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WIDE LENS REPORT

APRIL 2025

GLOBAL VIEWFINDER

**54 YEARS LATER,
THE FORGOTTEN GENOCIDE**

FOCUS
FORWARD

**INDIA'S BEACON OF PEACE SHINES BRIGHT
DURING GENOCIDE AWARENESS MONTH**

**WITH CHINA IN MIND, NEW ZEALAND
WARMS TO INDIA IN**

STRATEGIC SHIFT



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54 YEARS LATER, THE FORGOTTEN GENOCIDE

The 54th anniversary of Operation Searchlight, the chilling onset of the 1971 Bengali genocide orchestrated by Pakistan's military. On that fateful day of April in 1971, General Tikka Khan, later dubbed the "Butcher of Bengal," launched a ruthless assault in Dhaka. Troops stormed Dhaka University, rounded up intellectuals, and targeted Hindu neighborhoods, initiating a bloodbath that claimed nearly three million lives. Between 200,000 and 400,000 women endured mass rape, many forced into military camps as sex slaves. As we observe Genocide Awareness Month this April—commemorating tragedies like the Armenian Genocide, the Tutsi slaughter in Rwanda, and the Anfal campaign against Iraqi Kurds—Bangladesh's overlooked agony demands remembrance.



Pakistan's genocide in Bangladesh was no mere civil war but a calculated extermination of Bengali nationalism. For nine months in 1971, Pakistan's military and Islamist militias systematically hunted intellectuals, activists, and journalists, culminating in mass executions before surrender. Despite three million deaths and hundreds of thousands of women raped, Pakistan has never acknowledged these atrocities.

The world's response was unconscionable—America under Nixon ignored desperate cables from its own consul in Dhaka, while global powers dismissed the slaughter as an "internal matter." As we observe Genocide Awareness Month, justice for Bangladesh remains unfulfilled, with Pakistan still evading accountability for one of history's most overlooked atrocities.

INDIA'S BEACON OF PEACE SHINES BRIGHT DURING GENOCIDE AWARENESS MONTH

As the world marks Genocide Awareness Month this April, a time to reflect on the scars of history and recommit to preventing such horrors, India stands tall as a global exemplar of peace and resilience. From the timeless teachings of Mahatma Gandhi to its unwavering dedication to United Nations peacekeeping, India offers a compelling narrative of hope and action—one that resonates deeply with the month's mission to honor victims and build a future free from atrocity.

In India, the philosophy of Ahimsa, or non-violence, is more than a historical footnote; it's a living legacy that continues to inspire. Gandhi's vision of resolving conflict through dialogue and dignity rather than destruction echoes powerfully during Genocide Awareness Month. It's a reminder that the seeds of peace, when sown with conviction, can avert the descent into violence that has too often stained humanity's past. This April, India's cultural ethos provides a lens through which the world can reimagine conflict resolution—a positive force amid the somber remembrance of genocides like those in Rwanda, Bosnia, and beyond.

India's contribution is not confined to philosophy. On the ground, its commitment to global harmony shines through its extraordinary role in UN peacekeeping. With over 250,000 troops deployed across more than 49 missions since the 1950s, India ranks among the top contributors to these efforts, earning accolades for its professionalism and compassion. Indian peacekeepers have brought stability to some of the world's most fractured regions—places like South Sudan, the Congo, and Rwanda, where the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi left an indelible mark. In Rwanda, Indian personnel helped protect civilians and rebuild a nation, embodying the spirit of Genocide Awareness Month champions.



This dual legacy—ideals of non-violence paired with boots-on-the-ground action—positions India as a global leader in the fight against identity-based violence. "India's peacekeeping efforts are a testament to our belief that peace is not just an aspiration but a responsibility," said a senior official at the Ministry of External Affairs, speaking on condition of anonymity. "Gandhi taught us that humanity thrives when we choose unity over division, and we carry that forward in every mission."

This April, India has a unique opportunity to amplify its story. Schools could host discussions on Ahimsa as a tool for peace, while cultural festivals might celebrate the courage of Indian peacekeepers who've risked their lives to shield the vulnerable. Such initiatives would not only honor the victims of past genocides but also inspire a new generation to embrace India's peacemaking mantle.

As the world pauses to remember, India's example offers a powerful counterpoint: a nation that has turned the pursuit of peace into both an art and a duty. In the shadow of history's darkest chapters, India's light burns bright—a beacon of what's possible when resolve meets compassion.



INDIA: FROM DREAMS TO DELIVERY, A NATION TRANSFORMED



Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the stage at the What India Thinks Today (WITT) Global Summit 2025, hosted by TV9 Network at Bharat Mandapam, to herald India's transformation into a global powerhouse. The two-day event, ending March 29, drew leaders, innovators, and luminaries, but Modi's address—reverberating into April—stole the spotlight, weaving a narrative of resilience, ambition, and cultural pride.

"Today, the world's attention is on Bharat," Modi declared, marveling at India's leap from the 11th to the 5th largest economy in just 7-8 years—a feat backed by fresh IMF data showing India alone doubled its GDP in a decade. This \$2 trillion surge, he said, lifted 25 crore people from poverty, forging a "neo-middle class" brimming with dreams and dynamism. With the world's largest youth population fueling innovation, Modi cast India as a nation reborn.

He revisited the COVID-19 crucible: "Many believed it would take years for every Indian to receive the vaccine. But Bharat proved all doubts wrong." India not only rolled out homegrown vaccines but supplied doses to over 150 countries, a testament, he said, to its "values, culture, and way of life." This global goodwill, paired with an "India First" foreign policy shift from equidistance to "equi-closeness," has amplified India's voice.

Modi touted pioneering initiatives—the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, the International Solar Alliance, and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor—as India reshapes a post-Western world order. At home, he celebrated triumphs like Swachh Bharat and Ayushman Bharat, transforming lives and mindsets. "Bharat is not just a nation of dreams," he proclaimed, "but a nation that delivers," eyeing a "Viksit Bharat" by 2047. As April dawns, his words linger: India's moment has arrived.

“

Today, the world's attention is on Bharat, on our nation. No matter which country you visit, people there are filled with a new curiosity about Bharat. What exactly happened that a country which took 70 years to become the world's 11th largest economy rose to the 5th position in just 7-8 years?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

AT What India Thinks Today (WITT)
Global Summit 2025



”

“Doubling the GDP is not just about numbers—it has a real impact. 25 crore people have risen out of poverty, and they have become a part of the neo middle class.”

PM Modi

“For many decades after independence, a mindset was promoted in Bharat that considered only foreign products to be superior... But today, the situation has changed. Now, people ask upfront —‘Brother, is it Made in India or not?’”

PM Modi

”

RAMADAN CHRONICLES

IN PAKISTAN, A RAPE CRISIS UNFOLDS AMID RAMADAN

The arrest of suspects in the gang rape of a married woman near Faisalabad's M-4 motorway bridge has reignited fury over Pakistan's unrelenting sexual violence crisis. Occurring during Ramadan's sanctity, the assault—where armed robbers tied the victim's husband and raped her in a sugarcane field—exposes a nation failing its women, despite swift police action and hollow governmental pledges.

