

# OUR OPINION, THEIR OPINION

**"The goal of social justice and all round development can't be achieved through ideas but actions."**  
**Mehiel Alber**

## MODI-VANCE TALKS EASE TARIFF WORRY

**P**M Narendra Modi's talks with US Vice-President JD Vance have brought a measure of calm to what was threatening to become a full-fledged tariff war. The high-level engagement, held on the sidelines of a multilateral summit, reaffirmed the strategic importance of Indo-US ties and signalled a desire on both sides to iron out trade irritants without resorting to retaliatory measures. With India being one of the fastest-growing major economies and the US a key investor and export destination, maintaining a healthy trade relationship is in mutual interest. Vance's comment expressed optimism over the ongoing bilateral trade agreement talks which, he said, present an "opportunity" for a modern trade agreement. The decision to defer tariff hikes and re-engage through the Trade Policy Forum is a welcome move. However, thorny issues remain. The US is pushing hard for wider access to India's dairy market, which remains a politically sensitive subject due to cultural and economic factors. Similarly, American retail giants like Walmart are seeking fewer restrictions on operations in India, especially in e-commerce, a sector where local players have demanded stronger regulation to protect indigenous enterprises. While India is right to protect its domestic interests, it will be expected to remain committed to trade liberalisation within reasonable parameters. A balance between safeguarding local livelihoods and offering space for international players is possible—provided there is clarity in rules. The broader Indo-US partnership—spanning defence, technology, and climate cooperation—are unlikely to be undermined by the trade disputes. The Modi-Vance meeting offers a timely opportunity to set a more constructive tone in bilateral trade discussions.

## Trump's failing economy may turn worrisome

American workers are desperate for someone who will be on their side, and who will make trade policy — and all economic policy — work for them, not MNCs. The President they put their faith in is making the economy worse. They're hungry for an alternative

**T**he president's nonsensical tariff saga is unleashing economic chaos, hurting working people through cancelled manufacturing projects, higher grocery prices and lost retirement savings. It is also pushing too many progressives to hop into bed with Wall Street and retreat to the old and disastrous corporate-centered way of thinking.

There is a third option: Embrace a trade policy that truly levels the playing field for workers.

Tariffs, when used with a clear and consistent strategy, are a necessary part of any economic policy that looks out for workers. But clear and consistent, Donald Trump's tariffs are not. And his domestic economic agenda does next to nothing to help workers.

Growing up in Mansfield, Ohio, in the 1960s, I went to Johnny Appleseed Junior High with the sons and daughters of unionised workers making steel, cars, tyres and appliances at the Westinghouse, General Motors, Mansfield Tire and Tappan Stove factories nearby. By the 1970s, executives had moved many of these plants south in search of lower wages. Unsatisfied, they then lobbied Congress to pass the North American Free Trade Agreement and permanently decrease tariff rates with China — again, in search of lower wages. Compliant politicians obliged.

The deals they struck helped hollow out the middle class and devastated entire communities. Workers saw whose opinions mattered to the "serious people" in Washington and on Wall Street. They rarely have a seat at the table and their interests are so often overlooked.

Trump rose to power by understanding many workers' legitimate anger. He told workers that yes, the system is rigged against them — and on that, perhaps that alone, he was right. He knew that millions of working Americans wanted destruction.

But the destruction Trump voters asked for? Surely not higher prices on bananas or coffee that we can't

grow in the US, or interruptions in supply chains with Canada.

Unfortunately, like so much with Trump, his actual policy doesn't come close to living up to the promises he made.

Instead of ushering in a better economy where workers are the winners, he is pushing costs higher and hurting small businesses, creating uncertainty that will make manufacturers less likely to invest and create jobs here and inflicting more economic pain on the workers who put their faith in him — all while endorsing a budget that includes a massive tax cut for the wealthiest 5 per cent. We have already seen companies cancel billions of dollars in planned factory construction. That will only get worse.

But it's become clear there is a deeper damage Trump may do to workers: We're seeing a troubling revival in the old, neoliberal Washington-Wall Street consensus on trade.

Too many Democrats are turning to the same corporate crowd that brought us NAFTA, the Central American Free Trade Agreement and the aborted Trans-Pacific Partnership to argue against Trump's tariff policy. One analyst on MSNBC recently approvingly quoted the Wall Street Journal editorial board to make her point.

The last thing Democrats should be doing is elevating the same old, out-of-touch economists who led us astray. Following their guidance was an economic disaster for working people in places like Ohio and a political disaster for the Democratic Party.

There is still a need for — and a strong desire among workers for — a dramatic overhaul of the global trading system.

Lost in the discussion of these tariffs is the reason corporations outsource jobs and the reason they lobbied so hard for "free" trade deals in the first place: They want to pay lower wages and fewer benefits to their workers, and follow weaker environmental protections.

