

‘Catch Me If You Can 2’: How an Indian techie deceived 10 AI startups in Silicon Valley

UNITED STATE, JULY 3

Not Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg or Elon Musk, but an Indian techie has got the world talking in what can be called Silicon Valley’s most bizarre Internet saga.

What has now become a full-blown scandal gaining popularity as “Soham-Gate” had begun as a simple warning from former Mixpanel CEO Suhail Doshi.

Social media is divided over Soham Parekh, with some branding him a serial scammer while others see him as an unusually gifted misfit caught in the wrong spotlight.

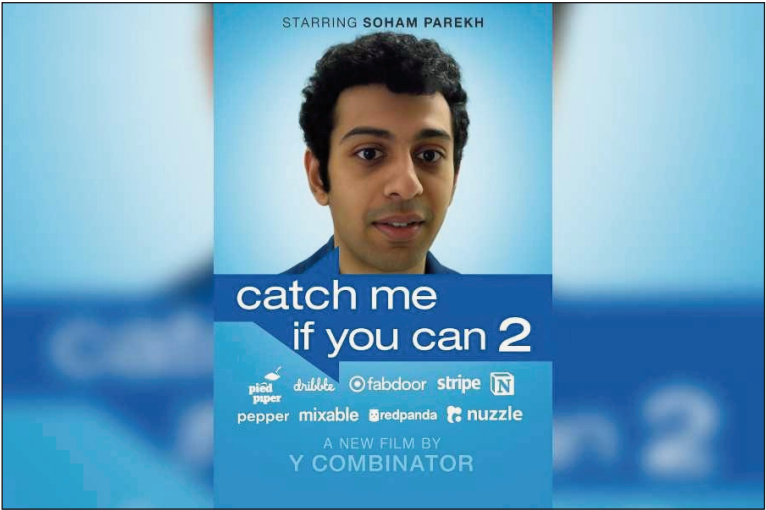
What’s the matter?

Parekh is an AI engineer from India who has been accused by multiple startup founders of working full-time at several companies at once, all while allegedly misrepresenting his credentials and commitments.

His resume reads like a who’s who of hot tech startups like Synthesia, Dynamo AI, Union AI, Alan AI and boasts degrees from the University of Mumbai and the Georgia Institute of Technology.

But according to his accusers, much of it appears to be fabricated. Founders claim links don’t work, references fall flat, and in more than one case, he allegedly vanished after acing interviews and beginning work.

The most vocal among them, Suhail Doshi, founder of Playground AI, alleged that Parekh has been “preying on YC companies” by misrepresenting his commitments and holding



multiple full-time positions at once. “I fired this guy in his first week and told him to stop lying/scamming people,” Doshi wrote on X. “He hasn’t stopped a year later. No more excuses.”

Doshi went as far as posting Parekh’s resume publicly, claiming “90% of it appears fake,” with broken links and unverifiable stints.

He added that he even tried to guide Parekh away from moonlighting, but his efforts, he said, “clearly didn’t work.”

Soon, others chimed in. Fleet AI co-founder Nicolai Ouporov confirmed that Parekh has been doing this “for years.” Justin Harvey of AIVideo said Parekh “crushed the interview,” while Adish Jain, another founder, said the engineer “wasted our time for a month.”

Another startup, Warp, said they had offered Parekh a work trial, only to cancel it after the allegations surfaced. Antimetel had previously hired and then let him go in 2022 when his multiple

commitments came to light.

However, this isn’t a one-note narrative. Some users questioned the very premise of the outrage. “Why is moonlighting wrong if someone delivers and has the skills?” one user asked.

Doshi’s reply was sharp: “Get nothing done. Made up constant lies. Corroborated by 6+ other companies.”

But not everyone is convinced. As the controversy spiralled, X transformed into a meme factory.

One popular meme features multiple Spider-Men pointing at each other, all labelled “Soham Parekh”.

Another shows Shiba Inu dogs claiming to be him. A fake movie poster for Catch Me If You Can 2 starring Parekh has also made the rounds, underlining the bizarre, theatrical nature of the situation.

Amid the noise, a verified X account claiming to be Soham Parekh broke silence in this matter.

“There’s a lot being said about me right now, and most of you

don’t know the full story,” he wrote.

“I’ve been isolated, written off, and shut out by nearly everyone I’ve known... But building is the only thing I’ve ever truly known, and it’s what I’ll keep doing.”

In the same thread, Parekh said he had just signed an exclusive deal to join a single company as founding engineer, vowing to “prove everyone wrong” and teasing a product launch in the video AI space by the end of the month.

The post only fuelled the frenzy. Some hailed him a misfit genius, others questioned the ethics of the startups that hadn’t properly vetted him. And then there were those who wondered aloud: Was this all a clever guerrilla marketing campaign gone viral?

Amid the flood of opinions, one thing is certain. ‘Soham-Gate’ has laid bare the growing friction in tech’s remote-first age.

