

# ASIAN JOURNAL

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## US AND RUSSIA FUELLING SEPARATIST DEBATE IN CANADA, NEW REPORT SAYS

By Ana Faguy

Foreign actors are attempting to undermine Canadian interests by interfering in Alberta's separatist debate, according to a new report. Actors from Russia and the US are attempting to promote separatist ideas in what researchers behind the report described as a threat to Canada's "democratic integrity".

The findings come as a proposed independence referendum in the western Canadian province could face a vote as soon as this autumn.

Earlier this week, a group behind a citizen-led petition seeking independence for Alberta said that it had acquired the number of signatures needed to trigger a referendum. The Alberta separatist movement has its roots in what is known as western alienation - a term used to describe the belief by some that the interests of the province are often overlooked by decision-makers in Ottawa.

While the push for a plebiscite has grown in the province, opinion polls suggest a minority - about 25% - of Albertans support independence.



The joint report was released on Wednesday by the Global Centre for Democratic Resilience, the Centre for Artificial Intelligence, Data and Conflict, and DisinfoWatch. It argued that foreign actors are exploiting genuine regional grievances, such as concerns the resource-rich province is economically exploited, through social media, "Russian-aligned information infrastructure" and other online accounts.

"When external actors

amplify separatist narratives, normalize annexation, encourage national rupture, or undermine confidence in democratic processes, the issue is no longer only a matter of provincial politics," researchers wrote in their report.

"It becomes a direct threat to Canada's democratic integrity, national security, and cognitive sovereignty."

The BBC has contacted the Russian embassy in Canada for a response. Marcus Kolga, the di-

rector of DisinfoWatch, told the BBC, that "ensuring that [Canadians] have a discussion domestically that's free of that manipulation is key".

The social media accounts studied were ones known to have previously spread disinformation.

The content was created in an attempt to inflame the ongoing debate in Alberta and was designed to be pushed and promoted among like-minded Canadians, the report said.

Researchers described Russia's engagement with Alberta separatism as covert; it appears "doctrinal, operational and sustained".

The aim for the disruptors was for the content to then find its way into local conversation, "creating a laundering effect in which local grievances are blended with foreign strategic narratives", the report said.

Economic "opportunists" are also involved, the researchers say, using generative AI, paid voice actors, and video production to "mimic authentic Canadian political commentary".

And those online videos are designed to fill the ongoing debate with false narratives.

Even American influencers are playing a part, Kolga said, "pouring fuel on the issue externally".

"The reason they're doing this is to provoke some sort of political action," he said.

The researchers also noted that senior US Trump administration officials have met directly with Alberta separatist leaders "and made public statements validating their cause". In January, Prime Minister Mark Carney and

Alberta's premier said the US should respect Canadian sovereignty after it emerged that Alberta separatists had talked to the Trump administration about the province possibly leaving Canada.

Should the independence vote move forward, the proposed referendum in Alberta could come as early as 19 October.

While the movement doesn't have one unified view, most want to see more autonomy over the province's resource wealth and political priorities.

Even if a "leave" vote were successful, a long and uncertain path would lie ahead.

Canadian law lays out ground rules for any independence referendums, including that a "clear majority" of voters must be in favour, that the language of the referendum question be clear and that there must be oversight from the House of Commons. If those conditions are met, Alberta would then enter into complex and likely lengthy separation negotiations with the federal government on the terms of the divorce.



*Chal Chaliye*  
**SABZI MANDI**  
*Chal Chaliye ...*

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# Surrey's free outdoor skating rink wins provincial excellence award

Surrey, B.C. – The City of Surrey is proud to announce that Skating at Civic Plaza has received the 2026 Program Excellence Award from the B.C. Recreation and Parks Association, which recognizes innovative programs that create positive community impact and serve as models for other local governments and organizations.

