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TRAGEDY IN UTTARAKHAND

Bodies of missing sisters recovered in Kedartal

NEWS » PAGE 6



DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION

Falling fertility rate makes 2-child norms outdated: SC

NEWS » PAGE 6



INSISTENCE ON FORM 6

Do not fear prosecution, SC tells excluded voters

NEWS » PAGE 5

PROTEST RESTRICTIONS

Public spaces and democratic citizenship

A historical relationship is being undermined

OPINION » PAGE 9



PERFECT START

Pacers and Kohli give Men in Blue the lead

SPORT » PAGE 16

INSIDE



Volatility index stays elevated despite rally

MUMBAI

The volatility index (VIX) of India's stock markets has surged to 65.4% year-to-date, reflecting heightened investor anxiety despite the recent recovery in equities as the markets extended winning streak in five consecutive sessions. » PAGE 12

Four people dead as armed groups clash in Manipur

GUWAHATI

At least four people were killed and several injured in a gunfight between rival armed groups in Manipur's Noney district on Wednesday. Officials said the gunfight, reportedly between different Naga groups, opened at Taodaijang village in the the Nungba police station limits. » PAGE 6

Cess on sales tax falls in State's scope, says SC

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has held that an additional tax levied by a State on the sale or purchase of goods will not fall outside the State's competence. It confirmed a 1975 ruling that a cess levied as an increment to an existing sales tax has to be judged in the same way as the principal tax. » PAGE 4

Four tankers on fire after 'hitting mines in Hormuz'

TEHRAN

Four oil tankers caught fire after hitting mines while attempting to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, Iran said on Wednesday. It came a day after President Donald Trump said the U.S. had launched strikes on the Islamic republic, following reports of a raid on Qeshm island. » PAGE 14

Blow for Trump as Democrats seize Congress

- Opposition flips seats long held by GoP, securing majorities in both House and Senate in midterms
- The U.S. President strikes a conciliatory note, says disappointing results are 'not a hit on him'
- The landslide will give Opposition power to block legislation, investigate Trump's administration

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

Democrats seized control of the U.S. Congress after the midterm election on Tuesday, capturing the Senate and House of Representatives in a stunning, nationwide rejection of President Donald Trump set to put the brakes on the final two years of his term.

With most of the electoral races called by Wednesday, the Opposition party won at least 237 seats in the 435-member House and increased its strength in the 100-member Senate to at least 54.

Democrats flipped seats that had long been held by Republicans, scoring breakthroughs in South Carolina, North Carolina, Iowa, Kansas, Ohio, Texas, and Maine as public anger at rising living costs compounded dissatisfaction with an already deeply unpopular President.

In Texas, Democrat James Talarico, a former schoolteacher who campaigned on a "politics of love", won the Senate defeating the State's attorney-general Ken Paxton, a close ally of Mr. Trump. He becomes the first Democrat to win Statewide office since 1994 while Gina Hinojosa unseated the State's Republican Governor, Greg Abbott, ending decades of Republican rule.

The scale of the victory grew further when Abdul El-Sayed defeated former Republican lawmaker Mike Rogers in Michigan to become the first Muslim elected to the upper chamber of Congress.



Jubilant crowd: Democratic supporters in Texas react on Tuesday as the party secured major victories in the midterm polls. REUTERS

Not a hit on me: Trump

Mr. Trump struck a conciliatory tone despite his history of questioning elections, telling *The New York Times* he was "absolutely willing" to accept the results. However, he later told Fox News, "I do not view it as a hit on me." He also warned the Democrats against launching any effort to impeach him, saying that it would "destroy" their party. The landslide will give the Opposition power to block legislation, launch broad investigations into Mr. Trump's administration, and thwart his judicial and senior government appointments.

"Michigan, we did it!" Mr. El-Sayed said in a speech at his election headquarters after his historic win in Michigan.

Mr. El-Sayed won despite a last-minute curveball in his campaign when congresswoman Haley Stevens, who lost the Democratic primary to Mr. El-Sayed, came out in support of the Republican candidate at the 11th hour.

In Kansas, Methodist Minister Adam Hamilton became the first Democrat elected to the Senate from the reliably conservative State since 1932. Iowa had not elected a Democratic Senator since 2008.

In Maine, former logger Troy Jackson defeated long-time Republican Senator Susan Collins, the party's seventh Senate seat captured from Republicans. Democrats also protected key Senate seats of their own, including Jon Ossoff in Georgia and an open seat in New Hampshire.

The party's House victory saw gains across Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Arizona, North Carolina, Wisconsin and New Jersey, including districts Mr. Trump had carried comfortably in 2024.

Historic firsts

In a closely watched bellwether, Democrat J.D. Ford ousted Republican congresswoman Victoria Spartz in Indiana, capturing a district Mr. Trump won by 17 points two years back. Democrats won Georgia's governorship, electing former Atlanta mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms as the first Black woman governor in U.S. history.

Republicans had some consolation in Florida, where Trump-backed Byron Donalds became the state's first Black governor and Ashley Moody retained a Senate seat – but only after seeing off surprisingly strong Democratic challenges.

Democratic control of Congress will allow the party to pursue investigations into the Iran war, immigration enforcement and allegations of corruption, while blocking Mr. Trump's agenda and senior appointments.

Democratic Representative Robert Garcia, now expected to lead the powerful House Oversight Committee, warned Republicans on social media: "LAWYER UP."

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries declared Mr. Trump's MAGA movement "on the run from sea to shining sea". Mr. Jeffries could become the first Black Speaker of the House when the new Congress meets in January.

Despite his conciliatory remarks, Mr. Trump also insisted on social media that Republicans would have won "IN A LANDSLIDE" if he had been running.

MORE REPORTS ON
» PAGE 4, 12, 13, 14 & 15

Back to work



Dusting off: After repairing boats damaged by Cyclone Murasu, fishermen are preparing to return to their fishing grounds near Kothapatnam in Prakasam district, Andhra Pradesh, on Wednesday. KOMMURI SRINIVAS

Agniveers get option for extension; pathway to join army as regular soldiers

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet has approved an additional two-year engagement period for a section of Agniveers, creating a pathway for all cadets under the Agnipath scheme to join the armed forces as regular soldiers, subject to their willingness and fulfilment of selection criteria.

The move marks a significant revision of the original Agnipath framework, under which only up to 25% of each batch of Agniveers were eligible for retention in the regular cadre after four years, while the remaining personnel were to be released from service.

Under the revised arrangement, 25% of Agniveers will continue to be offered regular employment while the remaining 75% would be given an opportunity to serve for another two years, following which they would be eligible for consideration for enrolment as regular soldiers, Chief of Defence Staff, General N.S. Raja Subramani, told mediapersons on Wednesday.

Higher remuneration

The second engagement period will come with higher remuneration, an enhanced Seva Nidhi package, and seniority benefits.

The decision follows an assessment of the performance of Agniveers in terms of organisational requirements and operational efficiency. The evaluation found that they had demonstrated outstanding performance in skills, motivation, physical fitness, and technological prowess, according to the government, he added.

The additional engagement period was approved on the recommendations of the three services following an elaborate evaluation and feedback process. The objective is to align the aspirations of Agniveers with the operational requirements and organisational efficiency of the armed forces, the Defence Ministry said.

The government said a detailed assessment of the Agnipath scheme after four years of implementation had brought out several achievements, including a wider geographical footprint of recruitment across districts, a more standardised and transparent recruitment process, and high levels of physical fitness, morale, motivation, competitive spirit, and discipline among Agniveers.

The scheme has also contributed to enhancing the skills, technological adaptability, and educational qualifications of personnel during their service. It has further enabled the opening up of various branches of the defence forces to women.

Based on the assessment and feedback, the government has decided to continue with the Agnipath scheme while introducing the additional two-year engagement period for Agniveers and a subsequent pathway for their regular enrolment.

ADDRESSING DISCONTENT
» PAGE 4

Career trajectory

The revised arrangement creates a pathway for all Agniveers to eventually become regular soldiers

- 25% of Agniveers to be offered regular employment on the basis of merit, as envisaged under the Agnipath scheme
- Remaining 75% to get opportunity for a 2-year extension and subsequent enrolment



- Second engagement period to have higher remuneration and seniority benefits

Hockey star's Olympic gold stolen in Bengaluru

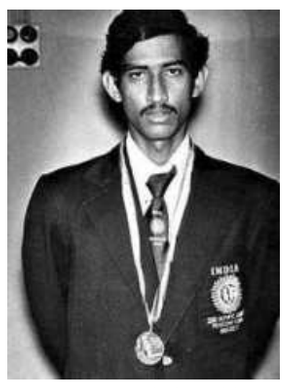
The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Burglars broke into the house of former Indian hockey star M.M. Somaya at New Thippasandra in Bengaluru and took his prized 1980 Moscow Olympics gold medal, other international sporting medals, jewellery, and some cash. The incident, which took place in the early hours of October 28, came to light after the family returned from Kodagu district.

"I had left Bengaluru for my native place in Kodagu with my family on the morning of October 25.Around 7.15 a.m. (on October 28), neighbours noticed that the door of the house was open. They alerted me. Subsequently, CCTV camera footage from a neighbouring house showed two men breaking open the house door and entering the premises," Mr. Somaya said.

A three-time Olympian who represented India in 1980, 1984, and 1988, Mr. Somaya captained the Indian Olympic hockey team at the 1988 Seoul Olympics. He was conferred the Arjuna Award in 1985.

"The stolen medal was India's last Olympic gold medal in men's hockey and, therefore, has immense significance not only for me personally, but also for the nation and the history of Indian sport. For me, it is an irreplaceable symbol of years of dedication, sacrifice, and service to the country," Mr. Somaya said.



M.M. Somaya with the gold medal that the Indian hockey team won in the 1980 Olympics. THE HINDU ARCHIVES

A silver medal from the 1982 Asian Games held in New Delhi, a bronze medal from the 1986 Asian Games in Seoul, and another bronze medal won at the 1982 Champions Trophy in Amsterdam, too were stolen. The burglars also took silver cups, gold jewellery, including bangles, silver spoons, gold coins, and ₹30,000 cash.

The total value of the stolen property has been estimated at ₹3.53 lakh.

The Indiranagar Police have registered a case under Sections 331(4) and 305 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. They are examining CCTV camera footage to identify the accused and recover the stolen valuables. Two special teams have been formed to track down the accused, Vikram Amte, Deputy Commissioner of Police (East Division), Bengaluru City Police said.

Mr. Somaya has written to Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar seeking his intervention for a thorough and time-bound investigation into the theft.

CMYK A IN-X

INBRIEF



'Drought relief paid to 73 lakh farmers; rest to get it in 2 days'

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday said 73 lakh farmers have so far received ₹5,000 each in initial drought relief ahead of Deepavali, and that payments to some farmers were delayed because of problems with bank accounts. Nearly 95% of eligible farmers are expected to receive the amount in the next two days, Mr. Fadnavis told reporters, adding that Ministers would visit farmers' homes and celebrate Deepavali with them. The Maharashtra government has declared 85% of the State drought-hit following deficient rains this year. PTI

ED raids AAP MLA's house in Punjab money laundering case

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday raided the premises of AAP's Moga MLA Amandeep Kaur Arora and her family in Punjab in connection with a money laundering investigation linked to the alleged fraudulent acquisition of government properties and other charges, officials said. A total of seven premises were raided, including the residence of Ms. Kaur Arora, who is a doctor and also the president of the AAP Women's Wing in Punjab. The premises linked to some of her family members, associates and others, including a de-addiction hospital associated with her husband, Dr. Rakesh Arora, were also searched by ED teams, who were accompanied by armed CRPF personnel. PTI

Rahul kicks off Cong.'s Punjab poll campaign from Mann's home turf

Cong. doesn't run governments from Delhi, says Lok Sabha LoP at an event in Sangrur; he hits out at AAP, BJP over drug menace; invokes Sidhu Moosewala's murder to attack State government

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with Balkaur Singh, father of the late singer Sidhu Moosewala, at a rally in Sangrur on Wednesday. PTI

Congress leader and Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi kicked off his party's campaign for the Punjab Assembly election in Sangrur, the home district of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, on Wednesday.

He hit out at the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for "running governments from Delhi".

"Our Chief Minister will be the Chief Minister of Punjab. Neither does the Home Minister of India [Amit Shah] nor the Chief Minister of Delhi run Punjab [when Punjab has a Congress government]," he said addressing supporters at 'Insaf Rally'.

Mr. Gandhi took on the ruling dispensation over the issues of law and order and the drug menace and accused AAP of failing to fulfil its pre-poll promises, including those pertaining to minimum support prices, eradicating drugs and cash transfers to women, for the past four years.

Only the Congress, he added, was capable of fighting gangsters and curbing drug abuse.

'We stood with farmers'

"To eradicate drugs from Punjab, to generate employment, strengthen small and medium industries, and stand with the farmers and protect them, elect a Congress government. When the Congress government was here, Punjab had an abundance of small and medium industries, whether it was of sports goods, of textiles or the automobile industry. Congress always protected the interests of farmers. Without these two things, you can neither fight gangsters nor can you fight against drugs. And only the Congress party can do this work," he said.

Mr. Gandhi also highlighted the high-profile daylight murder of singer Shubhdeep Singh Sidhu, known as Sidhu Moosewala, soon after Mann-led AAP came to power in the State in 2022.

"What happened to Moosewala has today become a fashion in Punjab. The mindset that shot Sidhu Moosewala in front of everyone, fearlessly, that same mindset is roaming around in every nook and corner of Punjab today," the Congress leader said.

Dig at Amit Shah

Taking a dig at the BJP, the Lok Sabha LoP said, "Amit Shah*ji* says he will eradicate drugs in three years. Let me tell you, he won't even remain the Home Minister by then. My assessment is that the government will be wrapped up within a year."

"Also, on the law and order situation – Mr. Shah should tell the country what is happening in Manipur. Tell the country that your Prime Minister [Narendra Modi] can't go to Manipur because of the law and order situation there," said Mr. Gandhi.

Anti-Sikh riots, drugs have stained Punjab's soul, says Prasad

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH



Ravi Shankar Prasad

Senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and Lok Sabha member Ravi Shankar Prasad on Wednesday said two blots stain Punjab's soul – the 1984 anti-Sikh riots and drug addiction, which cannot heal without "uncompromised justice".

He was speaking at a day-long event, organised in Chandigarh by the BJP's Punjab unit on the 1984 anti-Sikh riots titled '*Zakhm 84 De* (Wounds of 1984)'.

The former Union Minister took a swipe at the Congress, accusing it of rubbing salt into the wounds of the '84 riot victims by staging a rally in Delhi on November 1.

Question for Rahul

Taking on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, he said, "I have to ask some questions for Rahul Gandhi, who is visiting Punjab today. On October 31, 1984, the Sikh genocide took place. Your late father, Rajiv Gandhi, said, 'When a big tree falls, the earth shakes.'"