In the age of artificial intelligence, more American jobs will be

at risk of falling victim to the insatiable corporate appetite for offshoring that cuts costs to fatten profits. For years now, companies have been sending data processing, call centre and other customer service jobs to low-wage countries.

One 2022 report concluded "the greater a sector's exposure to AI, the more likely it is to offshore jobs to lower-income countries." Soon, Americans working in areas like marketing, financial analysis and software development could see their jobs sent overseas.

Our trade policy should target the countries that are the biggest destinations for outsourcing and worker exploitation, like China, Mexico, India and Malaysia. A universal tariff, or tariffs on countries like Canada, aren't tailored to the biggest risks to American jobs, but they do drive up prices for working people.

It should also come as no surprise that China, in addition to being a destination for outsourcing, also engages in unfair trade practices to artificially subsidise the cost of its products. We need tariffs on industries such as steel or solar panels, where China and other countries buttress their companies to kill their competition.

But you can't have a fair, level playing field if it's constantly changing. We can't expect companies to make long-term investments in moving production to the US if they have no idea what the policy will be from day to day. Nor can we expect companies to move entire global supply chains overnight without working Americans paying a massive price.

Politics isn't really about left or right, it's about who you fight for and what you fight against. American workers are desperate for someone who will be on their side, and who will make trade policy — and all economic policy — work for them, not multinational corporations. The president they put their faith in is making the economy worse. They're still hungry for an alternative.

**BY-SHERROD BROWN**

## What do 'expert level' talks signal for progress of Iran-US nuclear negotiations?

**N**egotiations between Iran and the United States over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program will move Wednesday to what's known as the "expert level" — a sign analysts say shows that the talks are moving forward rapidly. However, experts not involved in the talks who spoke with The Associated Press warn that this doesn't necessarily signal a deal is imminent. Instead, it means that the talks between Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and US Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff haven't broken down at what likely is the top-level trade — Tehran limiting its atomic program in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

"Agreeing to technical talks suggests both sides are expressing pragmatic, realistic objectives for the negotiations and want to explore the details," said Kelsey Davenport, the director for nonproliferation policy at the Arms Control Association who long has studied Iran's nuclear program.

"If Witkoff was making maximalist demands during his talks with Araghchi, such as dismantlement of the enrichment programme, Iran would have no incentive to meet at the technical level." That technical level, however, remains filled with possible landmines. Just how much enrichment by Iran would be comfortable for the United States? What about Tehran's ballistic missile program, which US President Donald Trump first cited in pulling America unilaterally out of the accord in 2018? Which sanctions could be lifted and which would be remain in place on the Islamic Republic? "The most important determinant of expert talks' value lies in whether there is a political commitment to do something and experts just need to figure out what," said Richard Nephew, an adjunct fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy who worked on Iran sanctions while at the US State Department during negotiations over what became the 2015 nuclear deal.

"If the experts also have to discuss big concepts, without political agreement, it can just result in spun wheels." Experts and the 2015 nuclear deal The 2015 nuclear deal saw senior experts involved in both sides of the deal. For the US under President Barack Obama, Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz reached an understanding working with Ali Akbar Salehi, then the leader of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran. Both men's technical background proved key to nailing down the specifics of the deal.

Under the 2015 agreement, Iran agreed to enrich uranium only to 3.67% purity and keep a stockpile of only 300 kilograms. Today, Iran enriches some uranium up to 60% purity — a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%. The last report by the International Atomic Energy Agency put Iran's overall uranium stockpile in February at 8,294.4 kilograms.

The deal also limited the types of centrifuges Iran could spin, further slowing Tehran's ability to rush for a bomb, if it chose to do so. It also set out the provisions of how and when sanctions would be lifted, as well as time limits for the accord itself. Reaching limits, relief and timelines require the knowledge of experts, analysts say.

"A nonproliferation agreement is meaningless if it cannot be effectively implemented and verified," Davenport said.

"The United States needs a strong technical team to negotiate the detailed restrictions and intrusive monitoring that will be necessary to ensure any move by Iran toward nuclear weapons is quickly detected and there is sufficient time to respond." It remains unclear who the two sides will be sending for those negotiations.

Hiccups already heard in these negotiations. Both the Americans and the Iranians have been tightlipped over exactly what's been discussed so far, though both sides have expressed optimism about the pace. However, there has been one noticeable dispute stemming from comments Witkoff made in a television interview, suggesting Tehran could be able to enrich up to 3.67% purity. However, analysts noted that was the level set by the 2015 deal under Obama. Witkoff hours later issued a statement suggesting that comparison struck a nerve: "A deal with Iran will only be completed if it is a Trump deal." "Iran must stop and eliminate its nuclear enrichment and weaponisation programme," Witkoff added. Araghchi responded by warning that Iran must be able to enrich.