"This recognition reflects Council's commitment to creating a vibrant entertainment district in City Centre where people come together year-round," said Mayor Brenda Locke. "Welcoming more than 43,000 visitors, Skating at Civic Plaza is an example of how creating engaging experiences can bring energy, activity, and community life to a shared public space." Skating at Civic Plaza transformed a typically



quiet winter area into an outdoor ice rink and covered gathering area, offering festive activities that encouraged people to gather, connect, and enjoy the space. The program emphasized affordability and inclu-

sion, featuring free admission, low-cost skate rentals, and enhanced on-site staffing to help ensure a safe and welcoming experience for everyone. "Skating at Civic Plaza exemplifies how cre-

ative programming can transform public spaces and bring communities together," said Katie Fenn, CEO of BCRPA. "The City of Surrey has demonstrated how accessibility, inclusion, and placemaking are es-

sential—and how they can create spaces for everyone to move, play, and connect." Delivered through collaboration across multiple City teams, along with sponsors and community partners, the

program highlights how partnerships and creative thinking can expand access to recreation and strengthen connections across Surrey. "Skating at Civic Plaza reflects the dedication and coordination of teams across the City," said Laurie Cavan, general manager of Parks, Recreation and Culture. "I want to thank everyone for their hard work in delivering a festive and supportive experience for the community." Based on strong community response, Mayor and Council have approved funding for Skating at Civic Plaza to return next winter, reinforcing the City's commitment to accessible recreation and inclusive public spaces that support community connections and well-being.

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# ASIAN JOURNAL

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## *Adding more fun for students with new school playgrounds*

Through Budget 2026, students throughout B.C. will have access to modern, inclusive playground equipment so they can continue to learn and grow.

“Every child deserves the opportunity to enjoy a safe and accessible place to play,” said Premier David Eby. “Playgrounds are outdoor classrooms that teach our children valuable life skills – exploration, imagination, risk taking. This is about making life better for our children and easing the fundraising pressure on parents and schools, so they can focus on other great things for their kids.”

New funding expands playground access throughout B.C. Twenty-five school communities will each receive \$200,000 toward a new playground.

“Let the kids play and grow! Playgrounds are vital to the physical and cognitive development of children,” said Bowinn Ma, Minister of Infrastructure. “With this additional round of funding, we’ll have delivered a total of 332 new playgrounds to schools across the province since 2018.” Every B.C. school district has received at least one playground since the program started in 2018. “Play is an important part of education. It helps children stay active, build friendships, solve problems and grow in confidence,” said Lisa Beare, Minister of Education and Child Care. “Students all over British Columbia are benefiting from



accessible places to play, learn and grow, thanks to government’s playground fund.”

Accessible playgrounds support student mental health and well-being. Playgrounds support children’s development by encouraging physical activity that builds strength, coordination and overall health.

Playgrounds promote social skills, creativity and problem-solving as kids learn to interact, share and navigate play together.

“This investment allows parent advisory councils to focus on enriching school communities instead of fundraising for expensive playground equipment,” said

Kendra Mann, BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils. “Playgrounds play a crucial role in schools and neighbourhoods, creating safe, welcoming spaces where children can play, connect and develop a sense of belonging. Ongoing support like this helps ease financial strain on families, while fostering stronger, healthier, more connected communities.”

Supporting students throughout B.C. Since 2018, the Province has supported students and families with more than \$50 million toward new playgrounds at more than 330 schools, benefiting more than

88,000 students. In addition to playground space, since 2017, the Province has approved more than \$7 billion to create more than 47,000 new student seats and more than 39,000 seismically safer seats in B.C. schools. Of these spaces, more than 23,500 new student seats and more than 33,000 seismically safer seats are complete provincewide.

As the Province grows, government is committed to working with school districts and municipalities to provide all students with safe, modern and inspiring places to play and learn.

Quotes:

Anne Kang, MLA for Burnaby Centre – “As a former Burnaby teacher, I know firsthand that playgrounds are important spaces for students and the broader community. They support children’s physical activity, social development and creativity, while also creating inclusive places where families and neighbours can connect outside of school hours. These investments help build stronger communities for generations to come.”