"Rahul Gandhi, you must answer whether you consider this comment given by your late father right or wrong," remarked the Patna Sahib MP.

He said the Congress had "never cared" about those killed in the anti-Sikh riots but only moved heaven and earth to shield three or four of the party's key leaders. "It was only when the Narendra Modi government stepped in, formed the Special Investigation Team and Justice Dhingra's recommendations were enforced that convictions such as that of [former Congress MP] Sajjan Kumar's were secured," he said.

State BJP chief Kewal Singh Dhillon said, "We have neither forgotten 1984 nor will we allow it to be forgotten."

The BJP said it held the conclave to bring together survivors, eyewitnesses, legal experts and political leaders to discuss the circumstances surrounding the massacre, alleged conspiracy, legal battles and rehabilitation of victims.

Day after SC warns of freezing officials' salaries, Mumbai civic body removes encroachments

The Hindu Bureau
NEWS DELHI



BMC officials deploying heavy machinery to demolish unauthorised structures in the Borivali East area of Mumbai on Wednesday. PTI

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Wednesday informed the Supreme Court in an urgent oral mentioning that it had "erased" structures that had encroached into the land earmarked for a BEST Brihanmumbai Electricity Supply and Transport Undertaking (BEST) bus stand in Mumbai.

'Orders not followed'

The mentioning was made before a Bench headed by the Chief Justice of India Surya Kant within 24 hours of the top court saying it would freeze the payment of salaries to the BMC Commissioner and other concerned officials. The order of the court has not been published yet.

The court had accused the BMC of failing to comply with its earlier orders to clear encroachments and make space for the public interest project. November 4 morning saw BMC bulldozers swing into a demolition drive.

"The orders have been complied with. They have been implemented. All structures in question have been erased," the BMC counsel informed the Bench as soon as the judges convened in court after the lunch break.

The hearing on November 3, in a contempt petition, witnessed the apex court criticise the corporation for seeking additional time to evict the occupants. The Bench, also comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana, had even voiced suspicion over collusion between the officials and the encroachers.

BJP gives Rajputs no importance, says Rudy amid Council poll row

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Senior BJP leader and Saran MP Rajiv Pratap Rudy has said that the party is not giving much importance to Rajputs and that no person from the Rajput community in Bihar has trust in any Rajput leader.

Mr. Rudy made the remarks while speaking to reporters at Chapra in Saran on Tuesday while replying to a question related to the recently concluded Bihar Legislative Council polls, in which Janata Dal (United) candidate Anand Pushkar lost to Independent candidate Rahul Raj, who belongs to the Rajput community, in the Saran Teachers' constituency.

"Some people are saying that if Rudy*ji* wanted, he [Rahul Raj] would have stepped aside. Do you really think that the BJP gives enough importance to any Rajput that they would actually heed what that person says?" he said.

After facing defeat, Mr. Pushkar, who belongs to the Brahmin community, alleged that the BJP had betrayed him and that all Rajput MPs and MLAs of Saran, including Mr. Rudy, helped the Independent candidate win. "All BJP MPs have openly betrayed me," he alleged.

RJD memorandum

Meanwhile, amid the controversy over two Independent MLCs, Bansidhar Brajwasi and Mr. Raj, allegedly "joining" the BJP following their win, a delegation of the Opposition Rashtriya Janata Dal on Wednesday submitted a memorandum to Acting Chairman of the Bihar Legislative Council Ram Bachan Rai. The party sought the disqualification of both MLCs under the anti-defection law.

Allow calculators in Class 12 maths, accountancy exams for students with disabilities: PIL

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday sought responses from the Centre and other authorities on a public interest litigation seeking permission for students with disabilities, other than those diagnosed with Dyscalculia, to use basic calculators in Class 12 board examinations in mathematics and accountancy.

A Bench of Acting Chief Justice Nitin Wasudeo Sambre and Justice Sanjay Sharma issued notices to the Centre, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and PARAKH (National Assessment Centre).

During the hearing, CBSE's counsel told the court that the issue was already under consideration and sought time to obtain instructions from the board.

The PIL, filed by Vishal Dua and several parents, seeks to extend the existing facility of using calculators, currently available only to students with Dyscalculia, to students with other disabilities as well.

The petitioners said CBSE's curriculum committee had approved a proposal in November 2024 to allow calculators in accountancy, observing that the existing restriction placed an additional "cognitive load" on students. The committee had also described the move as a long-overdue initiative in line with the National Education Policy 2020.

The plea said the proposal was subsequently placed before CBSE's governing body in December 2024 but had not been formally notified or implemented.

It argued that students with disabilities spend a considerable amount of examination time performing lengthy calculations, leaving them with less time to demonstrate their understanding of concepts in subjects such as mathematics and accountancy.

The petitioners have sought directions to CBSE to set up an expert committee to examine the use of calculators in mathematics and extend the existing exemption to students with disabilities beyond those diagnosed with Dyscalculia. They also told the court that a representation submitted to the authorities in August 2026, seeking implementation of the proposal and a reasoned decision, had not received any response.

Tiger found dead on railway track in Shenkottai-Aryankavu ghat section

The Hindu Bureau
TENKASI



The tiger was found dead early on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A healthy tiger was fatally knocked down by a train on the Shenkottai-Aryankavu ghat section in the early hours of Wednesday.

According to officials of the Tenkasi Forest Division, the tiger, aged four to five years, was knocked down by the Palakkad-Thoothukudi Palaruvi Express, while crossing the track at Poolankudiyiruppu around 1 a.m. on Wednesday.

Poolankudiyiruppu is located between Bhagavathipuram, the last station within Tamil Nadu on this section, and Aryankavu.

The incident came to light only after 3 a.m., when passers-by spotted the carcass of the tiger, with injuries to its head, on the track.

On receiving information, District Forest Officer R. Rajmohan; Assistant Conservator of Forest, Tenkasi, Nellainayagam; and others rushed to the spot and examined the injuries.

"The right side of the skull had been completely damaged, as the train had hit the tiger at high speed. We could not spot any other life-threatening injury on the tiger. I cannot comprehend how this highly agile and shy animal was caught in the middle of the track and only to be hit by the speeding train," Dr. Rajmohan said.

He added that the tiger might not have been in a position to gauge the speed of the train rushing towards it with the blinding light of the headlights.

After an on-the-spot autopsy, the carcass was incinerated there, as per the protocols of the National Tiger Conservation Authority.

Air quality in Delhi may deteriorate to 'severe' category on Deepavali

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Commuters wearing masks amid dense haze near India Gate on Wednesday. ANI

Delhi's air quality remained in the 'very poor' category for the third consecutive day on Wednesday. It is likely to deteriorate to 'severe' category pollution over the coming days, with respite unlikely before Deepavali, according to official data.

Several areas in the city, including ITO, Dwarka, Rohini, Punjabi Bagh, Alipur, Bawana, Jahangirpuri and Narela, recorded 'severe' levels of air pollution on Wednesday.

The Central government's Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi forecast that air quality would remain in the 'very poor' category on Thursday before deteriorating to 'severe' on Friday.

According to the CPCB's daily bulletin, Delhi's 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) rose to 377 (very poor) at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, up from 350 the day earlier.

The AQI measures air pollution on a scale of 0 to 500. A higher value indicates poorer air quality.

An AQI reading between 201 and 300 is considered 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', 401 and 450 'severe', and 451 and 500 'severe plus'.

Stubble burning spike

Meanwhile, the contribution of stubble burning in neighbouring States to Delhi's PM2.5 levels, a key pollutant, doubled to 16.28% on Wednesday from 8.2% on Tuesday, according to data from the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences.

It is expected to increase to 19.2% on Friday.

The political slugfest over air pollution continued, with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) writing to the Commission for Air Quality Management accusing the Delhi government of manipulating air quality data.

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Protesters taking out a march to the Sanskrit University in Kalady recently, in protest against the suspension of students. R.K.NITHIN

Democracy has 'no place' for fast and dharna: Kerala HC

Deborah Thambi
KOCHI

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court observed that political activities like dharna, hunger strikes, and satyagraha have "no place in a constitutional democracy, much less in academic institutions" as it quashed a Single Bench order that had permitted 16 Student Federation of India (SFI) activists to appear for semester examinations at the Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady.

The court cited another Division Bench ruling from 2017, observing that educational institutions are meant to impart education, not politics. It was also observed that anyone indulging in such activities in an educational institution would be liable to be expelled or rusticated.

The court held that a suspended student would have to suffer the consequences of a suspension, such as an attendance shortage. In the absence of statements from the students indicating that they were qualified to appear for the examinations, the Single Bench erred in granting permission, the Division Bench of Justices Anil K. Narendran and S. Muralee Krishna observed. It further said that the students had not brought forward any evidence to demonstrate the required internal assessment marks or attendance before the Single Bench.

Denies allegations

The students were under suspension for allegedly staging a mock cremation of the Vice-Chancellor, Ciza Thomas, manhandling her, and attempting to damage property.

The SFI activists have denied the allegations, claiming that their protest was to highlight their 18-point charter of demands, including the appointment of required faculty members and the implementation of basic facilities for students across various departments.

Set up SC Bench in Chennai, Tamil Nadu CM urges Modi

Stating that it has been a long-pending demand of T.N., Vijay cites several factors, including the difficulties faced by litigants from southern States in travelling to Delhi to seek legal remedy

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay on Wednesday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging him to take steps to establish a Bench of the Supreme Court in Chennai.

Mr. Vijay said it was one of the long-pending demands of Tamil Nadu. It was first mooted by the State in 1980, citing several factors, including the difficulties faced by litigants from southern States in travelling to New Delhi to seek legal remedy.



The demand was first mooted by Tamil Nadu in 1980.

Referring to Article 130 of the Constitution, he pointed out that the Supreme Court could sit in Delhi or any other place or places as decided by the Chief Justice of India, with the approval of the President, from time to time. He recalled that the issue was discussed at the conference of Chief Justices in 1979.

The Chief Minister said locating the Bench in Chennai, an important city in south India, would benefit all southern States. He highlighted the professional competence and talent of the Madras High Court Bar, and the fact that the Madras High Court, established in 1862, was one of the oldest chartered High Courts in India.

Mr. Vijay said the Full Court of the Supreme Court had, on August 7, 2007, found no justification for deviating from its earlier resolutions on the issue, despite the State's assurance that it would provide the necessary infrastructure, including residential accommodation for Supreme Court judges befitting their status.

When the Constitution was enacted, its framers contemplated that all citizens of the country must have direct access to the court. It was the main reason for the enactment of Article 32, a privilege not available in many other countries, he said. However, over time, the remedy under Article 32 had become practically available only to citizens who were geographically close to the Supreme Court, and were financially privileged to meet the cost of litigation and travel, he said.

SC stays Madras HC order on temple in Chidambaram

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



The High Court order said the Podhu Dikshidar had maladministered the temple.

Questioning whether State High Courts had *parens patriae* (guardian) jurisdiction only over public temples and not places of worship of other faiths, the Supreme Court on Wednesday stayed a Madras High Court order constituting a Board of Management to administer the Sabanayagar Temple (Natarajar Temple) in Chidambaram.

A Bench of Aravind Kumar and Vipul M. Pancholi issued notice to Tamil Nadu and froze the implementation of the October 30 High Court order, which said the Podhu Dikshidar (a hereditary community of priests) had maladministered the temple ever since its administration was handed over to them following orders passed by the Supreme Court in 2014.

The Board, in consultation with the Tamil Nadu Heritage Commission, was ordered to undertake the removal of unauthorised constructions put up on the temple premises that caused damage to the ancient structure. The High Court Bench had tasked the Board with taking steps to retrieve the temple properties under encroachment, with the help of the district administration.

Appearing for the Tamil Nadu government, senior advocates Shekhar Naphade and Jaideep Gupta submitted that severe damage had been caused to the property, and the Podhu Dikshidars had not shared the full accounts of the income derived from the temple in the past 12 years.

Mr. Naphade said the High Court had *parens patriae* jurisdiction over public temples to protect the interest of the presiding deity, considered as juristic person by law.

"Is this *parens patriae* only for temples or other places of worship," Justice Kumar asked the State government.

Mr. Naphade responded that the law only recognised *parens patriae* jurisdiction for public temples, not churches or other places of worship.

Senior advocate Sai Deepak Iyer, appearing for the opposite side, submitted that the court should look into why the *parens patriae* doctrine applied to temples alone.

Mr. Gupta said the primary question was whether the temple was in danger or not. "This is a prime instance of what maladministration would happen on returning a temple," Mr. Naphade said.

ED holds searches at 11 places in BLM case

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday conducted searches at multiple locations in Keralam and Tamil Nadu in connection with alleged money laundering involving the Bharath Lajhna Multi State Co-operative Society (BLM).

The Central agency was conducting searches at 11 locations in cities such as Kochi, Kozhikode and Chennai, targeting R. Premkumar, founding member and de facto chairman and managing director of BLM, according to the ED. Mr. Premkumar allegedly misused his influence to divert crores collected from public depositors into his relatives' accounts for personal use.

The Kerala Crime Branch arrested Mr. Premkumar from his residence in Chennai on October 29. He was granted bail shortly afterwards.

9 rescue personnel missing in Telangana

The Hindu Bureau
KHAMMAM

Nine personnel belonging to two rescue teams went missing after their inflatable boats capsized in the swollen Peddacheruvu in Khammam district of Telangana on Wednesday evening.

Five of the personnel are from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF).

According to sources, the incident occurred when the rescue teams, comprising SDRF and Fire Services personnel, ventured into the swollen rivulet in two boats to rescue five stranded fishermen. The boats capsized amid strong winds and powerful currents.

The search operation continued till reports last came in on Wednesday night. The National Disaster Response Force has also been deployed.

The fishermen trapped in the floodwaters are reportedly safe.

Telangana conductor's death triggers protests

P Sridhar
KHAMMAM/BHADRADRI KOTHAGUDEM

The death of a 24-year-old Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) conductor after she was pushed off a moving bus by a woman passenger, triggered widespread protests by the corporation employees across Khammam on Wednesday.

Drivers and conductors boycotted duties, demanding stringent punishment for the accused and justice for Pravalika's bereaved mother.

Following an argument, the passenger had allegedly pushed Pravalika off the bus on October 25. The conductor's legs came under the rear wheels of the bus, leaving her critically injured.

She died on Tuesday night after battling for life for nearly 10 days. Police had initially registered a case of attempt to murder and arrested the accused, identified as Mounika of Mittagudem. Following Pravalika's death, the police altered the case to murder.

Job, house for mother

Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar paid his last respects to Pravalika. He said the government would provide a job and Indiramma house to Pravalika's mother. The government and TGSRTC would jointly provide ₹10 lakh ex gratia, while the family would receive an additional ₹1 crore as accident insurance compensation.

TGSRTC employees staged a demonstration seeking safety measures for bus staff.