As the global startup ecosystem leans heavily on contract workers and distributed teams, verifying credentials and managing overlapping responsibilities has become a murky, often unenforceable task.

Whether Parekh becomes a cautionary tale, a cult hero, or both, remains to be seen. But as it stands, the man accused of deceiving multiple startups has ended up doing what most tech founders dream of — going viral.

And if the memes are to be believed, he might just be the most employed man on the internet.

82 Palestinians killed in Gaza, including 38 people waiting for aid: authorities

GAZA, JULY 3

Airstrikes and shootings killed 82 Palestinians in Gaza overnight, including 38 while attempting to get much-needed humanitarian aid, hospitals and the Health Ministry said on Thursday.

Israel’s military did not have immediate comment on the strikes.

Five people were killed while outside sites associated with the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, the newly created, secretive American organization backed by Israel to feed the Gaza Strip’s population, while 33 others were killed waiting for aid trucks in other locations across the Gaza Strip.

Dozens of people were killed in airstrikes that pounded the Strip Wednesday night and Thursday morning, including 15 people killed in strikes that hit tents in the sprawling Muwasi zone, where many displaced Palestinians are sheltering, and a strike on a school in Gaza City sheltering displaced people.

Gaza’s Health Ministry said the number of



Palestinians killed in Gaza has passed 57,000, including 223 missing people who have been declared dead. The ministry doesn’t differentiate between civilians and combatants in its death count but says that more than half of the dead are women and children.

The deaths come as Israel and Hamas inch closer to a possible ceasefire that would end the 21-month war.

Trump said Tuesday that Israel had agreed on terms for a 60-day ceasefire in Gaza and urged Hamas to accept the deal before conditions worsen. But Hamas’ response, which emphasised its demand that the war end, raised questions about whether the latest offer could materialise into an actual pause in fighting.

The Israeli military

blames Hamas for the civilian casualties because it operates from populated areas. The military said it targeted Hamas militants and rocket launchers in northern Gaza that launched rockets towards Israel on Wednesday.

The war began on October 7, 2023, when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel, killing 1,200 people and taking roughly 250 hostages.

The war has left the coastal Palestinian territory in ruins, with much of the urban landscape flattened in the fighting. More than 90 per cent of Gaza’s 2.3 million population has been displaced, often multiple times. And the war has sparked a humanitarian crisis in Gaza, leaving hundreds of thousands of people hungry.

US and India push for trade pact after Donlad Trump strikes deal with Vietnam

UNITED STATE, JULY 3

and India trade negotiators were pushing on Wednesday to try to land a tariff-reducing deal ahead of President Donald Trump’s July 9 negotiating deadline, but disagreements over U.S. dairy and agriculture remained unresolved, sources familiar with the talks said. The push comes as Trump announced an agreement with Vietnam that cuts U.S. tariffs on many Vietnamese goods to 20% from his previously threatened 46%. Trump said that U.S. products could enter Vietnam duty free, but details were scant. Trump threatened a 26% duty on Indian goods as part of his April 2 “Liberation Day” reciprocal tariffs, which were temporarily lowered to 10% to buy time for negotiations.

Sources in India’s commerce ministry said that a trade delegation from India was still in Washington a week after arriving for talks that started last Thursday and Friday. They may stay longer to conclude a deal, but without compromising on key agricultural and dairy issues, the sources said, adding that it was unacceptable to lower tariffs on genetically modified corn, soybeans, rice and wheat grown in the U.S. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government “doesn’t want to be seen as surrendering the interests of farmers - a strong political group in the country,” one of the sources said.

However, India is open to lowering tariffs on walnuts, cranberries and other fruits, along with medical devices, autos and energy products, the source said.

A U.S. source familiar with the talks said that there were “indications that they are close” and negotiators have been told to prepare for a potential announcement.

The source added that “there’s been intense and constructive effort to close a deal. I think both sides understand the strategic importance, beyond the economic importance, of closing a deal.”

Trump echoed those sentiments on Tuesday, telling reporters on Air Force One that he could reach a deal with India that would cut tariffs for both countries and help American companies compete in India’s market of 1.4 billion consumers. At the same time, Trump cast doubt on a potential deal with Japan, saying he may impose a tariff of 30% or 35% on Japanese goods, well above the 24% duty rate he announced on April 2. Japan is seeking to lower separate 25% automotive and steel tariffs that Trump imposed. Spokespersons for the U.S. Trade Representative’s office, the Commerce Department and the U.S. Treasury did not respond to request for comment on the state of trade negotiations with India and other countries. A spokesperson for India’s embassy in Washington did not respond immediately to a request for comment.

Manga doomsday prediction spooks tourists to Japan, arrivals drop 11% on-year in May

HONG KONG, JULY 3

Viral rumours of impending disaster stemming from a comic book prediction have taken the sheen off Japan’s tourism boom, with some airlines cancelling flights from Hong Kong where passengers numbers have plunged.

Japan has seen record numbers of visitors this year, with April setting an all-time monthly high of 3.9 million travellers.