Rohini Arora, MLA for Burnaby East – “School playgrounds play a key role in bringing students and communities together.

They encourage active play, support children’s development, and provide welcoming spaces for families and neighbours to gather beyond the school day.”

Kristin Schnider, chair, Burnaby Board of Education –

“We’re grateful to the provincial government for investing in accessible playgrounds that provide all children with inclusive and welcoming places to play. Enjoying the playground at Morley Elementary is a key part of the school day for students, where they further develop motor skills, nurture friendships and delight in the joys of play.”

# Bettering access to care, reproductive health protected through expanded midwives' role

People in British Columbia will have better access to midwife-led abortion care, continuous pregnancy care and other reproductive health services as midwives' role expands.

"At a time when reproductive health is under attack, we're taking action to protect and uphold it here in B.C.," said Josie Osborne, Minister of Health. "These scope of practice changes makes it easier for people to access safe, compassionate and timely abortion services closer to home, while also strengthening pregnancy care. As a rural resident, I know how essential this is for people in communities where access can be limited. These changes will break down barriers and support more people across all their care needs."

Expanding the role of midwives  
The Province is further expanding the scope of practice of midwives. Once the changes are in place, midwives will be able to:  
prescribe Mifegymiso to treat an early miscarriage or to provide a safe medical abortion within the first trimester



prescribe Levothyroxine for management of hypothyroidism  
prescribe Cabergoline for lactation suppression; to stop breast milk production after childbirth  
perform ultrasound for more obstetrical needs, such as to determine where the fetus is located during early pregnancy.  
"Midwives provide personalized, holistic care to families throughout the province, with many of them specializing in supporting people from underserved and marginalized communities," said Jennifer Blatherwick, parliamentary secretary for gender equity. "Expanding the scope of practice

for midwives will support healthy pregnancies and improve access to essential, culturally safe reproductive care for people in communities where it might be limited."  
Midwives are experts in pregnancy care, and these scope changes enable them to fully use their training to provide more comprehensive, compassionate support across a broader range of needs, leading to improved outcomes and more personalized care for people and their families during pregnancy, childbirth and beyond.  
In addition to this, there are only two other provinces in Canada, Quebec and Saskatche-

wan, where midwives have the authority to independently manage and prescribe Mifegymiso for medical abortion. This will especially benefit people living in rural and remote communities, where access to reproductive care can require travelling long distances. By allowing midwives to prescribe Mifegymiso, the Province is improving midwife-led abortion care and increasing access to safe, confidential and timely services closer to home.  
These new changes build on other expansions to midwives' scope of practice that came into effect on April 1, 2026, along with the Health Profes-

sions and Occupations Act. Midwives can now provide people with copper IUD insertions and other birth control services, including prescriptions for hormonal pills at any stage of life, helping to reduce barriers, enhance access to timely reproductive care, and support reproductive autonomy. Previously, midwives could provide birth control services to people who were within three months postpartum only. As of April 1, 2026, midwives with the appropriate certification can also:

use all methods to induce labour, similar to a physician  
use ultrasound to check the baby's presentation and position before birth, in addition to midwives already being able to do ultrasounds to monitor heart rate  
People will be able to access abortion care and birth control services from midwives at any stage of their reproductive care needs.

Next steps to expand the role of midwives  
These scope changes are a result of consultation with the BC College of Nurses and Midwives

(BCCNM) in March to expand and strengthen access to care. The Province is working with the BCCNM to expedite the regulation changes so they can come into effect as quickly as possible.

"The expanded midwifery scope of practice will support timely, consistent, and person-centred care for families across British Columbia, including in underserved communities," said Natasha Prodan-Bhalla, CEO and registrar, BC College of Nurses and Midwives. "As the regulator, BCCNM plays a key role in ensuring expanded scope activities are implemented safely and in the public interest. We look forward to working with our partners and with midwives as these changes are incorporated into midwifery practice, in service of a more responsive maternity care system."