Cultural proceedings



Beyond the House: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla at the Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday. @OMBIRLAKOTA X/ANI

14 MBBS students suspended for ragging

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Fourteen second-year MBBS students of the Government Medical College in Kamareddy in Telangana have been suspended following a ragging complaint lodged with the National Medical Commission (NMC).

Principal B. Valya said the college received a complaint forwarded by the NMC based on a representation from freshers.

He said the freshers were staying in the hostel. The second-year students, who were not residing in the hostel, were found to have entered an unauthorised area there. Four students were suspended for six months, while 10 got a four-month suspension.

NVS-03 reaches intended orbit

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The NVS-03 satellite launched by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on October 30, has reached the intended geosynchronous orbit, the agency said on Wednesday.

It is the third satellite in the next-generation navigation satellite system envisaged for providing continuity of navigation services for the IRNSS series.

The satellite carries an indigenous atomic clock along with procured clocks. It also includes L1 signal in addition to L5 and S band signals with coverage over Indian land mass and a region extending 1,500 km around Indian geopolitical boundary.



A GSLV rocket with NVS-03 lifts off from Sriharikota. PTI

ISRO said the satellite reached the geosynchronous orbit after four successful orbit manoeuvres. Its health is normal, it said

The development is significant as ISRO was unable to perform the intended orbit- raising operations for NVS-02 satellite in 2025 due to a valve malfunction.

Man gets 3-month jail for forging court order

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka has sentenced a man to three months' simple imprisonment for criminal contempt after he was found guilty of forging a 2017 court order by changing the date and adding the names of some individuals – who had not filed any petition – as petitioners.

A Division Bench comprising Justices D.K. Singh and H. Shanthi Bhushan passed the order on a criminal contempt of court petition initiated *suo motu* by the court against Chethan Kumar, a resident of Siddlaghatta in Chickballapur district.

2017 case

As many as 26 students, who had failed to complete engineering courses within stipulated period, had filed writ petitions before the Vacation Bench, which passed an interim order on September 28, 2017, directing respondent engineering colleges and the Visvesvaraya Technological University to receive their applications for allowing them to appear for exams in backlog subjects. Later, an advocate for the petitioner-students filed a complaint before the court alleging that the interim order had been fabricated by altering the date from "28.09.2017 to 28.10.2017".

While the police conducted an investigation against Chethan Kumar, the court had initiated a separate proceedings under the provisions of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 against him. The Bench noted that during the trial, the accused did not deny the allegatons.

Karnataka increases bus fares by 23%

Darshan Devaiah B.P.
BENGALURU

In another financial blow to consumers hit by the recent increase in milk and curd prices, the Karnataka government has announced a hike in bus fares across all four State-run transport corporations, with the revised rates coming into effect from the early hours of Thursday.

While fares on services operated by the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation, North Western Karnataka Road Transport Corporation and Kalyana Karnataka Road Transport Corporation have been increased by an average of 23%, Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) fares have been raised by 35%.

Transport Minister Byrathi Suresh announced the revision in Bengaluru on Wednesday. He attributed the increase to repeated hikes in diesel prices by the Union government since May this year.

Mr. Suresh said the government had opted for a comparatively lower increase than the 45% hike recommended by the Public Transport Fare Regulatory Committee, chaired by retired IAS officer Atul Kumar Tiwari.

INCOIS warns of marine heat wave, issues swell surge alert for east and west coasts

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), a research organisation under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), has issued a marine heat wave warning across the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Bay of Bengal.

The warming conditions could adversely affect coral reef ecosystems, marine productivity, and coastal biodiversity.

The intensity of the marine heat waves has largely been classified under the 'watch' and 'alert' categories, indicating sea surface temperature anomalies of up to 1 degree celsius above normal levels. The study area covered under this service is divided into six ocean basins, including the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Southern Indian Ocean and South China Sea, as well as 14 sectors along the Indian coastline for detailed regional analysis.



Waves of one metre or higher are likely to lash coasts of southern States as well as Gujarat, Maharashtra, and West Bengal. K.R. DEEPAK

Scientists are also assessing the intensity of marine heat waves and their potential impact on fisheries. These conditions could lead to biodiversity loss.

INCOIS on Wednesday also issued a swell surge warning for both the east and west coasts for the next two days, including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. A danger alert was issued for Car Nicobar Island. According to an official bulletin, waves of one metre or higher are expected to impact the coasts of Gujarat, Goa, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Lakshadweep, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

How U.S. midterm poll results could shape geopolitical options for India

Republicans have faced losses but it is unclear whether Trump will seek an early exit from the Iran war; the victory of candidates from immigrant families could temper anti-immigrant rhetoric; tariffs and trade deal other areas of interest

NEWS ANALYSIS

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI



U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, left, had made positive comments on the FTA when he visited Mumbai last month. ANI

The dramatic results of the U.S. midterm elections will probably have less impact on India-U.S. bilateral relations than on geopolitics and, as a result, India's "operating environment" in the world. The elections gave the Democrats a majority in the House of Representatives and a comfortable edge in the Senate, which means U.S. President Donald Trump will face restraints on both domestic and foreign policy.

In interviews given after the results began to come in, Mr. Trump said he stood by his decision to attack Iran in February 2026, but acknowledged that Iran was "part" of the reason for Republican losses.

It isn't clear whether this means he will give talks with Iran a greater chance and look for an early exit from the war, but New Delhi will watch closely.

Since the U.S.-Israel strikes on Iran began, at least 24 Indians have been killed, including 15 seafarers, who died in attacks by the U.S. and Iran on vessels in the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Oman.

The Hormuz blockade has had a choking effect on India's energy and fertilizer imports and goods trade, and any cessation of hostilities would come not a day too soon for India.

"Both an escalatory, costly and unnecessary war as well as inflationary tariffs have been negatively assessed by voters," said Navtej Sarna, a former Indian Ambassador to the U.S. and Israel, who said it was still early to see what "specific aspects" of foreign policy would be affected by the results.

The results could have a mixed, or even negative, effect on India's ties with Russia and its import of Russian oil.

Mr. Trump's decision on October 16, 2026, to waive all tariffs on countries importing Russian oil under the Lindsey Graham sanctions Act (SRIA) has given India a temporary reprieve.

However, the SRIA had widespread bipartisan support, and New Delhi will need to work both sides of the aisle if it wants the Act calling for tariffs of up to 100% on Russian oil imports to remain waived.

Ministry of External Affairs officials have said India will not bow to unilateral U.S. sanctions in this case. However, compared with July 2026, when India imported about 51% of its oil needs from Russia, the figure dropped to 44% in August and 33% in September.

FTA negotiations

Another area where India would benefit from constraints on Mr. Trump's "adventurism" is tariffs and the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations with the U.S.

Despite positive comments from U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who travelled to Mumbai last month and met top Indian industry leaders, there is some doubt about whether the FTA can be ready in time for Mr. Modi's visit to North America and Europe in mid-December 2026, when he will attend the G-20 summit in Florida.

"The general climate after the midterms is marginally favourable for the conclusion of the deal, which is already done to a great extent," former diplomat Mohan Kumar told *The Hindu*.

"On balance, I see a strong chance of the deal being done by the time or when the PM is in Miami for the G-20 meeting," he predicted, citing rising inflation and mishandling of the economy as election issues.

The rise of Democratic governors, senators and Congress members from immigrant families in these elections could mean a reduction in the anti-immigrant rhetoric that has worried Indians and persons of Indian origin (PIOs) in the U.S. over the past few years.

However, it is unlikely to change the administration's stance on curbing visas, restricting the naturalisation of professionals and deporting undocumented migrants, as these have widespread support.

Finally, India will watch closely whether the Republican loss will affect Mr. Trump's Indo-Pacific policy, U.S. ties with China, and his interest in the Quad grouping.

U.S. poll outcome a display of people's strength: Congress

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Jairam Ramesh

Opposition leaders on Wednesday cited the results of the U.S. midterm elections to stress that people's collective strength can defeat "authoritarian tendencies".

While Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal said that "change is in the air", party communications chief Jairam Ramesh underscored the importance of midterm polls in enforcing accountability of executive action.

"The midterm results in the U.S. are a powerful demonstration of how people's collective strength can take on and defeat authoritarian tendencies, even when they are backed by big corporations, a compromised media ecosystem, and algorithm-driven social media platforms that amplify division, hatred, and anti-people politicians," Mr. Venugopal said in a post on X.

He argued that democracy belongs to ordinary citizens who make their voices heard, and not to billionaires, powerful interests, or technology platforms.

Mr. Ramesh described the results as a "stunning verdict" against U.S. President Donald Trump. "Personalities aside, the results demonstrate the power of midterm polls to enforce accountability. In our own country, the ONOE (One Nation, One Election) idea that is being advocated by the Modi government will significantly blunt that instrument," he said on X.

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen chief Asaduddin Owaisi put out a post on the victory of Democrat Abdul El-Sayed, who will be the first Muslim in the U.S. Senate.

"An Abdul has won in Michigan; now the Abdul from Uttar Pradesh will have to strengthen his political identity...," Mr. Owaisi said in a post on X.

Govt. seeks to cut access to substandard medicines

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry has proposed amendments to the Drugs Rules, 1945, to immediately suspend the manufacturing licences of drugs declared Not of Standard Quality (NSQ) on specified critical quality parameters.

Under the existing provisions of the Drugs Rules, 1945, suspension or cancellation of a manufacturing licence is preceded by the prescribed regulatory procedure, including issuance of a show-cause notice. This may result in a time gap between the declaration of a drug as NSQ and the initiation of regulatory action. During this period, the drug may remain in circulation, posing potential risks to public health.

The amendments address this regulatory concern.

The draft amendments have been notified for public consultation, inviting objections and suggestions from stakeholders and members of the public within 30 days from the date on which copies of the Gazette of India containing the draft rules are made available to the public.

Nirmala Lakshman wins Sharjah award for book *The Tamils*

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI



Nirmala Lakshman

Nirmala Lakshman, author, journalist and Director of The Hindu Group, has won the Sharjah Award for the Best International Book in the Best International Non-Fiction Book category for *The Tamils: A Portrait of a Community*. The award was presented by Sheikha Bodour bint Sultan Al Qasimi, Chairperson of the Sharjah Book Authority.

According to a press release, the book, which was published by Aleph Book Company in January 2025, has sold several thousand copies since its release. Drawing on historical research and personal observations, it explores the history, society and culture of the Tamil people.

"I am deeply honoured by this recognition," said Dr. Nirmala Lakshman. "Writing *The Tamils* was both a personal journey and an exploration of a rich and complex history. I wanted to convey the diversity of Tamil life, the many influences that have shaped it, and its continuing vitality. It is especially meaningful to see this story resonate with readers and receive international recognition. I hope it encourages more people to rediscover the histories and ideas that connect us."

Agnipath review aimed at addressing youth discontent ahead of key polls

NEWS ANALYSIS

Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI



Armed forces recruitment is a key issue in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, which will soon hold elections. FILE PHOTO

The two-year extension for Agniveers, with the option of being retained thereafter in the armed forces, is the outcome of a review of the Agnipath scheme announced by the National Democratic Alliance government after the 2024 Lok Sabha election, in which the BJP lost its parliamentary majority and suffered losses in States where armed forces recruitment was high.

Soon after the results of the election came in, with the BJP at 240 seats and dependent on its allies to form the government, one of the first things demanded by the Janata Dal (United), the Telugu Desam Party, and the Lok Janshakti Party had been a review of the Agnipath scheme. NDA allies had gone on record asking for a review in 2024, and cited ground-level resentment among youngsters aspiring to join the armed forces.

BJP losses

According to one estimate, one of the reasons for the BJP's losses in Rajasthan, Haryana, and parts of Uttar Pradesh was the resentment with regard to the four-year Agnipath scheme, which replaced permanent recruitment into the armed forces below officer ranks. In fact, widespread protests had taken place in western Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Rajasthan when the scheme was announced in 2022.

For the BJP, which will defend its governments in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand in the upcoming Assembly elections – States where armed forces recruitment is considered important – the review has come as a relief. "We did get feedback that this was an issue... We are happy that this has been announced before the first batch completes its four-year term," said a senior office-bearer in the BJP.

Rahul's assurance

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, had said that the Congress would be scrapping the scheme altogether if voted to power.

The changes in the Agnipath scheme will, in a way, help the BJP defuse what could have turned out to be a volatile issue for the young people with regard to employment, coming as it does after the Gen-Z protests against the leak of NEET papers and the discontent against the BJP on the University Grants Commission (UGC) social equity regulations.

Accused in Guwahati hotel shooting case killed in 'encounter'

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI



Ghanakanta Gogoi

The prime accused in the October 26 Guwahati hotel shooting, which killed five, was shot dead in an alleged police encounter in Sivasagar on Wednesday.

The encounter took place around 3.10 a.m. at Phulpanichiga under the Gaurisagar police station limits, when police were taking the accused, 34-year-old Ghanakanta Gogoi, from Guwahati to Sivasagar in connection with a 2024 bank fraud case registered in the district.

Gogoi asked the police personnel to stop the vehicle to relieve himself, and then attacked the accompanying team and tried to escape from custody, according to Sivasagar's Senior Superintendent of Police Papori Chetia. "Ghanakanta then tried to snatch an officer's service revolver. Three shots were fired from the revolver amid the scuffle, and one of our officers was seriously injured," she said.

Ms. Chetia said one of the police personnel, accompanying the team, had to use his service weapon to stop Gogoi from escaping. The Sivasagar police had obtained a production warrant from a Guwahati court in connection with the bank fraud case.

On Tuesday, a Guwahati court sent Gogoi to judicial custody after his seven-day police remand in the shootout case was completed.

PAC meet calls for closer scrutiny of public spending, quicker action on audit findings

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI/
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



K.C. Venugopal

A conference of Public Accounts Committee Chairpersons from Parliament and 25 State legislatures has called for closer scrutiny of public spending, quicker action on audit findings, and the wider use of forensic tools to identify areas of governance requiring immediate legislative oversight, adopting a resolution to that effect at the end of a two-day meeting in Thiruvananthapuram.

"[Comptroller and Auditor General] CAG reports often reach us years after the money was spent, when officers have moved on and the trail has become untraceable. We were alarmed by the delays by a few governments in placing the reports before the House. There should be a robust mechanism to ensure that all this happens in a time-bound manner," said K.C. Venugopal, a senior Congress leader and chairman of Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC), speaking at the conference's valedictory session.

In a post on X, he added: "Audit only matters when someone answers for what it finds. Accountability cannot end with a CAG report sitting on a shelf; it has to go on until the last rupee is accounted for and the last lapse is fixed."

Hold debates on reports

The PACs are responsible for auditing government revenue and expenditure and examining CAG audit reports. The conference, which was built on the theme, "Audit, accountability and good governance: the evolving role of PAC", concluded with the adoption of an eight-point resolution.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, who listened to the deliberations, said that the recommendations from the conference would provide a clear pathway to improve the functioning of PACs and ensure that public money is used for the right purpose.