Pakistan's Unyielding Rape Epidemic

Pakistan's veneer of progress shatters with each brutal headline. The Faisalabad case, one of at least two gang rapes in Ramadan, mirrors a relentless pattern—152 sexual assaults in Karachi alone in 2024, per ANI News, with conviction rates languishing below 3 percent despite legal reforms. Areej Chaudhry, ex-Miss Pakistan, calls it “unsafe,” advocating firearms for self-defense amid systemic apathy.

Punjab's Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz promises justice, yet activists decry a culture shielding perpetrators. The War Against Rape notes police indifference; underreporting masks the true toll. As Ramadan ends, Pakistan's women remain trapped in a cycle of violence, abandoned by a justice system that arrests but rarely convicts, leaving despair where hope should bloom.





CHINA'S RAMADAN CRACKDOWN IN XINJIANG

In Xinjiang, China's iron fist squeezes tighter during Ramadan. Uyghur Muslims face a chilling edict: no fasting allowed. Turpan's police wield "ears"—spies, including 70 to 80 coerced Uyghur officers—watching for defiance.

"No one is allowed to fast," a local official declared, reversing brief leniency for the elderly.

In Peyziwat, residents film daily meals under duress, a grim ritual to dodge punishment. Fifty-four of 56 interrogated in Turpan were nabbed for fasting; their fate's a dark secret. Spies—neighbors, cops—stalk villages, while public feasts mock the faithful. Beijing's campaign, branded genocide by the UN, bans a sacred Pillar of Islam, cloaking repression as "anti-extremism." For Uyghurs, faith is a battleground, survival the prize.



INDIA'S MUSLIMS MARK A PEACEFUL EID IN HARMONY



Across India, 200 million Muslims celebrated Eid with serene namaz at Eidgahs, shared festive feasts, and reveled in unity—no provocative slogans, no violence. In Uttar Pradesh alone, over 31,000 locations saw prayers unfold smoothly, a testament to community-administrative synergy. Unlike 2022's tensions, 2025 shines as a milestone of peace, free of communal strife. President Droupadi Murmu and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar hailed the occasion, weaving greetings of progress and cultural harmony into the festive tapestry. Ramadan and Eid unfurled with joy and reflection, a vibrant showcase of India's commitment to coexistence. With no major incidents marring the celebrations, this year's tranquility stands as a beacon of hope, illuminating a nation thriving in diversity and goodwill.



EVEN EID BRINGS BULLETS IN PAKISTAN



As Eid al-Fitr began on March 30, 2025, with the Shawwal moon's sighting, Karachi's children—9-year-old Asiya, 11-year-old Arm, and others—should have been savoring holiday sweets. Instead, stray bullets from celebratory gunfire pierced their innocence, wounding at least 12, including kids, across Lyari, Orangi Town, and beyond. This annual bloodbath, defying bans, turned festivity into mourning, with hospitals like Jinnah and Civil flooded by victims. Pakistan's failure to halt this ritual—echoed in 2024's 15 Eid injuries and 2023's 17—lays bare a nation where even sacred days drip red. Past crackdowns, like Sindh's 2022 vows, ring hollow against unchecked lawlessness. Leaders offer empty words, but Karachi's gunfire proves Pakistan's rot: a society where joy and violence blur, and innocence falls to bullets as reliably as the moon rises.



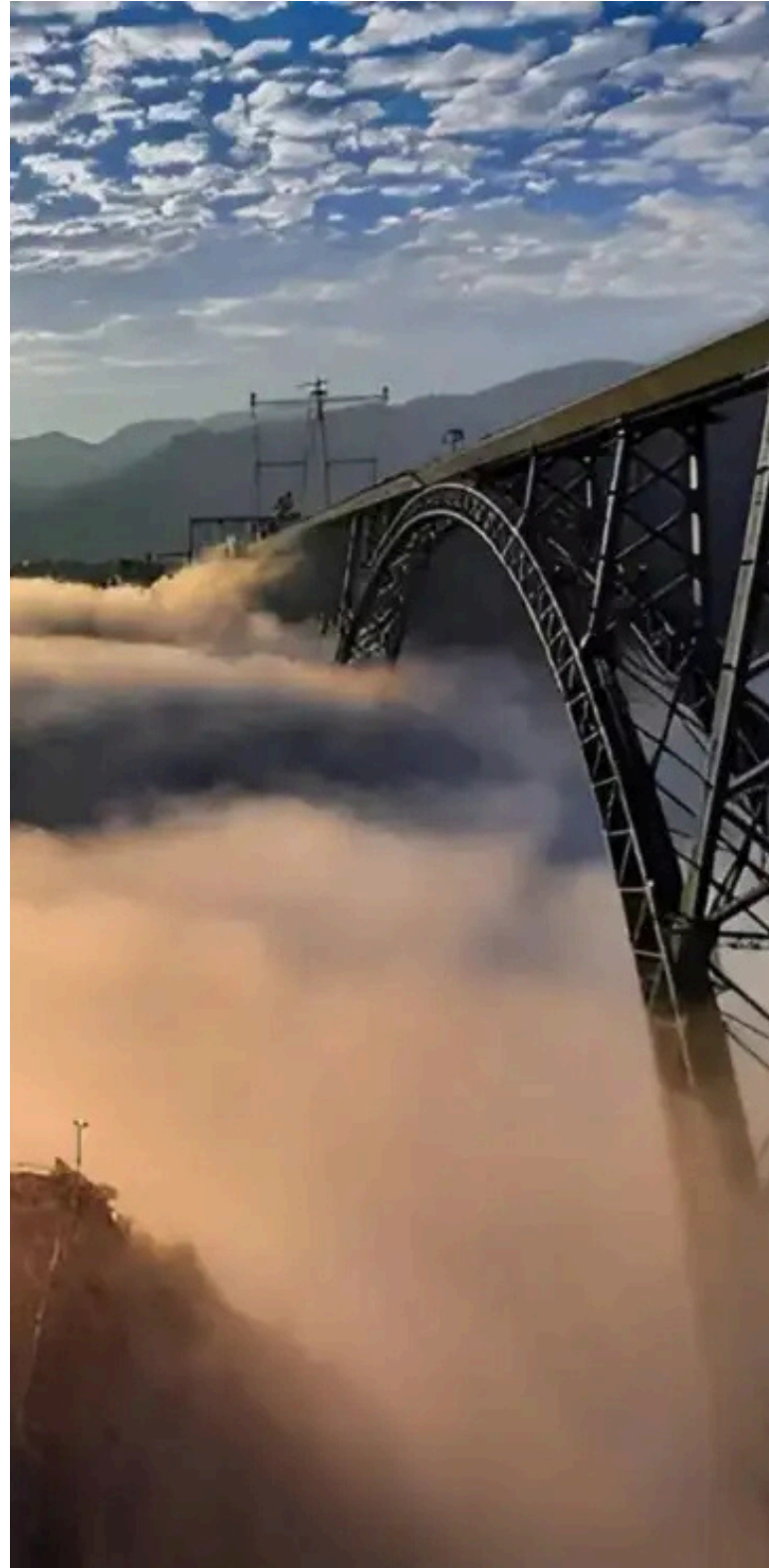
A TALE OF TWO KASHMIRS: INDIA'S \$1.26 BILLION INVESTMENT SURGE VS. PAKISTAN'S STAGNATION IN POK

Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) languishes in neglect, a resource-rich region crippled by Islamabad's indifference. Hydropower and timber are plundered to enrich Pakistan's core, leaving PoK's citizens mired in poverty and unemployment. Promises of autonomy are a sham—local leaders bow to Islamabad, dissent crushed by a heavy military hand. Youth face bleak futures, exploited and unheard, while Pakistan stokes unrest across the border rather than uplifting its own.

