

While nations worldwide battle ideological radicalism, India practices pluralism; while many grapple with identity crises, India celebrates diversity; while others retreat into protectionism, India champions globalisation with fairness. The cultural confidence of this decade has allowed India to shed outdated inferiority complexes. The world no longer views India as a land of snake-charmers or call centres, but as a civilisation-state that blends antiquity with modernity. Perhaps the most underrated instrument of India's democratic strength is Mann Ki Baat — the world's largest mass-line communication experiment. Over 110 episodes, it turned communication into a national movement, spotlighting grassroots heroes, ordinary citizens, innovators, environmental champions, and social reformers. It connected the State with society in ways no government program ever has. Mann Ki Baat is India's democratic heartbeat — participatory, people-centric and profoundly inclusive.

India today is shining not like a bird in a cage but like a bird that has discovered open skies. It is no longer content with being a moral spectator or a demographic giant; it seeks to be a civilisational leader. In the last decade, the world has witnessed an India that is strong without being threatening, confident without being arrogant, assertive without being aggressive. It speaks softly but with strength; it mediates without imposing; it leads without dominating. In an era where many nations are building walls, India is building bridges. Bridges between peace and power. Between past and future. Between nationalism and universalism. Between development and dignity. And between responsibility and ambition.

As the world searches for stability in uncertain times, India stands tall — not as a superpower of muscle, but as a superpower of meaning. A nation that shows peace is not weakness, democracy is not chaos, and diversity is not liability. A nation that insists that power without compassion is dangerous, and peace without power is fragile. India’s journey over the last decade offers a simple truth for the world: the future belongs to those who can grow without hatred, rise without violence, and lead without fear. India has done exactly that. And in doing so, it has not just marched ahead — it has shown the world the way.

Forthcoming Elections in Bangladesh & Nepal

By Vappala Balachandran

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Elections in Nepal and Bangladesh in the coming months are of immense interest to India as they may reshape the geopolitics of South Asia and impact our Neighbourhood First Policy

Introduction

Since the last decade, many South Asian countries have been optimistic that their demographic dividend would boost economic growth, resulting in better job opportunities, compared to the ageing population in developed countries, including China, where productivity was expected to dip.

This came to nought when job creation in these countries failed to meet expectations, sparking an explosion of youth anger and leading to drastic changes in government in Sri Lanka (2022), Bangladesh (2024) and Nepal (2025).

While Sri Lanka has become moderately stabilised after its 2024 elections, it remains to be seen how far Bangladesh and Nepal will balance out after their elections in February and March 2026, respectively.

Bangladesh

As Bangladesh heads toward its February 12, 2026, elections, indicators to assess public preferences are puzzling. The controversial 7 January 2024 elections were considered rigged after the Awami League (AL), led by Sheikh Hasina, triumphed with 271 seats. Jatiya Party (Ershad) followed AL at a distance with 13 seats. The remaining seats were won by four minor parties, each with one seat, while independents, mostly AL followers, secured 62.

The Bangladesh National Party (BNP), led by the ailing Khalida Zia and her son Tarique Rahman, boycotted the election after the AL rejected their demands for an independent caretaker government to conduct the polls.

The “Gen Z agitation” that rocked the country began peacefully in July 2024. It had arisen from deep frustration among the youth that the country’s much-advertised GDP growth had not translated into more jobs. The main grievance was against the scheme of reservation of 1/3rd civil service jobs to the families of those who participated in the 1971 Independence War, which went mainly to AL cadre families.

Sporadic violence during these demonstrations went out of control when massive force was used to crush the protests, resulting in 300 deaths. This situation enabled the pro-Pakistan and fundamentalist lobbies to take advantage of the situation, alleging that Sheikh Hasina was India’s puppet. As a result, Hasina was forced to flee on 5 August 2024. An Interim Government (IG) under Dr Muhammad Yunus assumed power on 8 August 2024.

On 10 May 2025, the IG banned AL under the Anti-terrorism Act. On 17 November 2025, the International Crimes Tribunal (Bangladesh), created in 2009 for prosecuting the 1971 war crimes, sentenced Sheikh Hasina to death for alleged crimes against humanity.

Consequently, the proposed February elections would be a contest between the parties that signed the “July National Charter” on 17 October 2025. The main parties are the Bangla Desh Nationalist Party (BNP), the “Jamaat-e-Islami”, Jatiya Party, the National Citizens Party (NCP) and other small groups. NCP is led by the students of the “Gen Z Revolution” in July 2024.