Mr. Venugopal, on behalf of the PAC Chairpersons, requested the Speaker to ensure that the PAC reports are debated in Parliament and the Assemblies so that accountability is fixed by the government and the public would come to know of the valuable work of the PACs. He noted that a widely shared frustration by the PAC Chairpersons was that the replies from Ministries and Departments to the PAC often come late, are incomplete, or do not come at all.

The eight-point resolution committed PACs to ensuring that public funds are spent only for the purposes for which they were sanctioned and to safeguarding the public exchequer through rigorous monitoring. Among the key decisions was the creation of a digital platform to facilitate continuous peer learning, sharing of best practices, and procedural innovations among PACs across the country. The conference also resolved to work towards standardised timelines for governments to submit Action Taken Notes on audit observations and PAC recommendations.

To improve monitoring of audit findings, the participants called for the adoption of digital oversight systems on the lines of Parliament's Audit Para Monitoring System (APMS) in all State and Union Territory legislatures.

The conference also urged closer collaboration with the CAG, including the use of advanced forensic tools to identify high-risk areas requiring legislative oversight.

Cess levied on sales tax falls within State's ambit, says SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Constitution Bench's judgment was based on petitions dating as far back as 1994

The Supreme Court held on Wednesday that an additional tax levied by a State legislature on the sale or purchase of goods will not fall outside the State's competence.

A seven-judge Bench confirmed a 1975 ruling (*S. Kodar* versus *State of Kerala*) that a cess levied as an increment to an existing sales tax has to be judged in the same way as the principal tax.

"*S. Kodar* (supra) squarely holds that an additional tax or surcharge computed as a percentage of the sales tax payable is an enhancement of the rate of sales tax and a tax on the sale or purchase of goods within Entry 54 of List II, as it then stood. That decision continues to hold the field," the lead opinion authored by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant held.

In a concurring but separate opinion, Justice K.V. Viswanathan agreed that the judicial reasoning in the 1975 verdict indeed held the fort.

The Constitution Bench's judgment on Wednesday was based on petitions dating as far back as 1994, raising the question as to the legislative competence of a State Legislature, to levy a tax on the sale or purchase of goods under Entry 54 of List II of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution, on sales tax payable by a dealer rather than directly on his turnover.

'Tax on tax'

The assessees had insisted that such an extra tax could be construed as a 'tax on tax'. They urged that a levy measured by the quantum of tax already payable does not fall upon the 'sale' or 'purchase of goods', which alone is the subject of Entry 54 of State List. Entry 54 covered taxes levied by States on the sale or purchase of goods other than newspapers.

The States, on the other hand, maintained that such a surcharge was nothing more than an enhancement of the rate of sales tax for a class of dealers, and that the mode of its computation did not alter its essential character as a tax on sale of goods.

SC tells excluded voters not to fear prosecution; ECI insists on Form 6

Court had earlier said ECI was in 'error' to force pre-existing voters, deleted from the electoral rolls, to apply as new voters under Form 6; it had nudged the poll body to allow purged voters to use Form 8 or an enumeration form to get included

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday assured petitioners that no voter will face criminal prosecution, even as advocate Prashant Bhushan said the Election Commission of India (ECI) is still insisting that voters excluded after the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Delhi, under the Absent, Shifted, Dead, or Duplicate (ASDD) categories, must fill up Form 6, which is meant exclusively for new voters.

On October 28, the Supreme Court had made it clear that the ECI was in "error" to force pre-existing voters, deleted from the electoral rolls, to apply as new voters under Form 6 of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960.


The ECI too had clarified that no penal action would be taken against excluded voters applying to be included using Form 6. PTI

The petitioners, activists Anjali Bhardwaj and Amrita Johri, represented by Mr. Bhushan and advocate Cheryl D'souza, had submitted on October 28 that the ECI was compelling voters to misrepresent themselves as new applicants, an offence which attracts imprisonment.

On October 28, the top court had orally nudged the ECI, saying that such purged voters should be allowed to use Form 8, which voters can use to apply for a change in residence, or an enumeration form for the SIR process.

On Wednesday, Mr. Bhushan said voters were still in the same quandary despite the SC's remarks. He referred to a press note issued by the ECI on Tuesday which had clarified that the submission of Form 6 for the purpose of inclusion in the electoral roll under SIR or afterwards was "not, by itself, false merely because the elector was previously enrolled".

The ECI note had promised that no penal action would be taken under Section 31 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 by Electoral Registration Officers against electors "merely on the ground that they had been included in a previous electoral roll and had submitted Form 6 during the SIR process or afterwards".

He said the ECI note clearly showed that the court's oral observations to allow pre-existing voters to apply through Form 8 or their enumeration forms were not put into practice, leaving the voters to still apply through Form 6 and risk prosecution.

"Now they are in the horns of a dilemma," he submitted. "We are dealing with the matter, how can they feel like that," the CJI said. The Bench asked the petitioners to file an application on this aspect, and said the matter would be heard on November 19.

ECI separates online form for registration of fresh voters and SIR declaration

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has separated Form 6, used for fresh voter registration, and an accompanying declaration in its online version in States where the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise is under way.

Earlier in September, it had already withdrawn the declaration from its digital platforms in States where the SIR exercise had been completed.

Form 6 is used for fresh voters registrations and since the SIR in Bihar a separate declaration had been added to it in physical forms. However, in the digital mode, it was a single form and this included the declaration.

Under the revised process, each must be submitted separately, requiring a separate OTP verification and e-sign, an official said

The ECI had justified it saying a single OTP for the two documents had led to suggestions that the form had been tweaked without the approval of the Union Law Ministry.

This change in the online version of Form 6 had been one of the issues flagged in dissent notes by the two Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi.

On Wednesday, a senior ECI official said: "Previously, Form 6 and the accompanying declaration were submitted together using a single OTP and e-sign for the operational convenience of applicants. Under the revised process, each must be submitted separately, requiring a separate OTP verification and e-Sign. Applicants must complete both steps for successful submission".

Affidavit in court

The poll body has in a counter affidavit submitted in the court last week had said that according to an October 21 decision of its electoral roll division, "similar to physical submissions, online applications in Form 6 shall also be divided into two distinct parts: Form 6 as prescribed in the Rules; and the SIR Declaration."

Anarchic forces trying to create unrest: RSS

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale on Wednesday said that "anarchic forces", both within India and outside, were trying to provoke the country's youth with the aim of creating unrest.

Regime change, he said, must take place through elections and not violence.

"Whatever political goals people may have in wanting a change of government but stirring unrest in society, dividing people or turning to violence does not serve society's interest," he said.

Responding to a question about the RSS's views on the SIR exercise, Mr. Hosabale said he was puzzled by the uproar over a process he described as a "routine exercise".

Several BJP BLAs named as 'objectors' deny filing Form 7s in Mustafabad constituency

Suruchi Kumari
NEW DELHI

Individuals named as BJP-appointed Booth Level Agents (BLAs) and listed as 'objectors' in at least 77% of the total 1,021 deletion applications filed so far in Mustafabad constituency of Delhi have largely denied their association with the filing of Form 7s as part of the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of voter rolls.


BJP-appointed BLAs were listed as 'objectors' in at least 77% of the total 1,021 applications filed so far in Mustafabad. FILE PHOTO

The Hindu contacted all 20 BLAs registered with the BJP, according to the Election Commission of India (ECI)'s records, who have filed the 787 Form 7s, citing reasons such as "absent/permanently shifted", "already enrolled" and "death" to seek deletion of electors' names.

All the applications are against Muslim electors. In all, 16 of the 20 denied having filed or signed any forms since the claims and objections phase began on August 31. Almost all of them claimed that they had no knowledge of forms being filled out using their names.

The 787 applications account for 94% of the 837 deletion applications filed by third parties, as per the publicly available list of Form 7s on Delhi's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) website. Form 7 is used to seek deletion of existing names from the electoral roll or to object to the inclusion of names.

One such BLA, Ankit Yadav, who has been named as an objector in 32 Form 7 applications, not only denied filing any of these but also said that he had submitted a complaint and his formal resignation as BLA to party representatives. "I got to know on Sunday that my details have been used to seek deletions of my neighbours belonging to the Muslim community. I know all of them, and we live like family and friends here in this neighbourhood, which has only a couple of Hindu households," he said.

With the help of the area BLO, *The Hindu* verified that all electors concerned live at their registered addresses. The BLO also said he had not received any physical copies of Form 7s. "When I had taken the role of BLA six months ago, I was told that my work would be to help the BLOs and voters in the area. How can they use my details and pose me as 'fraud'?" Mr. Yadav asked.

The Hindu had reported on October 30 that BJP BLAs had been named as objectors in applications seeking the deletion of Muslim electors who were found living at their addresses in Mustafabad during *The Hindu*'s visit.

One of the objectors, Chandra Shekhar Nainwal, named in applications concerning 28 Muslim electors, had denied filing them and said he was not associated with BJP.

Apart from him, four others said they were no longer associated with BJP in that capacity. BJP BLA Robin Singh Dhama, who has been named as an objector in 57 cases, is an exception. He acknowledged filing Form 7 applications and claimed to have submitted "500 of those".

The district election officer, Delhi Chief Electoral Officer and ECI did not respond to questions by *The Hindu*.

Prohibitive orders passed *ex-parte* to prevent unrest: police

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Seven separate prohibitive orders passed by the Delhi Police under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) in the national capital show restrictions concerning free movement were imposed way before protests erupted demanding the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar.

Six orders issued on August 20 or immediately before or after this date, came a month after the July 20 protests against alleged NEET paper leaks witnessed violence in New Delhi district.

One of them imposes prohibitions from September 26 to November 24. The prohibitive orders are for a maximum period of 60 days, till the latter half of October. They are *ex-parte* or without hearing any objections, saying "notice cannot be served individually on all concerned".

Affidavit in SC

The orders, which are part of an affidavit filed by Delhi Police Commissioner Anurag Kumar in the Supreme Court, said "reports have been received indicate that such conditions now exists that unrestricted holding of public meetings, processions/demonstrations, etc, in the area are likely to cause obstruction to traffic, danger to human safety and disturbance of public tranquillity".

The police reasoned in the orders that it was necessary to take "speedy measures" to "prevent danger to human life or safety and disturbance to public tranquillity".

SC seeks govt. reply on law giving lifelong immunity to CEC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The petitions said the Section was unconstitutional, went beyond the ambit of powers given to the ECI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought a response from the Union government on petitions challenging the constitutionality of a specific provision in the Chief Election Commissioner-Election Commissioners' appointment law which grants them blanket, lifelong immunity from any legal action or criminal prosecution, not only during the official tenure but even after retirement.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant issued notice to both the Centre and the Election Commission of India on petitions filed by RJD MP Manoj Jha, represented by Tanya Srivastava; and advocate Arun Kumar Agrawal, represented by advocate Neha Rathi, challenging Section 16 of The Chief Election Commissioner And Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions Of Service And Term Of Office) Act, 2023.

The court listed the petitions on December 18.

The petitions said the Section was unconstitutional, went beyond the ambit of powers given to the Election Commission of India (ECI) and, significantly, violated the Basic Structure of the Constitution. "Section 16 of the Act bars jurisdiction of Constitutional courts and interferes with the power of judicial review, held to be a part of the Basic Structure of Constitution," they submitted.

'Bars all prosecution'

"A bare perusal of the text [of Section 16] discloses the width of the protection granted in so far as it bars all kinds of prosecution including corruption, forgery and other serious offences. It provides for lifelong immunity and covers acts that may be outside lawful authority," Mr. Agrawal's plea contended.

The petitions said that until the enactment of the 2023 Act, the Parliament had not granted any blanket immunity to Election Commissioners.

Rahul seeks 'open debates' with PM, but avoids them inside Parliament, says BJP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party n Wednesday accused Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi of demanding open debates with Prime Minister Narendra Modi while "consistently shying away from debates" in Parliament.


Sharp attack: Sudhanshu Trivedi also targeted Rahul Gandhi over the 'mock Parliament' held by the INDIA bloc. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

"The Constitution-makers of India have designated Parliament as the highest forum for debate. If a person holding the position of Leader of the Opposition says that he does not wish to participate in debates in the House, it amounts to an insult to the vision of the Constitution-makers and the basic spirit of the Constitution," said BJP MP Sudhanshu Trivedi at a press briefing.

"MPs are sent to Parliament to debate issues, but Rahul Gandhi has consistently shied away from debates. When the no-confidence motion was brought in 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi began speaking, and Rahul Gandhi walked away," he said, alleging that the same had happened when Mr. Modi started speaking on the Manipur issue.

Targeting Mr. Gandhi over the "mock Parliament" recently held by the Congress-led INDIA bloc, Mr. Trivedi said the Leader of the Opposition should understand that Mr. Modi had been the unanimous leader of the National Democratic Alliance for the past 12 years, whereas Mr. Gandhi was not the leader of the Opposition bloc.

Mockery of democracy

"Rahul Gandhi may organise mock debates to console himself and do whatever he wishes, as he is already making a mockery of democracy, the Constitution and Parliament. His demand also amounts to making a mockery of Parliament," he said.

He also criticised Mr. Gandhi for making "baseless remarks" against the Prime Minister and Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Punjab, in an attempt to divert attention from his own "failures".

"Referring to the commitment to eradicate drugs from Punjab by a stipulated date, Rahul Gandhi had remarked that the government would not remain in power until then. It is surprising that Rahul Gandhi does not understand the strength of a firm resolve and the ability to translate it into achievement. If he wishes to learn, he should learn from our leaders," he said.

Cong. accuses Dhami of handing over govt. land to private parties

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday accused Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami of handing over government land and British-era heritage properties to private parties at throwaway prices, and alleged that Mr. Dhami had centralised decision-making powers to facilitate the transfers.


Pushkar Singh Dhami

The Opposition party demanded Mr. Dhami's removal and said it would approach the Governor and move the court if no action was taken.

At the centre of the State-wide agitation on Wednesday was the proposed transfer of the George Everest estate in Mussoorie, named after Sir George Everest, India's first Surveyor-General, to private entities.

The estate was part of Uttarakhand's historical and natural heritage, the Congress said, questioning the Uttarakhand government's decision to transfer such a significant public asset to the hands of private players.

Congress general secretary in-charge of Uttarakhand, Kumari Selja, alleged that land and properties at nearly 40 locations across the State were being transferred to private entities, compromising public assets and the interests of the local people.

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters here, Ms. Selja claimed Mr. Dhami had taken away the final authority over land transfers from the Cabinet, and was personally approving major transactions while also chairing the Uttarakhand Investment and Infrastructure Development Board.

The allegations came amid protests organised by the Congress across Uttarakhand under the '*Bhumi Bachao, Dhami Hatao*' (save the land, remove Dhami) campaign.