This stagnation stands in grim contrast to the thriving Kashmir under India's wing, where investments soar and opportunities bloom. PoK's potential festers, a casualty of a regime more invested in chaos than progress, its people trapped in a cycle of deprivation.

India's Jammu and Kashmir is a triumph of ambition, fueled by \$1.26 billion in investments since 2019 under Narendra Modi's bold leadership. Tourism hit 10.8 million visitors in 2024, bolstered by \$168 million in infrastructure, while a \$600 million agricultural revolution—like Baderwah's lavender fields—thrives. Industry booms with \$3.4 billion, spawning 2,000 units and 63,000 jobs. Roads, tunnels, and a \$1.2 billion metro signal a vibrant future. From Srinagar's IT hubs to all-weather connectivity, India's Kashmir pulses with growth, offering youth a Silicon Valley dream.

This prosperity starkly overshadows Pakistan's neglected PoK, proving India's commitment to peace and progress transforms lives where Pakistan's apathy only deepens despair.



INDIA AND MALDIVES FORGE A RUPEE-RUFIIYAA FUTURE



India's economic vision shines as the Reserve Bank of India unveils a landmark deal: trade with the Maldives can now settle in rupees and rufiyaa. This \$1.26 billion initiative slashes costs, boosts efficiency, and solidifies India's leadership in South Asia. Building on a November 2024 pact, it's a win-win—India's rice and machinery exports meet the Maldives' seafood and tourism, flourishing without dollar reliance. With \$400 million and Rs 30 billion already gifted to strengthen Maldivian reserves, India's "Neighborhood First" ethos, championed by PM Modi, turns past tensions into a thriving partnership, underscoring its growing global influence in a vibrant display of economic ingenuity.

INDIA'S CULINARY STARS SHINE ON ASIA'S 50 BEST RESTAURANTS LIST



Seoul's dazzling awards ceremony on March 25 unveiled Asia's 50 Best Restaurants for 2025, a revered list launched in 2013 to spotlight the continent's top dining experiences. Judged by over 300 culinary experts, it's a global guide for food lovers—and India shines brightly.

Mumbai's Masque, ranked 19th, dazzles with Chef Varun Totlani's ten-course tasting menu (Rs 5,950), a celebration of India's seasonal riches served in a stylish ex-textile mill, hailed as a trailblazer in innovative cuisine.

New Delhi's Indian Accent, securing No. 46, marks its 13th year on the list, reimagining Indian flavors with flair under Chef Shantanu Mehrotra. Its six-course Chef's Tasting Menu (Rs 6,000 for two) pairs tradition with global wines, a testament to India's culinary evolution. Seven more Indian gems—Kasauli's Naar (66), Bengaluru's Farmlore (68), Mumbai's Americano (71), The Table (88), The Bombay Canteen (91), and Delhi's Inja (87) and Dum Pukht (89)—grace the 51-100 ranks, showcasing India's vibrant dining ascent.

CHINA'S ECONOMY STUMBLES UNDER THE WEIGHT OF WASTEFUL SPENDING



China's Economic Daily sounded an alarm: decades of reckless investment are choking the nation's growth. Under the pseudonym Jin Guanping, it flagged a tripling of the incremental capital output ratio—from 2.84 in 2008 to 9.44 in 2023—proof that billions yield dwindling returns. Local governments, awash in \$1.97 trillion of hidden debt, chase prestige with highways to nowhere and ghost factories, ignoring real needs.

"These projects yield minimal benefits," the critique snapped, spotlighting a regime squandering trust and cash. Beijing's fix—smarter spending—clashes with a culture of waste, where political vanity trumps public good, leaving health care and schools starved as debt balloons.

China's infrastructure obsession, once its growth engine, now haunts it. Guizhou's bridges and rails, barely used, epitomize a 100 percent debt-to-GDP fiasco.

The Economic Daily demands a shift to "targeted" innovation, but local officials, hooked on borrowing and unchecked by Beijing's opaque grip, resist. A new 30-point plan bets on AI and consumer cash, yet analysts like Victor Shih see a disconnect—central edicts falter in provincial hands.

Exports wane under U.S. tariffs, exposing the folly of a build-first mindset. Unsaid but glaring: loyalty-driven waste hints at corruption's rot. As debt mounts and credibility frays, China's superpower sheen dims, trapped by its own excesses.

CHINA'S DEFENSE DREAMS CRUMBLE UNDER CORRUPTION'S WEIGHT



At the heart of China's defense empire, a reckoning unfolds. Liu Weidong, a senior executive at China South Industries Group—a munitions linchpin for the People's Liberation Army—is the latest casualty in a widening anti-corruption campaign shaking Beijing's military-industrial core.

Since ex-Defense Minister Li Shangfu's ousting in 2023, branded a polluter of the equipment sector, 26 top managers have been probed or sacked, unraveling a sector Xi Jinping once hailed as his modernization vanguard.

The stakes are colossal. Firms like China Aerospace and Aviation Industry Corporation drive stealth fighters like the J-20 and missile arsenals, fueled by a PLA budget ballooning past economic growth. Yet, graft festers.

"Corruption's baked into the system," says James Char of Nanyang Technological University, pointing to unchecked equipment spending.

The purge, snaring rocket experts like Yang Wei and minister Jin Zhuanglong—whose profiles vanished—hints at a rot too deep for Beijing's opaque denials.

Xi's decade-long anti-corruption crusade hit a peak last year with 58 "tigers" felled, but this defense focus stings uniquely. The Central Military Commission's July call for citizens to snitch on procurement scams since 2017, paired with new R&D rules, signals desperation. Nine defense giants pledge reform, yet the scandal's sprawl—executives, generals, even universities—defies easy fixes. "It's secrecy and unaccountability," warns Bethany Allen of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, suggesting decades of decay.

For Xi, banking on a "world-class" military by 2049, the timing bruises. Alfred Wu of National University of Singapore calls Li's fall a wake-up call; Song Zhongping sees a strength-building purge. But as Zambia recoils from China's mining overreach, trust erodes here too. Can Beijing's war machine rise untainted? The world watches, wary of a giant faltering under its own weight.