That dipped in May, however, with arrivals from Hong Kong - the superstitious Chinese-controlled city where the rumours have circulated widely - down 11% year-on-year, according to the latest data.

Steve Huen of Hong Kong-based travel agency EGL Tours blamed a flurry of social media predictions tied to a manga that depicts a dream of a massive earthquake and tsunami hitting Japan and neighbouring countries in July 2025.

“The rumours have had a significant impact,” said Huen, adding that his firm had seen its Japan-related business halve. Discounts and the introduction



of earthquake insurance had “prevented Japan-bound travel from dropping to zero,” he added.

Hong Kong resident Brandon Choi, 28, said he was a frequent traveller to Japan but was hesitant to visit the country during July and August due to the manga prediction. “If possible, I might delay my trip and go after September”, he said.

Ryo Tatsuki, the artist behind the manga titled ‘The Future I Saw’, first published in 1999 and then re-released in 2021, has tried to dampen the speculation, saying in a

statement issued by her publisher that she was “not a prophet”. The first edition of the manga warned of a major natural disaster in March 2011. That was the month and year when a massive earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster struck Japan’s northeastern coast killing thousands. Some have interpreted the latest edition as predicting a catastrophic event would occur specifically on July 5, 2025, although Tatsuki has denied this. Situated within the Pacific Ocean’s ‘Ring of Fire,’ Japan is

one of the most earthquake-prone countries in the world. In recent days there have been more than 900 earthquakes, most of them small tremors, on islands off the southern tip of Kyushu.

But Robert Geller, a professor at the University of Tokyo who has studied seismology since 1971, said even scientifically-based earthquake prediction was “impossible”.

“None of the predictions I’ve experienced in my scientific career have come close at all,” he said.

Nevertheless, low-cost carrier Greater Bay Airlines became the latest Hong Kong airline on Wednesday to cancel flights to Japan due to low demand, saying it would indefinitely suspend its service to Tokushima in western Japan from September.

Serena Peng, 30, a visitor to Tokyo from Seattle, had initially tried to talk her husband out of visiting Japan after seeing the social media speculation.

“I’m not super worried right now, but I was before,” she said, speaking outside Tokyo’s bustling Senso-ji temple.

Operation Sindoor sends clear message India will act against terror: External affairs minister S Jaishankar

UNITED NATION, JULY 3

Operation Sindoor conveyed to the world with great clarity that India will act against terrorism, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said in a statement in line with the UN Security Council calling for those responsible for the Pahalgam attacks to be brought to justice.

“What is important for us in the Quad statement, as also the statement that the Security Council had issued on April 25, is that the perpetrators of terrorism must be held accountable. They must be brought to justice,” Jaishankar said during a press conference in Washington on Wednesday.

“And that’s important because we then have to communicate to the world what we did. On May 7, the objective of Operation Sindoor is that if there are terrorist attacks, we will act against the perpetrators, the supporters, the financiers, and the enablers. So that message, I think, was conveyed with great clarity,” he said.

A joint statement issued by Quad Foreign Ministers -- Jaishankar, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Foreign Minister of Australia Penny Wong, and Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya -- unequivocally condemned all acts of terrorism and violent extremism in all their forms and manifestations, including cross-

border terrorism.

The Quad foreign ministers condemned in the “strongest terms” the April 22 terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, which left 26 people dead.

“We call for the perpetrators, organisers, and financiers of this reprehensible act to be brought to justice without any delay and urge all UN member states, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant UNSCRs (UN Security Council resolutions), to cooperate actively with all relevant authorities in this regard,” the joint statement said.

The UN Security Council press statement condemned the

Pahalgam attack, with members of the Security Council underlining the need to hold perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors of this reprehensible act of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice. The council members stressed that those responsible for these killings should be held accountable.

India had launched Operation Sindoor targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in retaliation for the Pahalgam attack, whose responsibility was claimed by The Resistance Front (TRF), a front for Pakistan-based terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Jaishankar said he shared with

his counterparts, in the Quad as well as globally, the nature of the terrorism challenge that India faces and has confronted over multiple decades, and “that we are very resolved today to respond to it very firmly and that we have the right to defend ourselves”.

Apart from the Quad discussions, Jaishankar said he had a good bilateral meeting with Rubio and the two leaders “essentially did a stock-taking of the last six months” and the path looking ahead.

“This included a discussion on trade and investment, technology, defence and security, energy and on mobility,” he said, adding that he had separate meetings with Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth

and Energy Secretary Chris Wright.

To a question on the US plan to impose a 500 per cent tariff on imports from countries buying Russian oil under a bill by Senator Lindsey Graham, Jaishankar said that any development happening in the US Congress is of interest to India “if it impacts our interest or could impact our interest”.

The Indian Embassy and officials have been in touch with Graham over the issue, he said.

“I think our concerns and our interests in energy security have been made conversant to him. So we’ll then have to cross that bridge when we come to it, if we come to it,” Jaishankar said.