"The core issue of enrichment itself is not negotiable," he said.

**BY-JON GAMBRELL**

## Peace interrupted: Rethinking civilian security after the Pahalgam massacre

**I**n this ground-level reflection, Singh examines the recent killing of 28 civilians in Kashmir's Baisaran meadow, highlighting a tactical shift in militant behaviour. The incident, he writes, is a reminder that militancy adapts—and so must our frameworks. Protecting soft civilian spaces, fostering community trust, and preempting psychological warfare are now as essential as boots on the ground.

In a place long described as paradise, the echoes of gunfire were the last thing anyone expected to hear.

On April 22, 2025, Baisaran—a meadow perched like a quiet green crown above Pahalgam—was filled with ponies, picnics, and the kind of laughter that had only recently returned to Kashmir. Then came the shots. In minutes, 28 tourists lay dead. Among them were children, honeymooners, a naval officer on leave, and two foreign visitors whose journey to peace ended in silence.

The assailants came cloaked in camouflage, moved with practised calm, and disappeared into the forest as swiftly as they had emerged. There were no slogans, no claims shouted, just precision. It was not only a crime. It was a message.

Kashmir has seen violence before, but this attack felt different. It did not target a checkpoint or convoy, and it did not seek confrontation with security forces. Instead, it aimed for the most human



of spaces: a leisure trail, a family vacation, a moment of peace. The victims weren't participants in conflict; they were symbols of recovery.

The Resistance Front (TRF), which later claimed responsibility, alleged that the attack was in protest of demographic shifts—referring to the post-Article 370 domicile policy that, they claim, threatens the region's character. But that was the political footnote. The real intent seemed more psychological: to provoke fear and unsettle hope.

Militancy in Kashmir has entered a quieter, deadlier phase. Gone are the high-pitched gunbattles of the past decade. A strategy of erasure remains—the erasure of optimism, co-existence, and the idea that a place wounded can also heal.

Survivors speak of the assailants asking names, the kalma, checking for circumcision. The implication is chilling: that this was not just a massacre but a selective one. It points to a renewed drive

toward communal polarisation—an effort to turn cultivated anger into social fracture.

And yet, the tactic itself was not new. Insurgent movements across the world have long recognised the power of targeting symbols. The 2015 Paris attacks struck concert halls and cafés, not government buildings. The 2008 Mumbai attackers stormed hotels, not barracks. The pattern is familiar. The goal is always the same: to tell the world that joy is fragile and that fear walks even in places that claim to be safe.

What does this mean for internal security forces? The answer is - recalibration.

In conflict-prone zones, the idea of "vulnerability" must evolve. Security can no longer be limited to convoys and cantonments. It must extend to marketplaces, temples, trails, and meadows—spaces where people choose to live, not just survive.

Baisaran, for instance, had returned to prominence pre-

cisely because it was untouched. Unarmed. Unburdened. That very openness made it a target. The goal of militancy is not to win a war. It is to ruin the peace.

So, how do we protect spaces without turning them into garrisons?

The answer lies in intelligent presence—not domination but anticipation. Local QRTs (quick response teams) trained for terrain, plain-clothes patrols embedded in the crowd, and real-time data on movements and anomalies must all be part of the everyday security architecture. This is not about putting guns behind every tree. It is about knowing which tree to watch.

But no security system can function without community. The forest guide, the shopkeeper—they know the rhythm of a place. They sense when something is off. But do they feel safe enough to say it? The answer depends on how the state listens.

Community intelligence

doesn't flow from fear. It flows from trust. For that, we must build systems that reward vigilance, protect anonymity, and—most importantly—respect the people they seek to include.

Equally important is the narrative battlefield. In the hours after any attack, truth becomes a casualty. Rumors race ahead of facts. Photos are doctored, motives distorted. Here, too, the state must respond—not just with law, but with language. Clarity, compassion, and credibility are our best defence against disinformation.

Still, the long-term response must be deeper. Policing alone cannot outpace the psychology of terror. It must be paired with fairness, opportunity, and visible justice. Because what militants fear most isn't bullets—it's belief. The belief that people can live without them.

The Pahalgam killings are not the first of their kind. But they could be a turning point—if we allow them to sharpen our resolve, not paralyse it. In conflict zones, peace is not an event. It is a discipline. It must be practiced every day, in quiet improvements, quiet investments, and quiet vigilance.

In the end, the most potent answer to violence is not more violence. It is continuity. It is the same tourists returning next season. It is a child's laugh in the same meadow. It is life—unchanged, unshaken, and unafraid.

**By-OP Singh**