On November 5, the American “International Republican Institute” (IRI) released its findings on the proposed poll after holding 21 meetings with 59 stakeholders, including representatives from political parties, the IG, the Election Commission of Bangladesh, media, international organisations, and civil society. A poll conducted by IRI during September-October and released on December 1, 2025, revealed a disturbing trend that the “Jamaat-e-Islami” was “Strongly liked” by 20% and “Somewhat liked” by 33%, compared to NCP, which had only 6% “strongly liked” and 32% “somewhat liked”. The BNP came in between.

Another assessment, released on November 6 by Husain Haqqani, former Pakistan ambassador to the USA (2008-2011), now a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, highlighted the alleged failures of the IG under Dr Muhammad Yunus “to satisfy almost all the different segments of Bangladesh society”. While IG wants the NCP to have a decisive say as the third force in addition to BNP and Jamaat, this is rendered difficult on the ground due to a multitude of factors like mob rule, failure to bring the previous administration to task by recovering funds allegedly stashed in foreign banks, inability to attract foreign investment due to poor law and order in the country and friction with India which is seriously hurting the country’s economy and trade.

Haqqani also added a very interesting observation regarding the banned AL’s latent influence. He said that some recent polls showed roughly two-thirds of voters as “undecided,” compared to earlier polls in 2025 that had clearly demonstrated preferences for BNP (42%), Jamaat (32%), Awami League (14%) and NCP (5%). He concludes: “The discrepancy between disclosed and undisclosed preferences suggests hidden support for the Awami League despite the ban”. Would this conclusion rhyme with what veteran journalist Subhir Bhaumik had said in an assessment on 21 October 2021 that the Hindus who form 10% of Bangladesh’s population could swing 50 to 60 seats? Would they vote without fear?

A quandary coinciding with the proposed February elections is the holding of a referendum on nearly 50 proposed constitutional changes as agreed by the National Consensus Commission (NCC) and 24 political parties on 17 October 2025. Dr Yunus wants this to take place alongside the elections to reduce expenses. Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin confirmed the date on December 11 and stated a national referendum on political reforms would also be held on the same day.

However, this has led to deep divisions among the “National Charter” parties. While the BNP seeks to hold the referendum simultaneously, the Jamaat and fundamentalist parties insist on keeping it earlier, so that reforms are in place before the elections. The NCP has no objection either way, although it is deeply suspicious of the referendum and wants to reconstitute the Election Commission.

As the elections approach, their differences are becoming apparent. On December 8, BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman sharply criticised the Jamaat on “how the party killed hundreds of thousands and violated countless mothers and sisters during the Liberation War”. On the other hand, NCP, which has formed an alliance with Amar Bangladesh Party (AB Party) and Bangladesh Rastro Songskar Andolan, criticised major parties for “greed for more seats”.

India would remain a significant factor in the February elections. However, the visit of Bangla Desh National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman to New Delhi for a meeting with our NSA

Ajit Doval in November and our PM's message on December 1 expressing concern about Begum Khalida Zia's health, have been welcomed by Bangladesh as New Delhi's gesture to normalise relations with the new governing order.

Elections in Nepal

The mid-term elections in Nepal, scheduled for March 5, 2026, were necessitated by the sudden and massive "Gen Z agitation" in September 2025, which resulted in 76 deaths and the resignation of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli (CPN-UML). As in Bangladesh, an interim government under Sushila Karki, a former Chief Justice and noted anticorruption figure, was sworn in on 13 September 2025. The previous elections were held in 2022 to elect 275 members

Nepal had experienced student revolt, now called "Gen Z", even earlier. Students were in the vanguard when agitation began in 1960, after King Mahendra dismissed the Nepali Congress (NC) cabinet under Prime Minister BP Koirala and introduced a party-less "Panchayat" Raj. Campus agitation over political and educational reforms occurred throughout the 1970s and 1980s, keeping political dissent alive. In 1990, Panchayat Raj was abolished.

However, the Maoist rebellion between 1996 and 2006 radically altered the country's political process. When the Maoists entered mainstream politics, a new agitation to abolish the monarchy began. The agitation received support from other political parties, civil society and students. This forced King Gyanendra, the monarch, to cede power. In 2008, a new constitution was adopted, declaring Nepal a democratic republic, thereby ending 240 years of monarchy.

However, this did not usher in political stability. The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) said in October 2025 that although the trigger for unrest in Nepal was different from a similar overthrow of the governments in Sri Lanka in 2022 and Bangladesh in 2024, the common factor was the anger and frustration of the youth due to a lack of economic opportunities and "perceived indifference from an apparently self-serving political class".