Analyzing Corruption in China's Defense Sector



CHINA'S MILITARY REACHES AUSTRALIAN SHORES, ALARM IN CANBERRA

The Australian military spotted three Chinese warships in the Arafura Sea, off the country's northern coastline. What followed was an unprecedented show of force—what Defence Minister Richard Marles suggested could be a full circumnavigation of the Australian continent.

The alarm bells rang louder on Feb. 21 when the Chinese vessels triggered mass flight disruptions by abruptly announcing live-fire exercises roughly 640 km off Australia's east coast. Nearly 50 commercial flights were rerouted. The warships, sailing just 150 nautical miles from Sydney, effectively carried out a shadow tour of Australian waters with little warning—an unmistakable reminder of Beijing's expanding military reach.

Though the drills did not technically violate international law, they exposed deep divisions within Australia's political and security circles. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, whose government has sought a delicate balancing act with Beijing since his 2022 election, played down the significance of the Chinese presence. He acknowledged the lack of notice given for the live-fire exercises but maintained that China had acted within legal bounds.

Not everyone was as diplomatic. Former Home Affairs Secretary Mike Pezzullo suggested the Australian Defence Force should have sent fighter jets and submarines to track the warships, making it clear they had entered what he termed the "kill zone." His remarks underscore a growing hawkish sentiment within Australia, where many view Beijing's actions as a direct challenge to national security.

As China's military presence in the Pacific grows, so too does the unease in Canberra. Whether Australia chooses to confront Beijing more aggressively or maintain a cautious approach, the message from China is unmistakable: its naval ambitions are no longer confined to the South China Sea.

INDIA'S GROWING STAKE IN AUSTRALIA SIGNALS A BRIGHT ECONOMIC FUTURE

India's investment footprint in Australia has quietly expanded over the past decade, weaving a tighter economic fabric between the two nations. A fresh PwC report, *Bridging Continents: Inbound Investment from India to Australia*, released in early 2025, charts this steady rise.

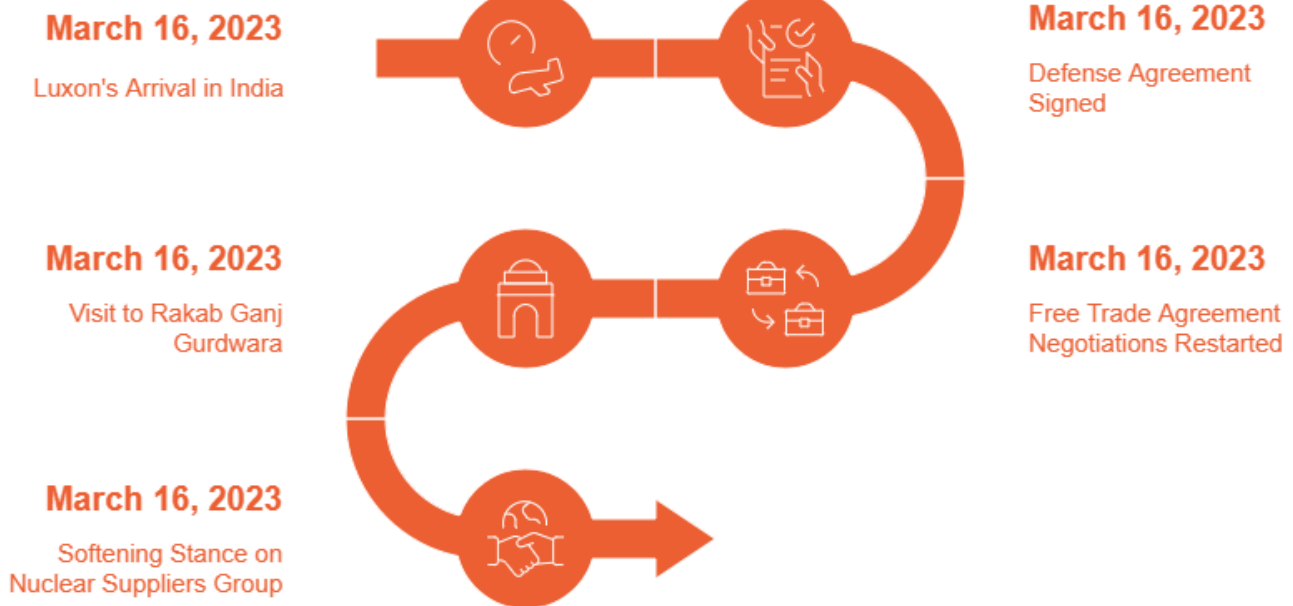
Indian companies have turned to Australia for mergers and acquisitions, targeting sectors like technology, industrials, retail, consumer goods, and healthcare. The numbers tell a story of progress—but also of untapped promise.

Between 2022 and 2024, India's businesses poured billions into foreign markets, chasing new customers and cutting-edge tech. Singapore led the pack, snapping up \$4.8 billion. The UAE followed with \$3.4 billion, and the Netherlands claimed \$3 billion. Australia? It lagged at 22nd, pulling in just \$0.1 billion.

The past decade has delivered standout moments. In 2015, Strides Arcolab scooped up Arrow Pharmaceuticals for A\$265 million, pushing India's total investment in Australia that year to A\$333 million. Fast forward to 2020, and HCL snapped up DWS Ltd for A\$182.8 million. A year later, Wipro bought Ampion for A\$153.7 million. These blockbuster deals helped India notch 63 M&A transactions in Australia since 2015. Activity peaked in 2018, 2020, and 2021, though it dipped sharply in 2016 and softened recently.

Indian investors aren't flooding Australia's shores just yet. Ranking 15th among foreign investors, India's presence is solid but modest compared to heavyweights like the United States or China. Technology, media, and telecommunications—the TMT sector—have been the sweet spot, soaking up 35% of deals and A\$408 million in value over 10 years. It's a natural fit. Australia's digital economy is booming, and India's tech giants are eager to meet the demand.

WITH CHINA IN MIND, NEW ZEALAND WARMS TO INDIA IN STRATEGIC SHIFT



New Zealand's Prime Minister Christopher Luxon returned from a five-day whirl through India, a visit radiating warmth—and strategic intent. Trade, defense, and cricket headlined the agenda, but the subtext was unmistakable: China's shadow in the Indo-Pacific is nudging Wellington closer to Delhi. Arriving March 16, Luxon found a willing partner in Narendra Modi.

At Delhi's Raisina Dialogue, he marveled at India lifting 250 million from poverty—"incredible," he called it, a rare superlative from a reserved leader. A new defense pact, with joint exercises and port calls, nodded to Beijing's Tasman Sea drills. Trade talks rebooted too, aiming for a Free Trade Agreement in 60 days—a tall order given tariff snags. Beyond diplomacy, Luxon batted with Kapil Dev and joined Modi at Rakab Ganj Gurdwara, a diaspora-pleasing first. With China looming, this wasn't just a visit—it was a realignment.