Once the regulation changes have been made and before they are implemented, the BCCNM will develop standards of practice, and will work with the University of British Columbia on any additional training mid-

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# Supporting students in Tumbler Ridge with new secondary school

The Government of Canada and Province of British Columbia are supporting Tumbler Ridge with plans to build a new secondary school at a new location, with funding from the Province and the Government of Canada, following a school board decision based on consultation with victims' families, students, teachers, experts and the community. Following consultations with victims' families, students, teachers, experts and community members, the Peace River South School Board has requested support from the Province to build a new secondary school at a new location in Tumbler Ridge and to ensure the current school is removed quickly and in a trauma-informed way. The Province and Government of Canada will support both the



removal of the existing school and the development and construction of the new school. The location and design of the new secondary school will be informed by trauma-informed community consultations and expert advice, with that feedback guiding a plan that will come back to the community for design con-

sultation later this year. Construction activity will begin as early as this summer, starting with the removal of the existing school. The Province will work with the school district to expedite construction of the new school.

Modular campus  
In the meantime, fin-

ishing touches are being completed on large modular classrooms provided by the Province. Students will move into these later this month. These new classrooms provide students and staff with a more comfortable place to learn until the new secondary school is built. The modular campus for secondary school students includes: eight spacious, modular facilities that are twice the size of the existing temporary classroom trailers each of the new classrooms can accommodate 25 to 30 students and are comparable in size and comfort to standard classrooms five additional modular units that will be installed by fall 2026 to be used as administrative and common space As the community continues to move

through this difficult time, we will continue to stand with Tumbler Ridge and support people for as long as necessary.

**Quotes:**

Gregor Robertson, federal Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada - "In the wake of an unspeakable tragedy, the community in Tumbler Ridge has persevered and shown such strength. We are focused on providing the students with the support they need and a new school will help make that happen."

**David Eby, Premier of British Columbia -**

"The people of Tumbler Ridge have endured unimaginable trauma and grief. We will continue to be there to ensure that they have the

supports they need. Building a new school is an important step in providing students and staff a healing and supportive place to learn and work, and is the result of Tumbler Ridge families, B.C. and Canada standing together for the future of this vital community." Lisa Beare, Minister of Education and Child Care -

"As the community continues to navigate and process this tragic event, the commitment to a new school represents the beginning of the path to a brighter future for Tumbler Ridge. As a province, we will continue to stand with the community and ensure that students, staff and families can access what they need on their journey of resilience and recovery."

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## ਸਟ੍ਰੋਕ ਦੇ ਸੰਕੇਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਜਾਣੋ

- F**ace ਚਿਹਰਾ: ਕੀ ਚਿਹਰਾ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਢਿਲਕ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ?
- A**rms ਬਾਹਵਾਂ: ਕੀ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਬਾਹਵਾਂ ਉੱਪਰ ਨੂੰ ਚੁੱਕ ਸਕਦੇ ਹੋ?
- S**peech ਗੱਲ-ਬਾਤ: ਕੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਗੱਲ-ਬਾਤ ਅਸਪਸ਼ਟ ਹੋ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ?
- T**ime ਸਮੇਂ: ਸਮੇਂ ਦੀ ਅਹਿਮੀਅਤ ਸਮਝੋ - ਬਟਪਟ 9-1-1 'ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

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# B.C.'s labour force results reflect global economic pressures, key sectors continue to grow

Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Jobs and Economic Growth, has released the following statement about the release of Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey for April 2026:

"As the war in Iran and tariffs from U.S. President Donald Trump continue to impact people, businesses and economies around the world, British Columbia is staying strong in the face of uncertainty.

"Investors are continuing to show confidence in our economy, with \$88 billion worth of proposed major projects moving forward, estimated to create tens of thousands of new jobs over the next three years.

"Earlier this month, StatsCan confirmed what we already know: B.C. is an economic leader in Canada, and it is outperforming projections. We have had the fastest GDP growth of all large provinces since 2017, and the second fastest of all large provinces in 2025, ahead of Ontario and Quebec.