This perception was because the same group of three parties with predictable strategies had been in power across 13 governments between 2008 and September 2025: the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (CPN-UML), the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) (CPN-MC), and the Nepali Congress (NC).

Also, during this period, known faces as Pushpa Kamal Dahal (CPN-MC) and K.P. Sharma Oli (CPN-UML) served as prime ministers three times, while Sher Bahadur Deuba of the NC led the government twice. The only outsider was Khil Raj Regmi, a former Chief Justice who was the prime minister for 334 days during 2013-14. The bottled-up youth frustration was further fuelled by an active social media, which spread it far and wide to unseat the government. The trigger was the Oli government's ban on social media.

According to the Bertelsmann Transformation Index, a measure of the development status and governance of political and economic transformation processes, Nepal made "little to no progress during this time on indicators such as party system, performance of democratic institutions and prosecution of office abuse."

As a result, youth fury was directed against the "status quoist" political class, which sought to continuously hold onto symbols of power. An example cited was Prime Minister Oli's removal of the "two-term and the 70-year age limit" on executive positions in his CPN-UML, which strengthened his control. An immediate reason for public fury was the incident, indicating the privileged class's callousness, evidenced by a hit-and-run incident involving a minister, which injured an 11-year-old girl who was left unattended. The public rose in protest after visuals were shared nationwide on social media.

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How Delhi's Red Fort Blast Was Funded by JeM and Others

By Vipul Tamhane

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The explosion near Delhi's Red Fort on November 10, 2025 rattled national security, not just due to its brutality, rather because of the planners behind it and their funding methods. With probes advancing, evidence points to university-affiliated individuals using institutional access to gather funds, but supporting what officials suspect was a planned series of attacks across cities.

The money behind terror often points to obscure people on the edges of communities. Yet this situation is different. Those charged include physicians and academics, whose roles are tied to care and teaching, are now accused of using their positions to support extreme harm. Instead of simple methods, they reportedly mixed legal income with hidden channels, creating a complex system. Such tactics pose serious challenges for law enforcement everywhere.

Recent probes show the militant cell gathered nearly ₹64 lakh via documented routes, using individual donations along with funds from groups and cross-border inflows from Jaish-e-Mohammed in Pakistan. The funding setup shows autonomy paired with network ties, which are self-reliant yet connected to larger extremist structures.

The self-financed part seems especially disturbing. Money came from personal funds, in tune of around ₹26 lakhs was gathered, for instance Shaheen Saeed gave ₹5 lakhs while Adil Rather put in ₹8 lakhs. These individuals weren't poor activists using last coins; instead, they held regular jobs and steady paychecks. Yet they used that financial stability to fund deadly attacks, showing a mindset similar to how others budget for homes or pensions.

Investigators also found ₹18 lakh in cash hidden inside a plastic bag, located in Shaheen Saeed's room at Al-Falah University, Faridabad. Although the origin of this large amount is still being checked, finding it on campus brings up serious concerns regarding supervision failures. This incident suggests possible exploitation of academic spaces, which are potentially linked to funding extremist activities.

The global angle brings extra challenges. While intelligence groups uncovered a ₹20 lakh hawala deal, thought to have come from a Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) aiming to support the medical team's actions. These informal money flows, bypassing regular banks, that have often fueled terrorist activities over time. The key point here? This transaction was purposeful, indicating JeM likely picked and nurtured this group of professionals deliberately. Funding wasn't random; it pointed toward building specific skills on purpose.

The spending shows clear, cold calculation. About ₹3 lakh was used to buy 26 quintals of NPK fertiliser was sourced from Gurugram and Nuh, which is usually for farming but can turn into explosives when misused. An estimated ₹5-6.5 lakh covered a Russian-made assault rifle; Dr. Muzammil Shakeel acquired it, yet authorities found the weapon in someone else's storage unit. A Maruti Brezza was paid for entirely in cash, part of multiple cars reportedly meant for use in planned assaults, highlighting their ability to move large sums undetected.

These were not sudden buys driven by emotional impulses. Nearly 2,900 kg of explosives likely built up slowly over many months or even years. Such careful gathering implies planning; it also shows control over supplies. That kind of organization is usually seen in armed forces rather than small attack groups.