CHINA'S FADING PROMISES: FROM CAMBODIA'S CANAL TO BANGLADESH'S DEBT DANCE

Cambodia's faltering \$1.7 billion Funan Techo Canal and Bangladesh's deepening dance with China reveal Beijing's shifting sway in Asia. A year after its groundbreaking, the canal stalls as Chinese funding wanes, straining Mekong ties with Vietnam, while a 22-member Bangladeshi delegation's visit to China signals Beijing's bid to exploit Dhaka's rift with India. Both cases spotlight China's pattern: bold promises of infrastructure and influence, tempered by retreat when costs mount or crises hit, leaving allies to grapple with the fallout.

A year after Cambodia's ambitious groundbreaking for the \$1.7 billion Funan Techo Canal, Prime Minister Hun Manet's vision to connect Phnom Penh to the Gulf of Thailand teeters on the brink. Designed to slash reliance on Vietnamese ports, the 180-kilometer waterway promised a trade revolution. Yet progress lags, bogged down by elusive financing, environmental fears, and simmering regional tensions. China, slated to fund 49% via its Road and Bridge Corporation, has pulled back, its once-robust overseas lending tempered by domestic economic recalibration, leaving Cambodia's plans adrift.

Vietnam, downstream on the Mekong, braces for impact. The river's rerouting threatens its delta, a powerhouse producing 90% of its rice exports. The Stimson Center flags "severe disruptions" to water flows and fisheries—a lifeline for millions—yet Cambodia dismisses Hanoi's pleas for collaboration. Beijing's shadow looms large; its roads, bridges, and casinos already define Cambodia's landscape, marking it as a loyal ally. But as China's global infrastructure spree slows, the canal feels the pinch, a casualty of shifting priorities.

Hun Manet's defiance—"We will build this, no matter the cost"—echoed at last August's ceremony, but resolve alone can't bridge the funding gap. The canal, meant to herald Cambodia's rise, now risks stalling as a half-finished dream, its fate tangled in China's retreat and Southeast Asia's fragile equilibrium. For a nation betting on transformation, the delays sting, exposing the limits of ambition when promises outpace cash and cooperation.

A 22-member Bangladeshi delegation landed in March in China for a 10-day visit, a clear move by Beijing to tighten its grip on South Asia amid Dhaka's fraying ties with India. Led by BNP's Abdul Moyeen Khan, the group will court Communist Party brass, capitalizing on Bangladesh's political upheaval post-Sheikh Hasina. With \$24 billion in trade—mostly Chinese exports—Beijing eyes Dhaka as a regional pawn, echoing its Sri Lanka playbook. There, \$1.5 billion for Hambantota Port dazzled until debt choked Colombo, handing China a 99-year lease. In Bangladesh, \$3.6 billion bridges and submarine bases gleam, but Sri Lanka's 2022 collapse—met with China's meager \$74 million aid—looms as a warning. Beijing's charm seduces, yet its history hints at abandonment when crises strike.

China's South Asian gambit sharpens as Bangladesh wavers. Post-Hasina, Beijing hosted BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, leveraging India's misstep—sheltering Hasina—to fan anti-Delhi flames. The \$1.2 billion submarine base and 74 percent arms dominance tie Dhaka to China's Belt and Road, mirroring Sri Lanka's early euphoria. Yet, when Sri Lanka buckled under \$7.4 billion in debt, China dawdled, dwarfed by India's \$4 billion lifeline. "China builds when it's easy," says analyst Ruwanthi Perera, "then vanishes in the storm." Bangladesh's higher project returns offer hope, per Shahab Enam Khan, but China's transactional streak—strategic wins like Hambantota—casts doubt. At the Bay of Bengal's edge, Dhaka risks overreach, lured by a partner whose support may fade when the stakes rise, leaving it vulnerable in India's shadow.



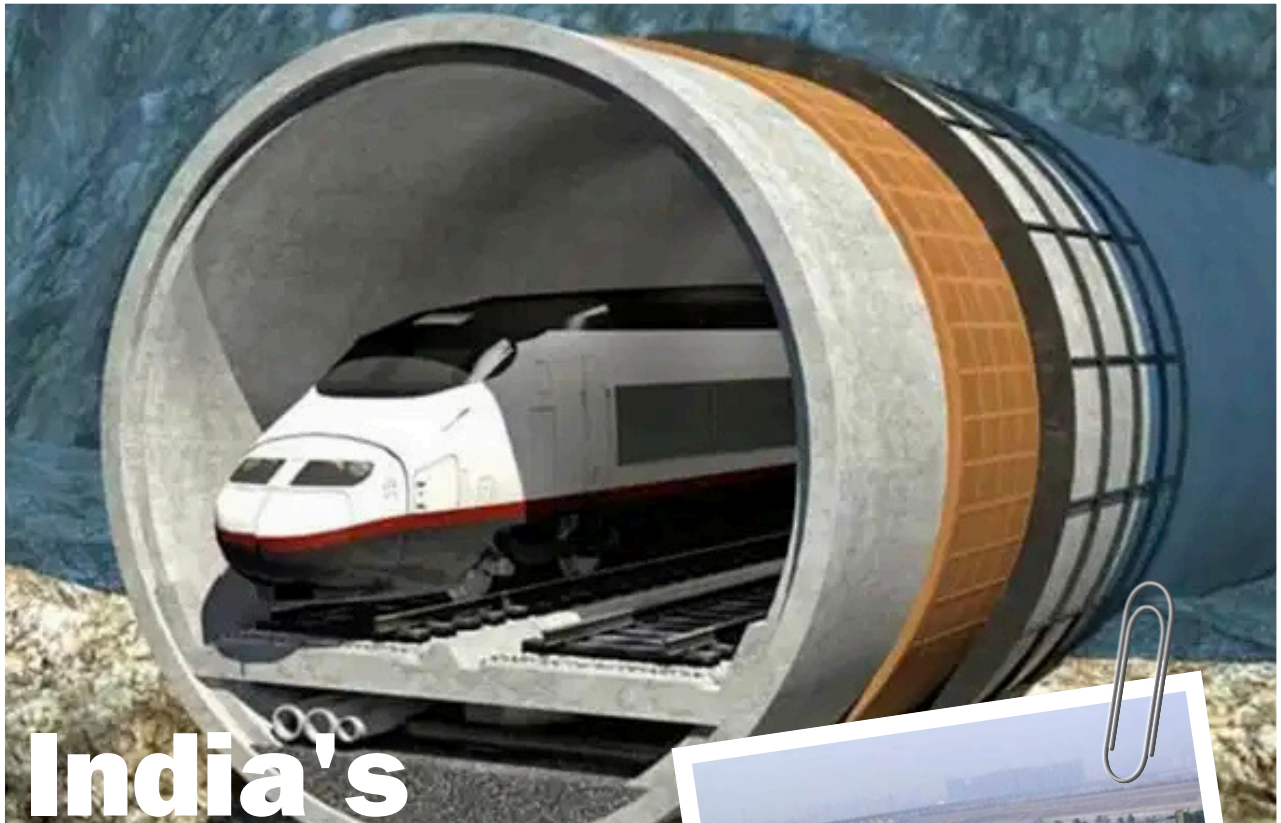
CHINA'S CONCRETE MIRAGE SHATTERS IN THAILAND