"While many provinces lost jobs last month, today's Labour Force Survey data shows that Brit-



ish Columbia's construction and manufacturing sectors continue to grow, with nearly 12,000 jobs added in the past two months.

"This is a positive trend and reflects the work underway to build the major projects and infrastructure we need to grow our economy.

"April also saw an increase of 10,300 in self-employment, which demonstrates people's confidence in starting their own businesses.

"B.C.'s unemployment

rate is 6.8%, which is below the national average. While still a concern, B.C.'s youth unemployment rate improved to 14.4% in April from 15.6% in March, in line with the national average, and below Ontario and Alberta.

"B.C. had the highest gains in youth employment in Canada in April, up 4,000 jobs.

"B.C. continues to lead the country with an average hourly wage of \$39.19, the highest

among provinces, up 2.5% compared to this time last year.

"When it comes to our economy, people and businesses in B.C. have a lot to look forward to, with 35 proposed major projects moving forward, and major international events coming soon.

"This includes Web Summit Vancouver, which begins on Monday, and will connect companies with more than 680 investors, 1,100 startups from 64 countries, and

global decision-makers, providing unmatched access to scalable technologies, emerging innovations, and strategic partnerships within a globally recognized ecosystem.

"And it includes FIFA World Cup 2026, which will put a global spotlight on the province as a prime destination for tourism, trade, and investment, helping to build an independent economy that works better for people. It is expected

to attract more than 350,000 soccer fans to BC Place during the tournament and generate more than \$1 billion in visitor spending for B.C.'s economy, from 2026 through 2031.

"As part of our Look West strategy, we will continue working every day to support a growing economy that creates good jobs and opportunities for people and businesses throughout B.C."

**SA**

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By Alan Samuel **CINEMA SCENE**

(PG) \* \*\*

**Grisly!**

Bad blood emerges in the breakout *At The Place of Ghosts*. A unique bond and between two disjointed brothers with a common history explodes. In this chilling tale from VVS films and Touchwood PR now intriguing audiences at select cinemas across B.C. Made with tons of Canadian taxpayers money this Halifax shot thriller has legs. Director Bretten Hannam wrote this chiller which involves a trip down memory lane and into the past for two reluctant siblings. It's a haunting expedition and quite the reunion for Mise'l and Antle as they journey back to their childhood haunts deep inside the forested woods. By foot and canoe

Actors Blake Alec Miranda and Forrest Goodluck journey and they do need a lot of luck and good fortune as they blend their way through treacherous territory and an assortment of ghosts to try to remedy a past wrong. Tension builds as fear of the unknown and an evil spirit or two touches raw nerves in the now grown men. Made in both English with subtitles *At The Place of Ghosts* is different and well-intentioned. Some surprises along the way keep you intrigued and on high alert.



**At The Place of Ghosts**



**BABIL KHAN TO MAKE MALAYALAM DEBUT IN BABU JANARDHANAN'S GANDHI BAZAR SUNDAY MARKET**

Babil Khan is set to embark on an exciting new chapter in his acting journey as he will be making his Malayalam cinema debut with filmmaker Babu Janardhanan's upcoming directorial titled *Gandhi Bazar Sunday Market*. The project will see Babil step into the rich and nuanced world of Malayalam storytelling, an industry celebrated for its depth and authenticity. Having steadily carved a space for himself through emotionally reso-

nant performances and unconventional choices, Babil's foray into Malayalam cinema underscores his commitment to pushing creative boundaries and embracing stories across languages. The film will feature Babil alongside an accomplished ensemble cast including Aparna Balamurali, Deepak Parambol, Nikhil Nair, Johny Antony, Jagadish, Sudheer Karamana, Unni Raja, Athmiya, and Jayashankar.