Central to the network is Shaheen Saeed, seen by officials as key to coordination. Aside from funding, reports suggest she organized arms purchases while also obtaining a freezer to store explosives. Her path stands out, where the sources state she joined Jamaat ul-Mominaat under JeM's female branch and later took charge of activities inside India. Should this be confirmed, it signals a strategic change for JeM, using a trained woman to manage local units, possibly because she draws less attention compared to male members.

Dr. Muzammil Shakeel shows a different side of this growing danger. Supposedly brought in by an extremist preacher, he had to obtain substances for bombs, using his science background in harmful ways. While doctors joining terrorist plans have happened elsewhere before, such cases are uncommon in India, suggesting this incident might influence how recruiters operate later.

The Al-Falah University angle brings a new layer to the case. Although no clear proof ties the university's finances directly to the explosion funding, authorities are separately investigating it for suspected money laundering. According to the Enforcement Directorate, the head of the organization made more than ₹415 crores from fake accreditation deals, labeling them as illegal earnings. Such actions may make financial misconduct seem routine, which could allow darker transactions to go unnoticed.

The situation looks worse when seen in wider terms. Because officials think the explosion at the Red Fort wasn't isolated, but part of a larger plan targeting several cities at once, indicating careful coordination. Such operations likely depended on solid funding, secure messaging systems, alongside active local teams. Since large amounts of explosives were found, it's clear the group aimed for something much bigger than what actually took place.

This situation calls for quick action from policymakers. To start, banks should improve tracking of cash-heavy activities, especially when professionals are involved, since they're often overlooked. Next, schools with dorms need better safety checks and tighter control over money flows. Lastly, spy agencies ought to update their risk analysis methods so that people with jobs and degrees who use legal earnings to support attacks which academically is termed as self-financing terrorism, are no longer missed.

The Delhi Red Fort explosion probe shows a troubling shift: future threats might not match old images. Instead of familiar figures, suspects could be physicians - caring in daylight, dangerous after dark. Some may even teach students each morning while secretly plotting mass casualties later. Their funding? Not only covert foreign flows, but also income saved from legal jobs over time.

As the inquiry moves forward, a key point becomes clear, that terrorism in India is changing; therefore, so should our defense systems. While threats shift shape, responses can't stay fixed. Because tactics adapt, strategies must too. Since risks grow more complex, solutions need flexibility. When danger transforms, readiness shouldn't lag behind.

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India is Proud of: Naushad Ahmad Dube



Naushad Ahmad Dube is from a village Dehri in Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh, located near Kerakat tehsil, about 35 km from the district headquarters. In this village some Muslim families have started using surnames like Shukla, Dubey, Tiwari, Singh, and Kayastha. According to Naushad, "Our ancestors told us that they were Brahmins. They converted from Brahminism to Islam a few generations ago due to conditions prevailing in those days. That's why they are now trying to reconnect with their roots in which they have faith. Naushad says that even as children, they had a feeling that their caste, such as Sheikh, Pathan, or Syed, was not their own, but borrowed. He says some Seven or Eight centuries back his ancestors Lal Bahdur Dube converted to Islam and became Lal Mohammad Sheikh alias Lalam Sheikh.

Naushad Ahamad Sheikh completed high school in the village, then went to Qatar and did Post Graduation in Urdu. He provided a good education to his children. His daughters went to a hostel for higher education, people from his own religion opposed this. His one daughter did Master's in Law (LLM) and she was University Gold Medalist. Another Daughter did Master's in Science (M. Sc.). Fatwas were issued against him for sending his daughters to study. His son did MBA and is serving abroad.

He proudly says he hasn't left Islam and tells people to call him a 'Muslim Brahmin'. They are simply reconnecting with their roots. They also keep cows and wear a tilak (a religious mark on the forehead). They don't speak ill of anyone. He says, nowadays, there's a group of people who advocate beheading, do not understand the true meaning of Islam.

In the same village lives Pandey ji or Irshad Ahmad Pandey who stays just two houses away from Naushad Ahmad Dubey.

Many others like Naushad and Irshad are following the same practice by adding the surnames Mishra, Pandey, Tiwari to their names.

“We started this practice around two years back when we came to know about our genuine ancestry. We got to know that we all were Hindus who got converted many generations ago,” says Naushad Ahmad with a saffron stole around his neck.

They all follow Islamic practices and also go to the temple as well to pay obeisance to Hindu deities. They follow the holy Quran but also take part in aarti at the village temple.

There are many such examples in the Oudh region where many Muslims remember their ancestral roots in Rajput, Brahmin and Kaystha lineage and proudly talk about that.

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