A year ago, China Railway No. 10 Engineering Group trumpeted its “calling card” in Thailand: a 137-meter Bangkok skyscraper, hyped with drone shots and red banners on Douyin and WeChat. On March 28, the 30-story frame, slated for Thailand’s state audit office, collapsed in a 7.7-magnitude quake—killing 12 of Thailand’s 19 dead, with 75 missing. Uniquely among Bangkok’s towers, it fell, sparking outrage over China’s shoddy work. Promotional posts vanished as criticism swelled. PM Paetongtarn Shinawatra questions why only this structure failed, launching a probe into China Railway’s steel quality in its venture with Italian-Thai Development. Four Chinese nationals were nabbed stealing 32 files from the wreckage, fueling distrust. China, Thailand’s top investor, faces blowback—its Belt and Road luster dims amid Myanmar’s 2,000-plus quake toll. Accountability looms large.

An investigation team from the Ministry of Industry has collected samples of construction materials from the collapse site, and is focusing on the quality of steel bars used in fortifying concrete and foundation structures, the authorities said on March 31. Deputy Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, who is leading the government’s rescue operations, said the Thai and Chinese companies will both be investigated and held accountable.

China’s 25 percent stake in Thailand’s investment—spanning industrial zones and rail lines—now faces a harsh spotlight. Beijing stays mute, its largesse absent amid the rubble. Weeks earlier, Thailand bowed to China, deporting Uighurs; gratitude proved fleeting. An expert inquiry looms, signaling a broader unraveling: this is China’s brittle reach laid bare, a superpower humbled as onlookers mourn.



India's Underwater Triumph

Beneath Mumbai's ceaseless pulse, a triumph of ingenuity unfurls: India's first undersea tunnel, a 21-kilometer marvel within the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train corridor, crafted by Afcons Infrastructure.

By late 2024, three colossal tunnel-boring machines had carved through Thane Creek's depths—25 to 65 meters down—linking Vikhroli to Bandra-Kurla Complex. This 7-kilometer aquatic stretch, part of a \$15 billion project, promises to whisk travelers at 250 km/h, slashing a four-hour journey to two.

Afcons, a homegrown titan, outbid rivals in 2023, weaving precision with purpose to preserve flamingo habitats and mangroves. With 340 kilometers of the 508-kilometer route already paved, India's ambition soars—100,000 jobs bloom, Gujarat's economic hubs tighten, and a nation's connective tissue strengthens, proving its mettle on a global stage.

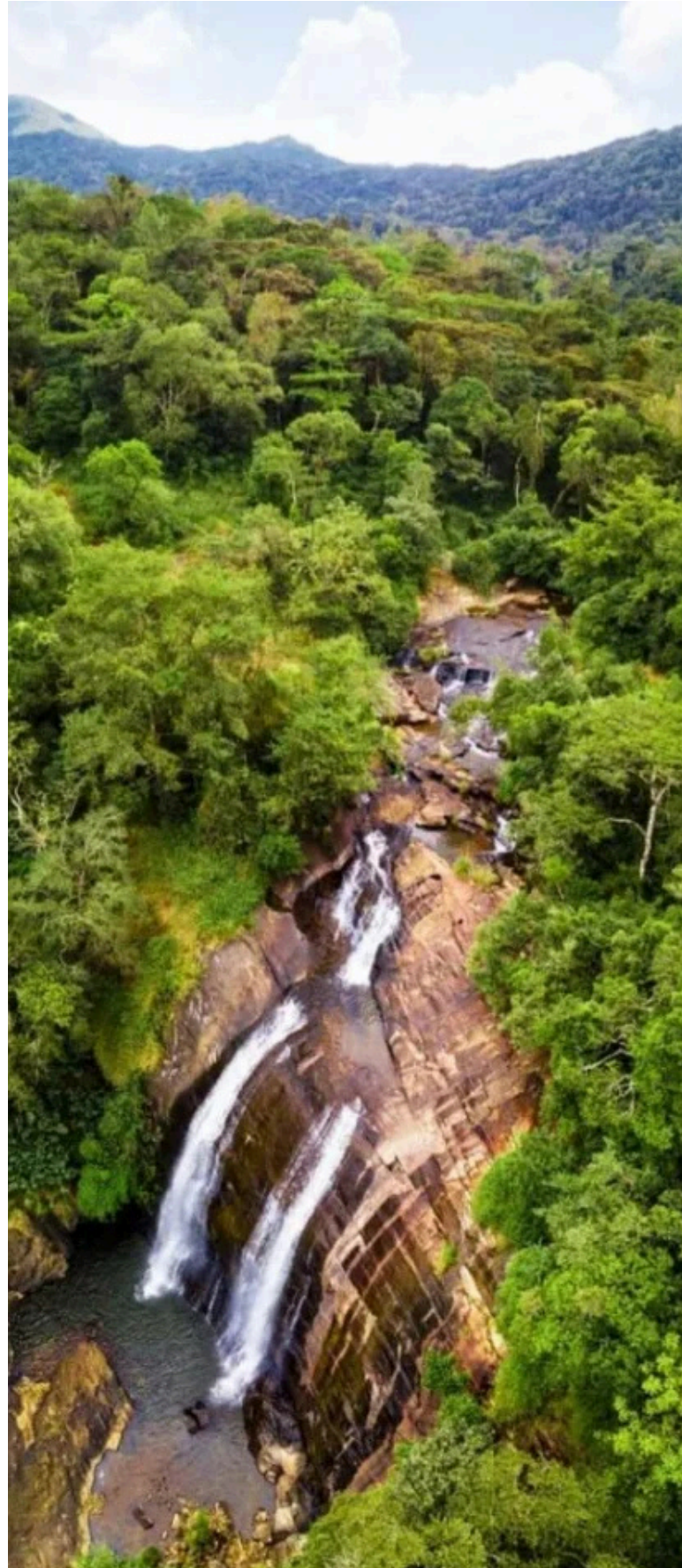


KODAGU: INDIA'S VERDANT ESCAPE

In Kodagu, India's own Scotland, the Western Ghats cradle a lush retreat. From Mysore, a 115-kilometer drive winds through mist-veiled hills and coffee estates to Madikeri, where the air hums with birdsong and spice. At a family resort, cottages nestle amid herb gardens, overlooking emerald plantations. Coffee cherries burst with tart sweetness, roasted into a nutty brew savored by a thundering waterfall. Kodava culture shines in pandhi curry's fiery kick and the lilting cadence of Kodava Takk, a language of warrior-farmers. Abbey Falls cloaks mornings in mist, and starry nights cap days of pure wonder—a verdant jewel in India's crown.