**ADNAN SAMI DEBUTS DRAMATIC NEW AVATAR FEATURING TATTOOS**

Adnan Sami has set social media buzzing after sharing a striking new picture that showcases him in a completely different avatar. The look has instantly grabbed attention for its bold styling, expressive energy, and cinematic aesthetic. Draped in layered jewellery, rich traditional silhouettes, tattoos and intense detailing, Adnan's appearance in the newly released image feels unlike anything audiences have seen from him

before. The look carries a blend of vintage drama, individuality, and confidence making fans curious about what he might be working on next. Within hours of the picture being shared online, social media users began praising the transformation, with many calling the avatar refreshing, experimental, and visually captivating. The image has especially stood out for its strong sense of character and artistic presentation.



# AUTO TRENDS

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## 2026 Kia EV4 GT-Line - Affordable EV Scores High!

Review by Veeno Dewan.

The brand new compact 2026 Kia EV4 is a uniquely styled All Electric compact sedan with a massively competitive price tag. It is one of the cheapest if not the cheapest EV in Canada and is a game changer for entry in the All-Electric Vehicle arena. Design wise, it is typical contemporary Kia stylings, lots of complex curves and lines, although some may question the busy rear styling. It is deemed a sedan, but has a liftback design element. With a super-slippery 0.23 drag coefficient, the EV4 is impressively aerodynamic allowing it to cut through the air more efficiently.

All Kia EV4 trims use a Four cylinder - 201 Horsepower 150-kW single front-wheel-drive motor with a choice of either 58.3 kWh battery delivering up to 391km of EV driving range. There is also the optional 81.4-kWh battery with up to 552 km of driving range on a full charge. For now, the EV4 is Front-Wheel Drive only and Kia says All-Wheel Drive will be available later in 2026.

The smaller battery does aid in keeping the purchasing cost low and the driving range is pretty good. 350-kW DC fast-charging is available with the EV4's 400-volt architecture and Kia says it charge from 10 to 80 per cent in a quick 30 minutes in ideal conditions. It also features a Tesla-style charge port for access to the Tesla Supercharger network.

The EV4 arrives with typically high standard equipment levels including a dual 12.3-inch



driver display and a 12.3-inch infotainment screen as well as a 5-inch climate display. There is also wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, six-speaker stereo, and heated seats as standard along with excellent safety equipment and driver aids.

The EV4 prices range from \$38,995 to \$51,995 in Canada (plus freight & PDI).

The \$42,995 EV4 Wind model gains the larger 81.4 kWh battery and 552 km of range as well as a heat pump for fast-

er cabin warming. The Wind Premium EV driving range drops to 515 km- but buyers gain: a sunroof, synthetic leather upholstery, a heated steering wheel and a wireless phone charger for \$45,495.

Moving to the top tier model, the GT-Line (As tested) has an estimated 488 km driving range on a full charge and includes sporty styling cues such as: gloss-black exterior accents, ventilated front seats and heated rear perches, and vehicle-to-load functionality

that allows larger electric items like laptops to be charged using the on-board battery as a power source. You also gain a 3-spoke steering wheel, and advanced ambient lighting. 2026 Kia EV4 GT-Line is priced from \$48,495 plus Freight and PDE.

The \$51,995 GT-Line Limited adds to the GT-Line with an upgraded 19 inch alloy wheels, heat pump, LED lighting, eight-speaker stereo, Wide sunroof, — Smartphone as-key functionality, and extra advanced

safety features such as camera-based blind-spot monitoring surround-view monitoring, and junction turn assist that can warn of oncoming traffic and other features.

The EV4 cabin is a treat with a high-quality feel and ambience. There are a few hard plastics, but enough soft-touch surfaces and tons of storage options. The dual screen layout is functional and easy to view and navigate. Seating is comfortable in all areas with decent legroom and

headroom. The rear cargo area is hampered only by a high lift height and small rear opening.

This is the EV to buy if you are contemplating an affordable All-Electric vehicle for the first time. I expect the EV 4 to do very well in Canada as it is a real game changer in terms of All-Electric affordability. Highly recommended.

2026 Kia EV4 GT-Limited: Price as tested - \$51,995 plus Freight and PDE. (\$2,150)

More info at [www.kia.ca](http://www.kia.ca)



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