(With inputs from PTI)

Haryana Cong. flags concerns over 'electoral transparency'

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

Ahead of the Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit to Haryana to lead the Bharatiya Janata Party's 'Save Democracy, Remove Anarchy' march, the Haryana Congress on Wednesday put out a series of pointed questions to the ruling party on issues related to democracy, electoral fairness, the independence of constitutional institutions, and the steadily deteriorating state of governance in the State.

"It was astonishing that the BJP, which had failed to provide satisfactory answers to serious questions concerning electoral transparency, was now launching a campaign in the name of saving democracy," the Congress's Haryana in-charge Sanjay Dutt said.

"Mr. Shah should also provide answers on who is accountable for the deteriorating law and order situation in Haryana. When the BJP talks about eliminating anarchy, the people of Haryana have every right to ask what concrete steps the State government has taken to ensure their safety," Mr. Dutt added.

INBRIEF



Navy puts two officers on trial over 2024 capsize of warship

The Navy has initiated court martial proceedings against two officers for alleged negligence that led to the partial capsizing of guided-missile frigate *INS Brahmaputra* at the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai in July 2024. A senior Navy official confirmed that the proceedings against the warship's commanding officer, a Captain, and its officer of the day, a Lieutenant Commander, began on October 12. The Captain faces charges of hazarding a naval ship and negligence in performing his duties, while the junior officer has been charged with negligence. The ship tilted onto its side after a fire broke out during repairs. A sailor drowned in the incident.

CBI gets custody of 'kingpin' in Mahadev betting app case

A special court in Raipur on Wednesday remanded Sourabh Chandrakar, the alleged kingpin of the ₹6,000-crore Mahadev online betting app scam, in CBI custody for eight days. The development follows the recent extradition of Chandrakar from Oman to Delhi after which he was brought to Raipur on Tuesday. Defence lawyer Tushar Giri told journalists that the court also allowed the Central probe agency to take the accused to Delhi for questioning. The CBI took over the probe in 2024, while the ED has been probing the money laundering linked to the cases.

Falling fertility rate has made two-child norm outdated: SC

Top court says its 2003 judgment, which upheld such penal laws, needs a revisit by a larger Bench; India's Total Fertility Rate has fallen from 3.02 to 1.9, going below the 2.1 replacement threshold

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday held that laws penalising having more than two children have lost their relevance due to the falling fertility rate in India.

"We are of the strong opinion that laws that penalise having more than two children have lost their relevance. The foundation of such laws, that is, the fear of overpopulation, has crumbled due to demographic changes in the past few decades," a Bench headed by Justice P.S. Narasimha observed.

The court said its 2003 judgment (in *Javed v. State of Haryana*) which upheld such penal laws, needed a revisit by a larger Bench.

India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) had fallen from 3.02 to 1.9. A TFR of 2.1, known as the replacement rate, would allow one generation to completely replace itself.

"Even though India's population is not yet declining, the TFR falling below the replacement rate will soon result in a demographic transition towards an older population with a declining share of the working-age population. Therefore, laws aimed at limiting population growth have now lost their significance," Justice Narasimha observed.

> The foundation of such laws, that is, the fear of overpopulation, has crumbled due to demographic changes in the past few decades... the TFR falling below the replacement rate will soon result in a demographic transition towards an older population with a declining share of the working-age population
>
> SUPREME COURT



The 2003 judgment had referred to the situation that existed in China as of 2000 and drew inspiration from the measures that it had undertaken to control the population.

Healthy growth

"The earlier perception that population has a negative impact on development does not hold water any more. Rather than society and the courts being concerned about the negative consequences of high population, it should instead focus on the need to encourage a healthy growth of population," the judgment, by a Bench including Justice Alok Aradhe, said.

The judgment pointed out that the share of persons aged 60 and above had risen from about 8.3% in 2014 to 9.7% in 2024, and government projections place that share at nearly 15% by 2036.

India's falling fertility rate, the court said, would necessarily mean a smaller proportion of younger persons in the future, and, correspondingly, a larger ageing population. The court said the failure to take notice of demographic changes would lead to only serious consequences. Failure to adapt not only produced injustice, but was also an abuse of power.

The judgment was based on a petition filed by Mangala Bhimrao Ingle, whose election as sarpanch of the Kakoda gram panchayat in Maharashtra was set aside on the ground that she had more than two children.

Justice Narasimha found such laws linking motherhood to political representation a violation of Article 21 (right to life) under the Constitution.

"Allowing such laws to stand excludes an entire class of citizens from political representation on grounds bearing little rational connection to their capacity to hold public office. It compels an unconscionable choice between bearing children and democratic participation, impinging on the right to reproductive autonomy under Article 21," Justice Narasimha observed.

Seeking an immediate re-visitation of the 2003 judgment, the court permitted the appellant to continue in her elected position while staying any proceedings against her.

Fast-track special courts scheme extended till 2031

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Centre plans to operationalise 850 fast track courts to deal with child abuse and rape cases

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a five-year extension of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) for fast-track special courts (FTSCs), including exclusive POCSO courts, from April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2031.

The scheme, operational since October 10, 2019, has undergone extensions to ensure expeditious disposal of cases related to rape and offences under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. It was initially launched for one year and was extended up to March 31, 2026.

The scheme has a total financial outlay of ₹3,788.04 crore, comprising a Central share of ₹2,353.15 crore and a State/Union Territory share of ₹1,434.89 crore.

The Centre's allocation will be met from the Nirbhaya Fund. There are 779 functional FTSCs across the country, including 399 exclusive POCSO courts. They have disposed of 4,02,457 cases since the scheme's inception.

Under the extended scheme, the government plans to operationalise 850 FTSCs, including exclusive POCSO courts, across participating States and Union Territories.

This expansion shall be based on case pendency data across all States and Union Territories.

There is also a provision for a dedicated Judicial Officer, a Special Public Prosecutor and six support staff to facilitate expeditious disposal of pending cases relating to rape and offences under the POCSO Act, 2012.

The continuation of the scheme is expected to expedite trials, reduce the backlog of rape and POCSO cases, and encourage the establishment of Vulnerable Witness Deposition Centres and child-friendly court spaces to facilitate victim testimonies without causing further distress, while prioritising cases involving vulnerable groups like women and children, an official statement said.

Cong. slams govt. over new rural jobs scheme norms

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Criticising the government for weakening the grievance redressal mechanism under the rural employment programme Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin), Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh on Wednesday said the government had reduced India's most significant rights-based law to an administrative scheme.

Mr. Ramesh was responding to *The Hindu's* report on the government dropping several provisions that had figured in the draft rules circulated in May. Key clauses dropped include a provision requiring the registration of a first information report for *prima facie* evidence of financial irregularities, and the requirement to place action-taken reports before local body meetings for review and monitoring. In a post on X, Mr. Ramesh said that while the government had an opportunity to strengthen mechanisms to address violations of the programme's provisions, it had instead "removed those avenues altogether".

According to the Congress leader, one of the most significant changes was deleting a draft provision that treated failure to dispose of grievances within seven working days as a contravention of the Act.

Mr. Ramesh further criticised the deletion of provisions mandating review of grievance-related action by Intermediate and District Panchayats and designation of a fixed weekly day for officials to receive complaints.

CPI(M) opposes linking welfare benefits to voter IDs

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) on Wednesday criticised the Union Panchayati Raj Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh's remarks that Aadhaar should be replaced with biometrics and voter identity cards as the identification document for welfare disbursals.

The party said welfare schemes should not be contingent on documents or technological requirements that many poor households were unable to meet.

Four dead in gunfight between rival armed groups in Manipur

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

At least four people were killed and several injured in a gunfight between rival armed groups in Manipur's Noney district on Wednesday.

Officials said the gunfight, reportedly between different Naga groups, began around 3.30 a.m. at Taodaijang village in the Nungba police station limits and continued for hours. "The exchange of fire prevented security personnel from immediately reaching the area," a district official said.

The groups involved were reportedly the Jenchui faction of the Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF), the Kamson faction of the ZUF, and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim, also known as the NSCN (Isak-Muivah). The last two are allies.

According to local people, three of those killed belonged to the ZUF (Jenchui) group, and one was a ZUF (Kamson) member. Several people from all three groups were injured. It was not clear what led to the gunfight.

The Rongmei Naga Luphuam, an apex women's body of the Rongmei community, appealed to all armed groups to stop fighting.

Shutdown extended

Meanwhile, the Committee on Tribal Unity, a Kuki-Zo organisation, on Wednesday extended its ongoing shutdown in Kangpokpi district by another 48 hours to protest the government's failure to deliver justice for two Kuki youths who were abducted and killed a few days ago.

The shutdown was scheduled to conclude at 5 p.m. on Wednesday.

Kedartal trek turns tragic for sisters from Lucknow

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

A family's search for two missing daughters ended in tragedy on Wednesday after the bodies of sisters Vartika Verma and Deepika Verma, residents of Lucknow, were recovered following an avalanche on the Kedartal trekking route in Uttarakhand.

The sisters were among the eight trekkers stranded near Kacchi Dhang, on their way to Kedartal. The group had set out from Gangotri on October 27, but heavy snowfall and avalanches cut off their route, leaving them stranded in the mountains.

Brother's call for help

"Please don't scroll. Please share," Atul Verma posted on Instagram, alongside an AI-generated photograph of his younger sisters smiling in the front row of a trekking group. He was desperately trying to draw attention to the missing trekkers and reach someone who could help.



Deepika Verma and Vartika Verma had set out from Gangotri for Kedartal with other trekkers on October 27. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"This is not just a photograph of a trekking group. These are eight human lives, eight families waiting for their loved ones to return," Mr. Verma wrote.

The family said they learnt about the incident through social media and not from the trekking agency. Mr. Verma rushed to Uttarkashi, hoping there was still a chance of finding his sisters safe. He reached the district headquarters on Tuesday with other relatives, but was eventually informed that both sisters had died.

The sisters shared a love for trekking and had explored several trails across India and Nepal.

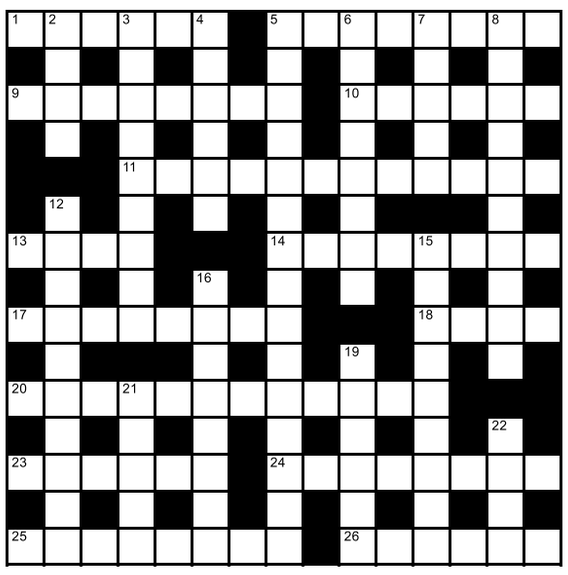
With the recovery of two more bodies, the death toll in the avalanche has reached four. Rescuers are continuing search for the remaining four trekkers, all from West Bengal.

TH CROSSWORD + 14941

(set by Avtaar)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at *https://thehindu.com/crosswords*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 It is like hell when husband's fired by present coach (6)
5 Yankee tie, crest and official garments (5-3)
9 Dope is worthless - contains adulterated musk (8)
10 Double-woven blouse, extremely lacy, worn by women (3-3)
11 Bubbly unopened alcohol is toted after the start in sign of childhood camaraderie (3,6,3)
13 Ducks in a row? (4)
14 12 eggs found in nobleman's jacket - issue being reviewed (8)
17 Vocal and essentially cynical freak subject to emotional fits (8)
18 75% of 14 is 5 less? (4)
20 Reserve hospital taken over by sick senior civil servant? (6-6)
23 Actor undressed completely going for a vivid Asian wrap (6)
24 Restraining covert operation about suffering (8)
25 Bust without head, feels very hard (8)
26 Time for cold drink and sweet (6)

Down

2 Hammer ball into channel (4)
3 See black rat entering complex seconds away from crisis (9)
4 Obstinate Republican boards train (6)
5 Silly Conservative focuses on reforms with intense third party scrutiny (4-11)
6 Class of anemones cultured in a zoo that wants it (8)
7 All orderlies in retreat drinking rum (5)
8 British daily featuring extremely unusual, shortened clip on soldiers' execution (10)
12 Reached outside old University with standard mask (10)
15 Instruction for band members in centrefold, briefly edited (5,4)
16 First to go out, believing bum's sweet talk (8)
19 Aimless commercial break (6)
21 1-0; United (2,3)
22 Regularly connected in the past (4)

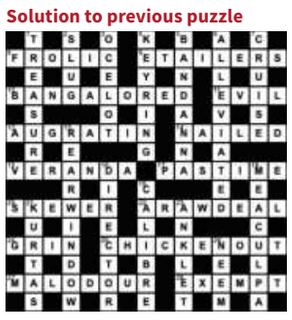
SUDOKU

3				9				7
7					4		5	
8	5	4						
		8		1	9		7	
		5				2		
	7		6	2		1		
						4	2	1
	1		8					3
5				3				9

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

3	7	8	2	4	5	1	6	9
1	4	2	6	8	9	7	3	5
5	6	9	1	3	7	4	2	8
7	3	6	9	1	2	5	8	4
9	8	1	4	5	3	6	7	2
2	5	4	8	7	6	3	9	1
6	2	7	5	9	1	8	4	3
8	9	5	3	6	4	2	1	7
4	1	3	7	2	8	9	5	6

FAITH

Three realities of Tattva

Swamy Vedanta Desika authored 'Tattva Navaneetam' in his work 'Miscellaneous Secrets' ('Sillarai Rahasyam'). Just as butter is churned from curd, he churns out Tattva Navaneetam from his work Sillarai Rahasyam, said Sri Desika Srinivasa Thathachariar in a discourse. Tattva denotes three realities: *chetanam* (sentient), *achetanam* (non-sentient), and the Supreme Lord (Eswaran). Anyone who desires liberation (*mumukshutva*) must know these tattvas. The Vedas, Manusmriti, epics such as the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, and the Vishnu Purana clearly describe these three tattvas in detail. The Upanishads give these tattvas different names: *bhokta*, *bhogyam* and *prerita*. The sentient soul, jivatma, is the *chetana* tattva and is called the *bhokta* – the experiencer. The non-sentient object is called *achetana* tattva and is *bhogyam*, meaning the object to be experienced. The Supreme Lord is called *prerita* (Eswaran) and is the controller. Jivatma experiences the fruits of karma. That is why it is called *bhokta*. Inanimate objects exist solely for others' experience (*bhogyam*). The Supreme Lord commands both the experiencer (*chetanam*) and the experienced object (*achetanam*) according to the laws.