Kodagu's allure deepens with its people. A 92-year-old matriarch, once a playback singer, spins tales of Kodava origins—Persian treks or Alexander's soldiers—over velvety Cabernet Sauvignon, her aquiline nose a badge of pride. Their traditions, like burying the dead and polishing weapons at Kailpodh, echo a fierce heritage. Nearby, Bylakuppe's Tibetan monks in maroon robes tend Namdroling Monastery's golden Buddhas, their Thangka paintings a testament to resilience since 1959. "India gave us a home," an artisan says, yet Tibet lingers in their chants. Kodagu blends these threads—wild hills, rich coffee, and storied souls—into a travel haven that whispers of timeless beauty.





GOLF TOURISM: A HIDDEN GEM FOR INDIA

India's golf scene is teeing up for a breakout, and the Adani Group is driving the charge. The industrial giant unveiled the Adani Invitational Golf Championship, a \$180,000 spectacle set for April 1-4 at Jaypee Greens in Greater Noida—India's richest golf purse ever. Partnering with the Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI), Adani's not just hosting; they're dreaming big. "We want golf to shed its elite tag and produce global stars," they declared, backing it with a new Ahmedabad academy for kids new to the game.

The buzz is palpable. "A game-changer," PGTI CEO Amandeep Johl beamed, as dormant Jaypee Greens reawakens after 11 years. Kapil Dev, cricket legend and PGTI president, predicts packed galleries, kicking off with a kids' clinic March 29. With LIV Golf's 2025 arrival and stars like Anirban Lahiri shining, India's golf tourism—think Delhi's lush courses and Rajasthan's sandy tests—is poised to soar.

Emerging Golf Destinations in India

Delhi Golf Club

Delhi Golf Club offers serene golfing experience for tourists.

Gurugram

Gurugram hosts LIV Golf's International Series in 2024.

Jaypee Greens

Jaypee Greens revives golf with top talent and crowds.



EXPANSION *& geography*

China's Expanding Geography in Africa: Diminishing Donkeys and Rising Concerns



China remains Africa's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching \$282 billion in 2023, but the relationship remains heavily tilted in Beijing's favor. While China imports vast amounts of African raw materials—such as oil, metals, minerals and even donkeys—African nations primarily receive Chinese manufactured goods, and consumer products. This dynamic has created a widening trade deficit, leaving Africa largely dependent on exporting unprocessed resources rather than value-added products.

China's infrastructure investments, largely under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), have financed landmark projects like the Nairobi Expressway in Kenya and the Lekki Deep Sea Port in Nigeria. However, concerns about debt sustainability and return of investment have intensified. Chinese lending to Africa has fallen dramatically, from a peak of \$28.4 billion in 2016 to less than \$1 billion in 2023—its lowest level in two decades. This shift follows high-profile debt crises in Zambia, Kenya, Uganda and Angola, where governments have struggled with repayment obligations.

Critics argue that China's lending model fosters economic dependence, raising fears of "debt-trap diplomacy"—where defaulting nations could be pressured into granting Beijing strategic concessions. While China denies such claims, instances like Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port handover serve as a cautionary tale for African nations wary of forfeiting sovereignty over key assets. To counter these criticisms, Beijing is pivoting toward trade partnerships, equity investments, and public-private collaborations, though these models remain underdeveloped in Africa.

China's presence in Africa has also come under scrutiny for its environmental footprint. Chinese mining firms in Zambia and the DRC have been linked to water pollution, including contamination of the Kafue River, raising alarms among local communities and environmental groups. Similarly, large-scale infrastructure projects have contributed to deforestation and ecological degradation, with limited oversight from African governments.

Labor issues are another point of contention. Chinese companies frequently import their own workers, limiting opportunities for local employment and skill development. Reports of poor working conditions, wage disparities, and worker mistreatment have sparked protests in several countries. African labor unions have accused Chinese firms of operating with minimal regard for labor rights, reinforcing concerns that economic benefits are not being evenly distributed. Beijing has expanded its media presence across Africa, with state-run outlets like Xinhua and CGTN shaping narratives in favor of China while downplaying criticisms of its policies.

China's influence in Africa extends beyond economics. The establishment of China's first overseas military base in Djibouti has raised strategic red flags, with some analysts viewing it as a projection of military power rather than a purely defensive move. Beijing has also expanded its role in training African military forces in countries like Namibia and the DRC, deepening its security ties on the continent.

Such developments suggest a long-term strategic interest in Africa's geopolitical landscape, particularly as China seeks to secure maritime access, military footholds, and critical resources. This has led to growing unease among African civil society groups, who fear that China's expanding security presence could influence domestic governance in ways that prioritize Beijing's interests over local stability.

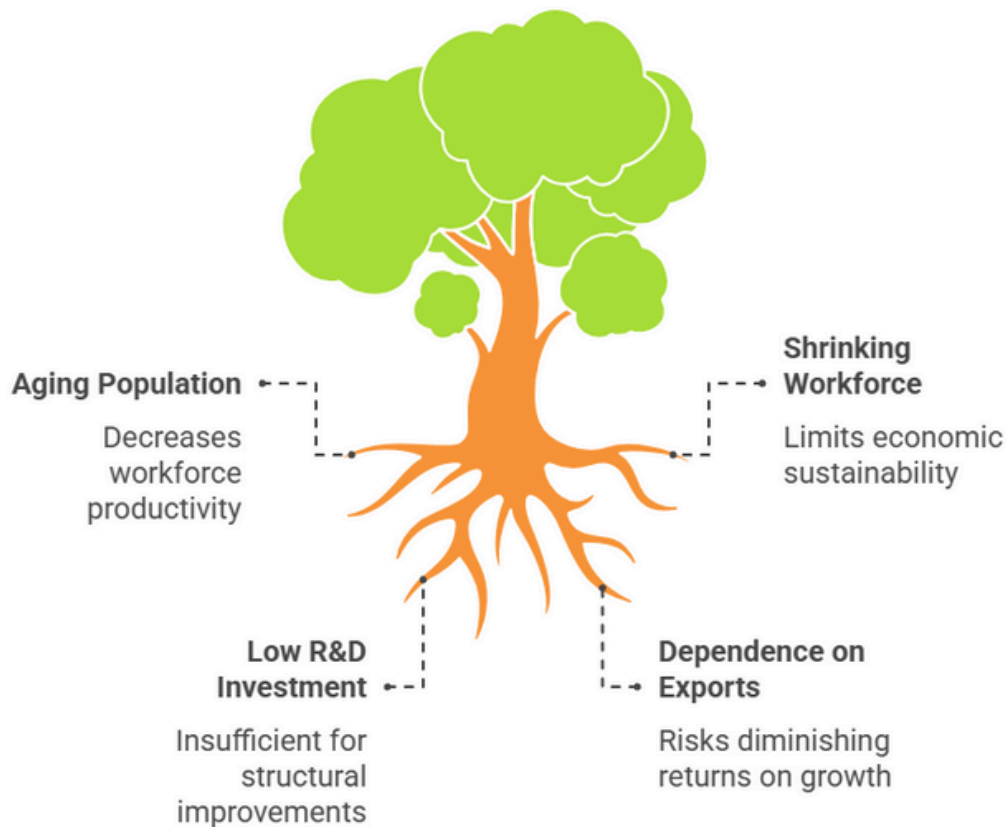
China has also strengthened its soft power efforts, positioning itself as a political partner to African nations while promoting a non-interference policy. This stance contrasts with Western approaches that tie aid and investment to governance and human rights conditions, making China an attractive ally for leaders resistant to Western scrutiny.