Jivatmas are of three types: *baddha* (bound), *mukta* (liberated), and *nitya suri* (eternal). *Baddha* (bound souls) are trapped in worldly bondage; *Mukta* (liberated souls) have escaped this bondage and attained liberation (*moksha*) through acharyas (bhakti or prapatti). *Nitya suris* are forever free from worldly bondage and render eternal service to the Supreme Lord. They are Senai Mudaliar, Periya Thiruvadi and Ananthazhwar.

Bengaluru exhibition attempts to make the quantum seem human

The 'QUANTUM' series at Science Gallery Bengaluru showcases a meld of science and art to turn the counter-intuitive principles of quantum physics into a human experience; it forces the visitors to acknowledge that their place in the universe is governed by uncertainty, ambiguity, and possibility

Sayantan Datta
BENGALURU



Light topic: A mediator explains experiments displayed as part of the QUANTUM exhibition at Science Gallery Bengaluru. J. ALLEN EGENUSE

If you enter Science Gallery Bengaluru one of these weekends, you should find Mr. Tomkins to your right. At first glance, he might appear asleep – or dead. But look at him from a different angle, and you might catch him in the middle of a prance.

'Mr. Tomkins meets Schrödinger' is one of the 34 exhibits at the Gallery's latest programme, simply called 'QUANTUM'.

Set up by The Hashtag# Collective, comprising artists Parvathi Nayar, Saira Biju, Abin Chaudhuri, Biju Kuriakose, and Sindhura V.S., 'Mr. Tomkins' depicts – somewhat literally – Erwin Schrödinger's famous 1935 thought experiment called Schrödinger's cat. The Austrian scientist came up with the thought experiment to contemplate a quantum phenomenon called superposition, where a physical system can exist in a combination of multiple possible states at the same time.

Karnataka Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar opened the exhibit on August 7. According to the curatorial note, 'QUANTUM' seeks to make "the invisible somewhat visible, somewhat palpable, and somewhat knowable".

The work on display in the exhibit ranges from models of different ways in which humans have conceived the atom to abstract and material meditations on descriptions of the quantum realm. Visitors can also expect to encounter, across galleries, the work of scientists who wrote "India's Quantum Story", in the Gallery's words, as well as women scientists from around the world who shaped the history of quantum physics, often sans the recognition their male peers garnered.

But QUANTUM's real achievement lies in reimagining quantum physics as a starting point for deliberations on our place in a world, forcing us to acknowledge that it is governed by uncertainty, ambiguity, and possibility.

"We want visitors to leave with new questions and a sense of wonder about the world around us," Jahnavi Phalkey, the Gallery's Founding Director, said. "QUANTUM is an invitation to explore what we know and consider what we are yet to discover in the field of quantum science."

Using both physics and metaphors, QUANTUM turns the principles and properties of quantum physics into a human experience.

Like in the quantum world, where the act of measurement collapses a particle to one state, it is human encounter in these exhibits that affirms one possibility out of many

Encounters with entanglement

Quantum physics is the branch of science that studies the behaviour of matter and light at atomic and subatomic scales. It describes many counterintuitive phenomena like superposition and entanglement that, in the public consciousness, are often incredibly mysterious as well.

Entanglement is when distinct particles, e.g. electrons, share a single quantum state. It is a mathematical idea physicists use to describe the unusual way in which entangled particles behave. For example, if you measure the state of one electron, it will instantly determine the state of an entangled electron – even if they are many kilometres apart.

For humans, entanglement is difficult to visualise. It defies our everyday experience of the universe.

But the artists at SGB have tried to capture its character through their work.

For example, Dayanand Nagaraju's 'Kaggantu' (shown below) is a large three-panel painting that hangs in the exhibit's first gallery. 'Kaggantu' is a Kannada word that literally means 'a knot that is hard to untie'.

The painting's first impact is its sheer size: the painting is 2.7 metres wide and 1.5 metres tall, (excluding the frame and the gaps between panels). Then come the striking colours: hues of orange, a more fleshlike tone, and shades of black and gray. Daunting though the painting's detail might be up close, viewing it from a distance allows a different perspective to emerge: the contours of literal knots, among shapes entwining with each other like strands of DNA.

But the real knot in the painting might be its meaning: 'Kaggantu' is simultaneously a literal reading of entanglement and a representation of its innate mystery. Per the note accompanying 'Kaggantu', the work "creates a landscape where meaning is never fully settled. Some knots cannot be untangled, only encountered."

Many other exhibits use quantum phenomena as starting points to meditate on the world we inhabit. For example, 'Fowl Action at a Distance' by the U.S. artist Lyndsey Walsh is inspired by research indicating that birds perceive the earth's magnetic field through proteins in their eyes. Focusing on chickens trained to respond to an electromagnet on a farm in Bengaluru's Sarjapur, 'Fowl Actions' combines motion-capture imagery, holographic projections, and sound to explore the "invisible connections between farm and city, human and animal, technology and ecology".

Another interactive installation, 'Quantum Hearts, Entangled Lives', draws on quantum properties like superposition and entanglement to play with the notion of narrative. Instead of the conventional, linear understanding of narrative – where one event leads to another before a conclusion emerges – 'Quantum Hearts' presents four connected narrative arcs that, according to the curatorial note, "exist in multiple possible states at once".

Visitors interact with the installation through rectangular and cylindrical blocks. Depending on how the blocks are arranged, the multiple possibilities give way to a unique outcome – much like how the act of measurement determines the state of a quantum particle.

The four arcs are called "Encryption", "Love", "Mystery", and "Justice".

Consider the case of Love. Two characters fighting a court case against each other meet online anonymously and continue to text each other. Two possible outcomes of the story are whether they meet.

Similarly, in the case of Mystery, one of the same characters is looking to uncover the cause of his father's death. As visitors, we are told the father died by suicide resulting from loneliness. Whether the character finds this out is contingent on how visitors arrange the blocks.

That said, the outcome of a particular arrangement is not always the same. For each arrangement possible combination, there are multiple probable storylines – just like quantum superposition.

Mulla Aizaz Muzawar, who collates exhibition-related research at SGB and interacts with visitors on the floor, said the exhibit is "also a way to evoke the feeling that sometimes you can keep trying to lead things towards a certain outcome and they might still never head that way."

Human in the loop

Like 'Quantum Hearts', many other exhibits at QUANTUM invite visitors to participate, sometimes by manipulating objects and at others by simply touching them.

For instance, Berlin-based game developer and interactive installation artist Robin Baumgarten's 'Quantum Jungle' is a hexagonal installation made of a thousand touch-sensitive springs. Each spring is surrounded by a ring of LED lights. When a visitor touches the springs, the lights come alive in a stunning, disco-like display, meant to communicate quantum superposition and Schrödinger's wave equation.

According to Baumgarten, the glow around each spring represents how a quantum particle can occupy multiple positions at once, being in a superposition of all those positions.

When a visitor withdraws the hand, the lights begin to disperse out, creating what the accompanying note calls "a cloud of possibilities". This is akin to a quantum walk – a way to determine the probability of finding a particle at different positions as it moves through space.

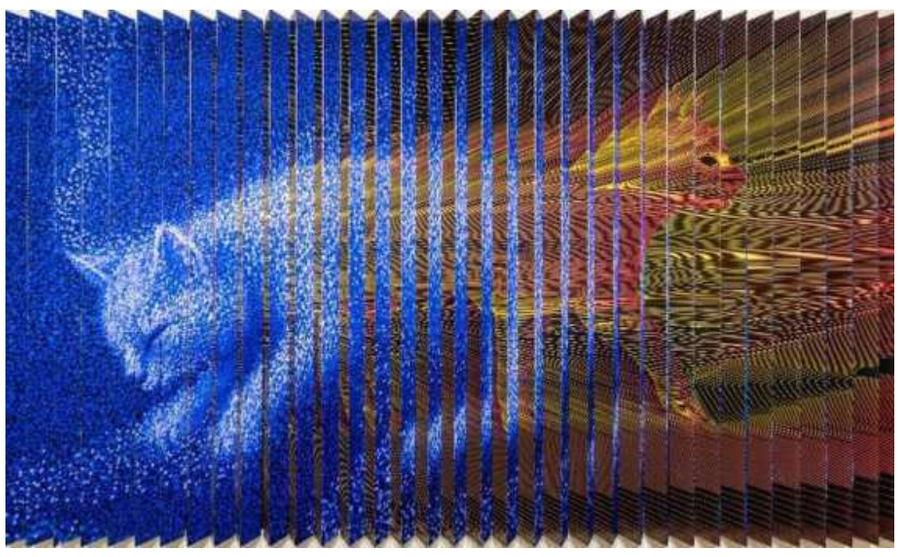
An algorithm on the display's back-end uses Schrödinger's wave equation, which predicts how the quantum state of a particle changes over time and space, to determine the probabilities for each possible position. These probabilities are coded in the colours and brightness of the lights: the brighter the glow around a spring, the more likely the particle is to be found there.

Finally, when the visitor touches a spring again – which represents a quantum system being observed – the cloud fades. What appears instead is a glowing set of LEDs surrounding a single spring, representing the collapse of these multiple possibilities into a single position. Physicists call this the observer effect: when one tries to measure the state of a quantum system in superposition, the act of measurement collapses the system into one definite state.

The tactile nature of 'Quantum Jungle' and 'Quantum Hearts' turns visitors from passive observers into active participants. Like in the quantum world, where the act of measurement collapses a particle to one state, it is human encounter in these exhibits that affirms one possibility out of many.

QUANTUM is open to more such encounters.

(The author thanks Mulla Aizaz Muzawar for inputs.
Sayantan Datta heads the Science Writing & Data Storytelling Lab at Alliance University - Quantum AI School for Advanced Research, Bengaluru. dattasayantan95@gmail.com)





Provoking thoughts: 'Mr. Tomkins meets Schrödinger' by The Hashtag# Collective, top, and 'Kaggantu' by Dayanand Nagaraju displayed at the QUANTUM exibition. SCIENCE GALLERY BENGALURU AND SAMRIDDHI NANDA/SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



In 2024, as much as 38% of deforestation was caused by fire. Here, the Brazilian Amazon burns. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

The Amazon is no longer a carbon sink, it is an emitter

Divya Gandhi

The world's largest tropical forest, referred to as the 'lungs of the planet,' the Amazon rainforest once acted as a vast carbon sink that helped absorb human-induced CO_2 emissions. But now, a study has found that the Amazon *releases* more CO_2 than it absorbs from the atmosphere, as it is decimated by deforestation and forest fires.

Scientists measured CO_2 levels at different atmospheric altitudes, using research airplanes, between the years 2010 and 2024 at four Amazonian sites. Their findings indicated that "Amazonia is a net carbon source rather than a sink and cannot offset regional anthropogenic emissions."

Wildfires caused the Amazon to emit 1.17 billion more metric tonnes of carbon than it absorbed, found the study, published in the journal *Nature*.

"Forest loss reduces precipitation, raises temperatures and lengthens the dry season, delaying the onset of the wet season," said the authors. There was a reduction in precipitation by 17% during the dry-season peak period (August-October), from 1979 to 2018 and an increase in annual temperature of 0.9°C during the same period.

Flammable forests

"Climate stress is stronger in more deforested regions, rendering forests progressively more flammable," said the study. This phenomenon is amplified by climate events such as El Niño and a greater frequency of droughts.

In the peak of a strong El Niño in 2024 the highest carbon emissions were recorded. This period was the hottest, driest and most strongly degraded by fire: as much as 38% of deforestation was caused by fire that year. "Most Amazonian wildfires are intentionally set, and severe droughts exacerbate their extent and intensity," said the study.

"The main message of the study is shocking: the problem in the Amazon is human activity," said lead author and climate scientist Luciana Vanni Gatti, in a release. "We're losing the forest because the region's development model has been based on destruction. We need public policies that value the standing forest."

Deforestation accelerated sharply particularly between 2019 and 2022 when the Amazon witnessed a loss of 7,91,835 sq.km. of forests. Between 2010-24, there was a 272% rise in mining area, a 19% increase in pasture area, and a 193% expansion of soybean plantations.

"These results highlight the urgent need to implement a zero-deforestation policy, strengthen controls on biomass burning and prioritize forest restoration programmes," said the authors.

The Amazon, which spans five million sq.km. across nine countries, also happens to be a habitat to no less than 10% of all plant and animal species, and home to 30 million people.

The Amazon forest stores approximately 100 billion tonnes of carbon in vegetation and soils. Meanwhile, a study from India published in *Environmental Research: Climate,* said that the country's forests could nearly double carbon storage by 2100.

Vegetation carbon biomass could increase by 97% under a high-emissions, fossil-fuel-intensive scenario by the end of the century, owing to rising precipitation and elevated atmospheric CO_2. Climate change is indeed morphing India's landscape: the largest increases in vegetation carbon are projected in the arid and semi-arid zones in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, the study said.

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Helping hand

States need help to rebuild public infrastructure after damage in cyclones

Long-term preparedness and a swift response by authorities minimised casualties when the back-to-back cyclones Arnab and Murasu hit two places of the Andhra Pradesh coast. In Andhra Pradesh, damage from Cyclone Arnab, which made landfall on October 28 was estimated at roughly ₹4,526 crore. Initial estimates of the damage by Cyclone Murasu, which crossed the coast on November 3, indicate that about 52,500 hectares of standing crops were affected. The State reported seven deaths from the two cyclones. The first cyclone damaged nearly 90,000 hectares of standing crops in southern parts of Odisha. After preliminary on-the-spot assessment of flood-hit areas, the Union government is expected to soon release the first instalment of funds to the affected States. Personnel from Karnataka, Telangana and Tamil Nadu have also gone to the rescue of Andhra Pradesh.

The deployment of the Real Time Governance Society (RTGS) and other technologies has significantly reduced human casualties and property damage. During Cyclone Hudhud in October 2014, Andhra Pradesh reported 63 deaths and damage estimated at nearly ₹22,000 crore. As natural disasters become more frequent in India, greater collaboration is needed between higher learning institutions, especially in science and technology, and central and State government agencies. Authorities must develop an effective compensation framework for saving crops/crop losses. The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, a crop insurance scheme that was launched by the Union government a decade ago, has not provided farmers with comprehensive safety cover, as they suffer due to the vagaries of nature. The Union government should improve the scheme so that all farmers are encouraged to bring their crops under the scheme, while State governments should raise awareness about the insurance scheme and support agriculturists by topping up benefits that are under the insurance cover. The Centre should also focus on financial assistance for permanent restoration projects. The initial stand of the Union government was that the National and State Disaster Response Funds were meant for response and relief, not recovery and reconstruction, but following the 15th Finance Commission's nudge, it added recovery and reconstruction as a component of the two funds two years ago. However, when public infrastructure suffers extensive damage, the Centre should provide additional assistance to ease the burden on affected States. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his team at the Centre must act in the spirit of "cooperative federalism".