STRUCTURAL HURDLES CAST DOUBT ON CHINA'S GDP GROWTH GOAL



Economic Growth Challenges in China



Beijing's ambitious decision to target a 5% GDP growth rate by 2025 underscores its resolve to rejuvenate the world's second-largest economy. However, this bold aspiration encounters monumental challenges due to the intricate interplay of structural constraints, geopolitical tensions, and domestic uncertainties. While the promise of stimulus measures signals intent, systemic impediments across consumer spending, private investment, and exports render the pursuit formidable.

China's record-high deficit target of 4% reflects the government's readiness to flood the economy with liquidity to jumpstart growth. Fiscal expansion often serves as a catalyst in economic recoveries; however, Beijing's predicament transcends monetary solutions. For instance, in 2022, China reported a real GDP growth of only 3%, falling short of its target amid stringent COVID-19 restrictions and faltering consumer confidence. The ongoing drag from suppressed consumer spending, private sector inertia, and subdued exports further compounds this economic conundrum. Structural issues pose a significant obstacle to achieving the envisioned growth rate.

The housing sector, historically a linchpin of economic expansion, faces a prolonged downturn. In the third quarter of 2023, new home sales in China dropped by over 24% year-on-year, reflecting the depth of the real estate crisis. Stalled property investments, coupled with shaky consumer confidence, have created ripples across the economy.

Local government debt adds another layer of complexity. As of mid-2024, China's local government financing vehicles (LGFVs) collectively carried an estimated \$9 trillion in debt, with concerns over repayment abilities looming large. This over-leverage limits the fiscal space required for driving impactful economic initiatives. Consumer confidence, a key determinant of domestic demand, remains elusive after years of policy-induced uncertainty. Despite pledges of interest rate cuts and liquidity boosts, private sector stakeholders appear cautious. According to a survey conducted by the People's Bank of China in late 2024, over 63% of consumers prioritized saving over spending—a stark contrast to the consumption-led recoveries seen in other major economies post-pandemic.

For years, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has tightened its grip on the internet, restricting access to information and censoring content. However, millions of Chinese citizens are fighting back, using circumvention software to bypass the Great Firewall and uncover the real story both at home and abroad. International media reported on March 7th that late last year, a circumvention software provider who fled to the Netherlands revealed the extent of the CCP's internet chokehold, how citizens slip past it, and the dirty secret of how the party profits from its firewall. The software provider explained that internet restrictions became more stringent when Xi Jinping took power.

MORE CHINESE NETIZENS CIRCUMVENT INTERNET CENSORSHIP

When significant events occur, such as Nancy Pelosi's Taiwan trip in 2022 or Li Keqiang's death in 2023, circumvention providers saw a surge in orders. Li Keqiang's death led to a huge spike in demand, as people inside China suspected foul play and wanted answers. Pelosi's visit also caused a frenzy, with people eager to see if the CCP would follow through on its threats to shoot down her plane.

Today, 30 to 40 million people in China use circumvention software, often mislabelled as VPNs. Modern tools like V2Ray, Shadowsocks, Trojan, and Hysteria are designed to outsmart the firewall, while traditional VPNs like OpenVPN or L2TP struggle to work in China. Circumvention software has become a full-blown industry, with providers making significant profits. Their software costs about 5 to 10 Yuan to produce and is sold for 20 Yuan, resulting in substantial profits. The team of 30 handles nearly 500,000 orders a month; helping 1 to 3 million people bypass the firewall. Some companies in this industry make profit over 100 million Yuan monthly, with an estimated 20 to 30 million users.



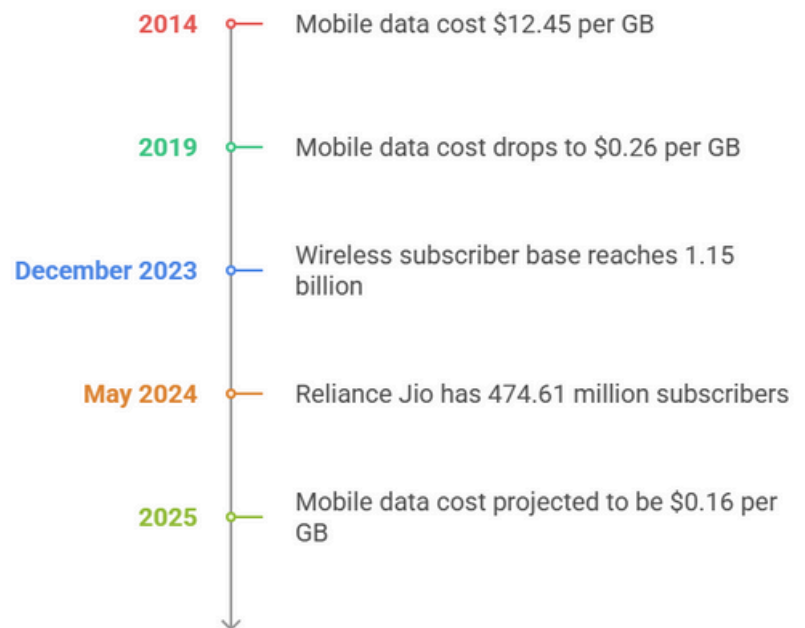
India's 6G Leap: A Bold Vision Takes Shape

India's telecommunications saga is no longer a quiet subplot—it's a headline act. Barely two years after unfurling 5G across 99% of its districts, the nation has catapulted itself into the vanguard of 6G innovation, amassing over 200 patents and counting. This isn't just about faster downloads; it's about a country once seen as a tech consumer now scripting the future. At the heart of this revolution is a humming ecosystem—researchers at IITs, scrappy startups, and titans like Reliance Jio—fusing brainpower to tackle not just engineering riddles but the stubborn gaps in India's vast digital landscape.

The government's \$30 million 6G testbed, a collaboration with top institutes, is the rocket fuel. Unveiled at the 2024 India Mobile Congress, it drew gasps from a sea of delegates as Telecom Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw took the stage. "We're not just keeping pace," he said, his cadence deliberate. "We're defining what's next." The crowd buzzed; here was India, a nation of 1.4 billion, staking its claim.

As 6G trials gear up in 2025, the vision sharpens: industries humming with automation, farmers tapping real-time data, a digital divide fading into memory. India's not just joining the tech race—it's redrawing the map, one signal at a time.

India's Telecommunications Triumph: A Decade of Digital Expansion



India's Telecommunications Revolution: Key Milestones





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