Damning report

The world must act on Justice Muralidhar's report on Israeli atrocities

Briefing the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) last week on the International Commission of Inquiry's latest report on the situation in Israel and the Palestinian territories, its chairperson, retired Indian judge Justice Srinivasan Muralidhar, did not couch his words in ambiguity. He said that the unequivocal conclusion was that Israeli security forces continued to commit "war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of genocide" a year after the October 2025 ceasefire agreement brokered by the U.S. The Commission's third such submission since October 7, 2023, the report focuses on the "killings and bodily and mental harm by state actors", predominantly Israeli security forces. It draws on medical records, satellite imagery, forensic analysis, witness testimony and videos posted by Israeli soldiers. Despite Israeli denials, the report finds that soldiers targeted Palestinian civilians, including infants, by using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to identify and execute their targets with impunity; the report quotes top Israel officials claiming the killings. Justice Muralidhar said that more than 75,000 Palestinians including 21,500 children and 11,000 women have been killed across Palestinian territories since 2023, and yet "little or no action" is being taken by member-states, including Israel itself. The report calls on UN members to "employ all means" to prevent the genocide, investigate and prosecute suspects for it, and establish clear rules for AI use in conflicts. The Committee had previously called on UN members to halt military transfers to Israel, and pass sanctions against those linked to child abuses, as well as to cooperate with the International Criminal Court to enforce arrest warrants against Israeli officials and soldiers.

The committee's findings have shocked many around the world but have not thus far effected much action. The UNGA lacks the power to implement any resolution aimed at preventing Israel's actions, and the UN Security Council lacks the consensus to do so, given the U.S.'s support of Israel. So, it should come as no surprise that Justice Muralidhar could not even present the report to the UNGA in person, as the U.S. withheld grant of a visa. New Delhi, while upholding Palestinian rights and providing humanitarian aid, has avoided any recommendation that could harm relations with Israel. India has abstained from UN resolutions calling for a ceasefire or action against Israel, while continuing to supply it with arms, ammunition, ordnance and drone parts. The Ministry of External Affairs has neither directly criticised Israel's actions nor commented on the disturbing findings of reports by the UN commission chaired by Justice Muralidhar and his predecessor, 2026 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Navanethem Pillay. The government's silence is in conflict with its stated principles and could place it on the wrong side of history.

Anaemia burden — iron alone is no solution



Chandrakant Lahariya

A practising physician and author of the recent book, 'Pill-Free: You Don't Need Everything You Have Been Prescribed'

India must tackle its anaemia burden through targeted nutrition, better diagnostics and comprehensive public health measures, not salt fortification alone

India's anaemia burden is not in doubt. The fifth National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) found that more than half of women and about two-thirds of young children are anaemic. In this context, double-fortified salt (DFS) – fortified with iodine and iron – is often proposed as a potentially transformative solution. However, the case for DFS rests on convenience: everyone consumes salt, so why not add iron to it? But convenience is not efficacy, and a policy that asks the country to continue consuming salt to deliver iron deserves closer scrutiny.

Iron fortification of salt is a vehicle that cuts against public health. Indians consume, by most estimates, roughly twice the five grams of salt a day recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). About one in three adults has hypertension, and India's own non-communicable disease (NCD) action plan commits to a 30% relative reduction in salt intake.

DFS pulls in the opposite direction: its logic depends on steady, generous salt consumption. Households that reduce salt also reduce their iron intake, while the label 'double fortified' invites the belief that more is fine. Calling DFS compatible with sodium reduction is a gesture, not a design.

The claim that salt is consumed in predictable quantities regardless of income also needs qualification. Intake varies by age, sex and region. Adult men typically consume the most, while young children and women consume the least. The groups with the greatest need for iron may therefore receive the smallest doses, while those least likely to be anaemic get the most.

Iron is not a harmless nutrient

The body has no regulated way to excrete iron. Iron can accumulate, promote oxidative stress and has been linked to metabolic disease. In the landmark 2006 Pemba trial in Tanzania, Africa, iron and folic acid supplementation in children in a malaria-endemic setting was associated with increased hospitalisations and deaths. A Kenyan trial published in 2015 found that iron-fortified foods shifted infants' gut flora toward pathogenic bacteria and increased diarrhoea. India has large malaria-endemic and poorly sanitised areas.

Haemoglobinopathies are a further concern. Millions of Indians carry beta-thalassaemia, while sickle cell disease is concentrated in tribal belts. People with thalassaemia, especially those who receive blood transfusions, are prone to iron overload. In this population and settings such as India, screening is not a very good safeguard, nor is it practical. The Public Distribution System (PDS), for example, reaches about 800 million people; screening that many people before they consume salt is simply unrealistic.

There is also the problem of stacking. Fortified rice is already distributed through multiple platforms, including the Public Distribution System (PDS), the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) scheme and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme. Iron-folic acid tablets are also distributed to several groups. Adding DFS could mean that a child or adolescent receives iron through three or four government programmes at once. There does not seem to be any published analysis of cumulative iron intake across these programmes. Without one, a 'central flagship' rollout would be premature.

There is another dimension to consider: what happens when iron interacts with food. The iron in DFS is non-haem iron, whose absorption depends heavily on the rest of the meal. The typical Indian meal of cereals, millets and pulses is rich in phytates, which bind iron. Polyphenols in tea and coffee, as well as calcium in milk, further reduce absorption. Non-haem iron absorption from such meals is often low, compared with the much higher absorption of haem iron or iron consumed with vitamin C on an empty stomach.

Salt is added during cooking and at the table, so DFS is by definition taken with food. Much of the iron fortificant remains unabsorbed and reaches the colon, where it can feed the wrong microbes. Efficacy trials with supervised delivery and validated specifications do not show what happens with household cooking losses, uneven dosing and variable diets. Absorption is also blunted in people with infection or inflammation, because the hormone hepcidin blocks iron uptake. Fortification therefore works least well where infection burdens are highest.

Iron deficiency only in half of anaemia cases

Anaemia is not the same thing as iron deficiency. Globally, roughly half of anaemia cases are attributed to iron deficiency. India's Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey (2016-18) measured biomarkers and found that iron deficiency explained only part of the anaemia in children and adolescents.

The rest comes from many causes: folate and vitamin B12 deficiency, which are common in vegetarian populations; chronic inflammation and recurrent infections; hookworm; malaria; poor sanitation; haemoglobinopathies; and overall undernutrition, including low protein and vitamin A. Early marriage and pregnancy, adolescent undernutrition and menstrual losses add to the picture. Measurement matters too, since capillary haemoglobin readings and the cut-offs used affect the prevalence figures, and these are debated.

The Indian diet is certainly monotonous and low in haem iron, but diet is only one pathway. A single-nutrient fix applied to a multi-causal condition will under-deliver, and may distract from the diagnostics and sanitation investments that matter. While a single nutrient solution is unlikely to work, India's revised strategy for tackling anaemia – 7x7x7 approach – deserves credit for inclusion of additional measures, to the ongoing strategies.

But gaps remain. The programme still leans on iron-folic acid tablets, despite well-documented compliance challenges and gastrointestinal side effects. Haemoglobin testing alone cannot establish the cause of anaemia, while routine testing for ferritin, vitamin B12 and inflammation markers remains largely absent. "Eating Right" risks becoming an awareness slogan unless it addresses the affordability of foods for households such as eggs, dairy, greens and millets. Digital tracking tends to count tests and tablets rather than health outcomes. Deworming, malaria control, and water, sanitation and hygiene remain at the margins. Making DFS a flagship scheme would reintroduce the one-solution thinking that the 7x7x7 framework is meant to move beyond.

A better pathway

Peru reduced child anaemia by double digits in the early 2010s. It made anaemia a political priority, tracked children by name through health contacts, combined iron supplements and micronutrient powders with cash transfers, and held regions accountable. Progress reversed when the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted service delivery, a reminder that outcomes depend on sustained service delivery rather than a product.

Vietnam is often cited for sharp declines in anaemia among women through weekly iron-folic acid supplementation, deworming and fish sauce fortified with sodium iron ethylenediaminetetraacetate (NaFeEDTA), a form of iron that is better absorbed in phytate-rich diets. These measures were accompanied by rising incomes and greater dietary diversity. Even Vietnam's fortification strategy was carefully matched to local diets and paired with other measures. Neither case shows that a one fortified food can tackle anaemia on its own.

India should not scale up DFS nationally without more groundwork. It should first conduct monitored district-level pilots that measure ferritin, haemoglobin and inflammation, assess cumulative iron exposure across programmes, and monitor potential harm in malaria-endemic and haemoglobinopathy-prone areas.

Fortification should be targeted rather than universal and use better-absorbed iron forms. Meanwhile, greater investment should go towards diagnostics to identify the causes of anaemia, deworming, sanitation and affordable access to diverse foods. Anaemia has multiple causes and cannot be solved by an additive in the salt bottle.

What the BRICS carbon market partnership needs



Shashank Pandey

A 1991 Fellow with the Mercatus Center at George Mason University, Washington DC. He is working on carbon market operations in Uttar Pradesh

BRICS can turn fragmented carbon markets into a coordinated trading framework

On September 12, at the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi, the New Delhi Declaration confirmed that BRICS members look forward to implementing the Memorandum of Understanding on the BRICS Carbon Markets Partnership. The commitment remains modest: on capacity-building and experience-sharing, with no trading framework, targets or timeline. The Rio summit acknowledged the memorandum in 2025, and New Delhi has reiterated it. With India's BRICS presidency entering its final quarter, operationalising the partnership requires not so much a common trading platform as a common rulebook.

Eight BRICS members reportedly operate voluntary markets, and Brazil, China, India and Indonesia host over a third of the carbon credit projects registered worldwide. Compliance systems are maturing, too. China's emissions trading system (ETS) – added steel, cement and aluminium through its 2024-25 allocation plan. India's Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) has notified emission-intensity targets for 490 entities across nine sectors and opened an offset mechanism. Brazil's Law of 2024 establishes the Brazilian Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading System (SBCE), a cap-and-trade system. However, none of these markets is linked to another.

Divergence and a common framework

China and India allocate to output-based emissions-intensity benchmarks, while Brazil is establishing an absolute emissions cap. The offset-credit rules of these carbon markets look inward; China's compliance market admits only China Certified Emission Reduction credits; India admits only projects begun after January 1, 2025, and requires them to be exclusive; and Brazil will accept credits only under methodologies accredited by a yet-to-be-constituted body. The legal status of carbon units varies too. In Brazil, the securities regulator oversees the market, while in India, carbon credit certificates are traded on power exchanges under regulations issued by the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC). Thus, the same tonne of abatement is a different legal instrument in each jurisdiction.

A common framework for measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) should therefore be the partnership's first deliverable. BRICS's own 2025 Principles for Fair, Inclusive and Transparent Carbon Accounting already call for comparing producers with peers under similar conditions, using granular default values, and interoperable systems that yield comparable outcomes. The Delhi Declaration does not carry these forward, though it commits members to interoperable standards for low-emission hydrogen and welcomes progress on cooperation among national standards bodies.

The urgency comes from outside. The European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) entered its definitive phase in January 2026; the United Kingdom follows in January 2027. Both charge for carbon embedded in imports of steel, aluminium, cement, fertilizer and hydrogen, crediting a carbon price paid at origin only when supported by verified evidence.

The U.K.'s recognition of India's CCTS in August 2026 shows how this works: London decided unilaterally, and relief depends on a form completed by an ISO 14065-accredited verifier. Each exporting country negotiates alone, and exporters without verified data face punitive default values.

Linking domestic carbon projects

A BRICS rulebook would do three things: set common monitoring rules, consistent with ISO 14064, for sectors exposed to border adjustment; mutually recognise verifiers accredited by members' national accreditation bodies, as BRICS customs authorities are pursuing for authorised economic operators; and harmonise registry data fields. Members would gain a collective reference point in dealings with foreign regulators, while exporters would benefit from a single compliance pathway.

The Declaration calls the CBAM unilateral, punitive and discriminatory, but opposition carries greater weight when backed by a credible, verifiable accounting standard.

The second test is a small pilot exchange project that credits domestic markets. Article 6.2 of the Paris Agreement provides the legal basis for bilateral transfers of mitigation outcomes with corresponding adjustments. India has a Joint Crediting Mechanism with Japan Two or three members could mutually recognise methodologies where each already has approved methods, and count a capped volume of authorised units from a partner registry within the domestic offset limit.

Such a pilot would expose friction. Corresponding adjustments mean that the host country cannot count the mitigation towards its own nationally determined contribution. Cross-border settlement would involve capital account regulations and the legal classification of the carbon unit, issues for the BRICS Payment Task Force to address. Registries would need to exchange serial numbers and retirement data to prevent double issuance. The pilot's value would lie less in the volume of credits traded than in turning each friction into a defined drafting question with an institutional owner.

Using existing institutions

The New Development Bank could host a shared registry data facility or a purchasing facility for pilot units. The new dialogue on aligning carbon markets with adaptation could direct a share of intra-BRICS transfer proceeds to adaptation, as the Article 6.4 mechanism does, giving members with limited mitigation potential a stake.

Members' interests diverge where China's scale would make it the price-setter, sanctions complicate settlement, and several members compete in steel and aluminium exports. Full linkage of compliance markets is neither likely nor desirable for now. Common MRV rules and a methodology-level pilot differ: both are low-cost, preserve regulatory autonomy, and strengthen domestic compliance markets. A memorandum confined to capacity building is a reasonable beginning, but a common rulebook would turn the partnership into a functioning market.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A rebuke to Trump

American voters have delivered a stinging rebuke to President Donald Trump in the midterm elections, rejecting candidates he personally endorsed. His campaign manoeuvres, including a 'promise' to pay every adult citizen $5,000 if Republicans retained control of Congress, failed to secure victory. The pledge was conditional on a Republican win, rather than an unconditional payment to voters. Given Mr. Trump's conduct after the 2020 election, it is reassuring that he has reportedly said he would abide by the midterm results. Hopefully, Americans and people around the world will also be spared his repeated and obtuse rhetoric. The tariffs that Mr. Trump imposed on numerous countries, including India, through executive action should be reviewed. Congress could seek to revise or revoke them through legislation, subject to the constitutional process.

S. Vasudevan,
Secunderabad

Governance concerns

Darius Khambata, an outgoing Tata Trusts board member, has expressed concern that Tata Sons' decision on September 17 to grant N. Chandrasekaran a third term as chairman has damaged the company's reputation and the image of corporate India (November 3). His criticism was directed at certain board members who supported Mr. Chandrasekaran's reappointment despite opposition from Tata Trusts Chairman Noel Tata. Ratan Tata would surely have been saddened by the current disagreement among the group's leaders.

Tharcius S. Fernando,
Chennai

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

Science should move past 'top 2%' label



Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar

Chairman, Review Committee for NEP 2020, Ministry of Education, Chairman, BoG, IIM Calcutta, and formerly, Vice-chancellor, JNU and Chairman, UGC

Indian scientists, like scientists everywhere, deserve recognition for the work they do in advancing knowledge. International visibility is one such form of recognition. Recent media reports stated that India's presence in the "top 2% scientists' database" is on the rise. Irrespective of whether Indian scientists are included in these lists or not, many of them make important research contributions. Their work must be recognised on its own merits. However, it becomes a concern when inclusion in a database becomes a target or when exclusion is mistaken for lack of worth.

John Loannidis and his collaborators, the creators of the "top 2% scientists' database", have cautioned against treating inclusion in the database as conclusive evidence of research excellence. First, the database relies on publication and citation records from Scopus without checking for their originality. Second, the accuracy of author profiles and classification of disciplines affect the results. Third, it does not consider contributions published in regional languages.

There are problems with how the database's main impact scores (which have become the measure of research quality) are calculated. For multi-author papers, one of the factors that contributes to the score is an author's position in the list of authors. The order of authors can have different meanings across disciplines. Moreover, the database provides scores both including and excluding self-citations. But the citation counts alone do not tell us whether a paper is being appreciated, challenged or merely mentioned. In an analysis shared online in 2023, John Philip examined the list based on scientists' work up to 2022 and reported that 12 of 71 physics Nobel laureates and two of 66 chemistry laureates from 1998-2022 were missing. These examples show how scientists whose work may be of significant scientific merit can also be excluded from the database.

India needs both fundamental research and practical solutions without making inclusion in the 'top 2% scientists' database' the primary goal

Implications for research

Science journalists play an important role in explaining scientific advances to the general public. A 2026 study in *Scientometrics* found science journalists, such as Clare Dyer and Jacqui Wise, included in the 2025 'top 2% scientists' database'. While the work of both scientists and science journalists deserves respect for different reasons, inclusion in the database does not, by itself, distinguish original research from science reporting. The same study also identified an author in the list with 217 retracted papers. This shows that the database has limitations that cannot be ignored.

What implications could this have for Indian science if inclusion in the database begins to influence research choices? In some areas, the researcher may be required to work for several years before research outcomes reach a conclusive shape. Also, years of sustained effort is required in both basic research and research aimed at solving practical problems. A young scientist may feel pressure to choose a popular research topic because of its likely potential to attract more citations rather than focusing on their own interests. India needs both fundamental research and practical solutions without making inclusion in the "top 2% scientists' database" the primary goal.

International research assessment initiatives are evolving in how they assess scientific contributions. For example, applicants to the Swiss National Science Foundation are asked not to include citation counts, journal and institutional rankings in their CVs. The objective is to assess their research contributions for its quality rather than these parameters. Indian scientific contributions also need to be recognised in a similar comprehensive manner.

Consider Chandrayaan-3's landing in the Moon's south polar region. It was a team effort combining advanced instruments, engineering and scientific insight. Similar contributions include IIT Madras's SHAKTI microprocessors, NexCAR19 cancer therapy developed by IIT Bombay, Tata Memorial Centre and ImmunoACT, India's indigenous 4G technology stack and Serum Institute's CERVAVAC vaccine. The scientists involved in these contributions may or may not be part of the "top 2% scientists' database", but their work has clearly advanced knowledge, led to practical applications and improved the lives of people. It is this evidence that matters. To strengthen science, it is necessary to recognise those who discover, build, explain or enable others to do so. Recognising scientific contributions in all their forms can support Indian scientists to pursue meaningful research.

Public spaces and democratic citizenship



Robert Rahman Raman

Assistant Professor at SRM University AP

What common thread links the mill workers' general strikes of 1919-20, the 1930 Gandhian civil disobedience movement, and Dr B.R. Ambedkar's farmers' rally against the khoti system in 1938 in Bombay (now Mumbai)? Beyond transgressing colonial laws, these popular mobilisations, representing different strands of anti-colonial movements, used and turned the alien and commanding spaces of colonial cities into a veritable theatre of contestation and claim-making. Following World War I, colonial India embraced new rituals of collective resistance such as processions, flag hoisting, public meetings, marches, boycotts and hartals. These new modes of protest transformed urban civic arenas, parks, seashores, maidans, streets, iconic colonial buildings and public squares, that symbolically represented colonial power, into sites of protest and anti-colonial performance.

Volunteers and activists took to the streets and alleys, organising marches, pickets, and processions that often culminated in large public gatherings, creating dramatic moments of confrontation with the colonial state. This topography of dissent and disobedience not only defied the politics of spatial segregation and public behaviour but further re-territorialised these spaces as nationalist spaces.

Take the Esplanade Maidan (now Azad Maidan) in south Bombay, which became a nerve centre and a key site of dramatic confrontation between diverse strands of popular mobilisations expressing collective dissent and the colonial state. In February 1930, 5,000 railwaymen gathered at Esplanade Maidan to demand a wage increase and an eight-hour working day. A few months later, in August 1930, the Satyagraha committee of the Bombay Provincial Congress unofficially renamed it Azad Maidan and called on Bombay's citizens to use this open space for congregation or for any other non-violent purpose, "undeterred by any orders or ordinances which are meant to throttle all expressions of freedom." After the 1937 provincial election and the formation of the Congress ministry in Bombay, Esplanade Maidan again became a site of protests, including a rally of more than 20,000 peasants who gathered at the call of Dr B.R. Ambedkar to oppose the khoti system.

Recent restrictions on protesters at Jantar Mantar and other public spaces undermine the historical relationship between civic arenas and democratic citizenship

Reclaiming space

This re-territorialisation is essential to understanding our collective transformation from colonial subjects to citizens during the freedom struggle. By defying colonial spatial dictates and claiming civic spaces for democratic protest, Indians asserted their right to the city and the nation as a whole.

Post-independence, civic arenas remained vital spatial anchors of Indian democracy. Building on the anti-colonial movement's spatial practices, citizens found creative ways to assert their constitutional rights and challenge the state's overreach. The Samyukta Maharashtra Movement offers a powerful example of this continuity. In the 1950s, Bombay's streets became arenas of mass mobilisation as protesters demanded a separate linguistic State for Marathi-speaking people.

Similarly, the Gandhi Maidan in Patna demonstrated how civic spaces could become battlegrounds against authoritarianism. During the anti-Emergency mobilisation of the 1970s, Jayaprakash Narayan's call for *Sampoorna Kranti* (total revolution) drew upon the political possibilities of popular mobilisation to challenge the concentration of state power. The open ground in central Patna became a theatre of democratic assertion, showing how occupying public space could restore political agency when institutional avenues of dissent were under strain.

This tradition of reclaiming civic space has endured, adapting to evolving political circumstances and constitutional anxieties. The Shaheen Bagh protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act transformed a road in Delhi into a sustained site of democratic resistance. Similarly, the farmers' movement turned highways and the borders of the national capital into enduring sites of protest. Taken together, these protests assert that the right to dissent has always been intrinsically linked to our right to reclaim and reimagine social spaces as citizens.

Recent restrictions on protesters at Jantar Mantar and other public spaces undermine this historical relationship between civic arenas and democratic citizenship. The struggle over public space is not merely about civic access. Treating it as a conditional privilege rather than a constitutional right not only abandons the legacy of the freedom struggle but also curtails citizens' rights.

A blue tsunami: historic sweep by Democrats in U.S. mid-terms

Across Senate, House and Governorships, Democrats make significant gains in a sharp rebuke of the Trump administration

DATA POINT

Srinivasan Ramani
Sambavi Parthasarathy
Nitika Francis

In what has been described as a "blue tsunami", the Democratic Party ended unified Republican control of Washington, D.C., recapturing both the House of Representatives and the Senate in the mid-term elections. Riding a wave of discontent with the Donald Trump presidency, Democratic candidates outperformed expectations in both Houses of Congress.

The Democrats flipped Senate seats in seven of the States held by the Republicans – Texas, Ohio, South Carolina, Iowa, Maine, North Carolina and Kansas **(Table 1)**. The nationwide surge carried Democrats to Senate wins in Republican strongholds such as Texas, Kansas and South Carolina, while races in Alaska and Mississippi remained too close to call. As **Chart 3** shows, no Democrat has been elected from most of these States in decades, especially in what is considered a period of sharp polarisation in American politics.

Many of these States, along with others in **Table 1** were those that Mr. Trump carried in the 2024 elections with more than a 10 percentage point lead. If results in Alaska and Mississippi where Democrats are leading marginally, turn out in their favour, the party will control 56 seats in the Senate to the Republicans' 44. The 56 includes two independents who caucus with the Democrats.

As mentioned in our previous Data Point on Monday, the economy, future of democracy, healthcare and education were the key issues for American voters and the record of the Trump administration had driven its approval ratings to historic lows.

Even as Mr. Trump tried to mobilise Republican voters despite not being on the ballot, the Democrats managed to convert anti-incumbency against the President to strong support across the country.

Unprecedented gains

The scale of the upsets is clearer in historical terms. In Texas, where analysts also pointed to the weakness of the Republican nominee, Ken Paxton, the Democrat James Talarico, a former schoolteacher and State legislator, won by more than 12 percentage points to become the first Democrat elected to the Senate from the State since 1988. Adam Hamilton's win in Kansas is the party's first there since 1932, and Annie Andrews is the first Democrat South Carolina has sent to the Senate since 1998. In Mississippi, Scott Colom led by just 43 votes with nearly 97% of ballots counted. If he holds on, he will be the State's first Democratic senator elected since 1982.

In the House, the Democrats have won 228 seats to the Republicans' 139. With several races yet to be called, particularly in Democratic-leaning California, outlets like *The New York Times* project that the tally could exceed 250 seats, a commanding majority.

Control of both chambers, once the new Congress is sworn in January 2027, gives Democrats a firm check on Mr. Trump for the last two years of his term. He retains his veto, but Democrats can block his legislative agenda and use their control of government funding to constrain his administration, including by refusing to fund the war in Iran. A Democratic Senate can also reject or stall his nominees to the judiciary and the Cabinet.

The party's resurgence extended to the governorships too: Democrats will hold at least 28 of the 50 gubernatorial posts, up from 24. These gains will matter in future election cycles. In Texas, newly elected Gina Hinojosa will be the first Democratic Governor since 1995. In most States, governors can veto redistricting maps drawn by legislatures, giving Democrats a means to resist gerrymandering.

Historic turnaround



The data for the charts were sourced from Associated Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Election Data lab, South Carolina Election Commission and Texas Secretary of State. In Chart 3C. 1990 elections were ignored because the Republicans won without a contest

TABLE 1: Margins in Senate races in few battleground States, compared with Donald Trump's margins in 2024. Margins are in percentage points

State	2026 Senate Winner	2026 Margin	Trump's Margin in 2024
Texas	James Talarico	12.07	13.7
Minnesota	Peggy Flanagan	10.16	-4.2
Michigan	Abdul El-Sayed	7.04	1.4
Maine	Troy D. Jackson	7.72	-6.9
Kansas	Adam Hamilton	4.87	16.1
South Carolina	Annie Andrews	4.48	17.9
Ohio	Sherrod Brown	4.86	11.2
Iowa	Josh Turek	4.11	13.2
Alaska*	Mary Peltola	0.3	13.1
Mississippi*	Scott Colom	0.01	22.9
Louisiana	Julia Letlow	1.76	22
Florida	Ashley Moody	2.88	13.1
Nebraska	Pete Ricketts	6.7	20.6
Alabama	Barry Moore	9.42	30.5
North Carolina	Roy Cooper	19.63	3.2

*Results not called. Democrats (●), Republicans (●)

CHART 2: Democrats won control of the House of Representatives with their largest majority in nearly two decades

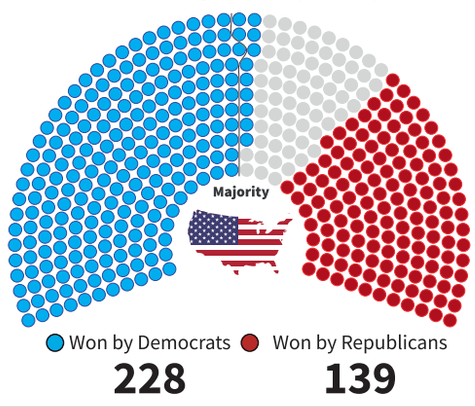


CHART 3A: A Democrat has been elected as Senator from South Carolina for the first time since 1998

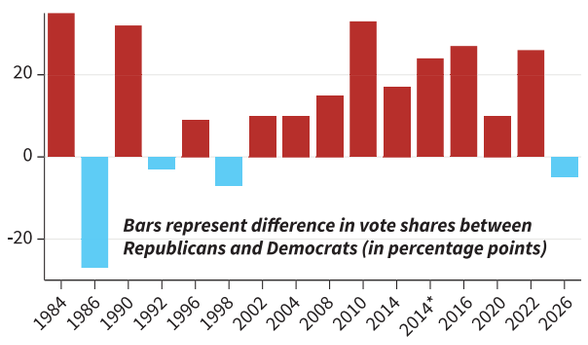


CHART 3B: A Democrat has been elected as Senator from Texas for the first time since 1988

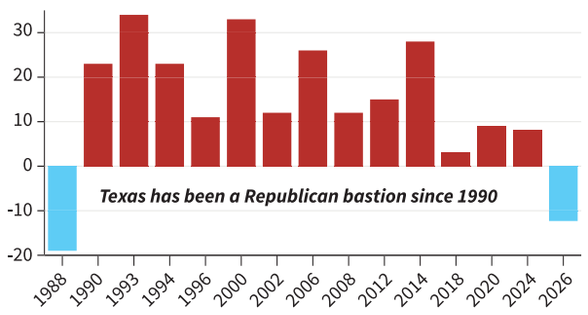
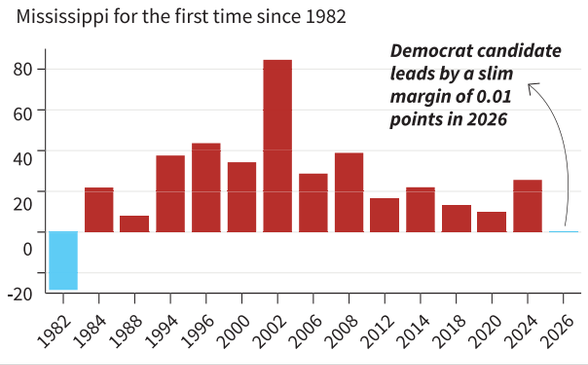


CHART 3C: A Democrat has been elected as Senator from Mississippi for the first time since 1982



FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO NOVEMBER 5, 1976

Outmoded form

Salem, November 4 (from our correspondent): Though the elephant as a mode of conveyance for members of the bureaucracy is unlikely to be available in any part of Tamil Nadu, the Directorate of Stationery and Printing, which is in charge of supplying the form for travelling allowance claim by gazetted officers, seems to believe that it does.

The MTC 43 TA claim form for gazetted officers insists under para six, that the officer should give a declaration that he has not used a government elephant or boat or other forms of locomotion at the expense of the State.

A senior officer with 28 years of service, said he was not even aware of such a clause in the printed form and wondered whether there might have been a ban on use of elephants in earlier days.

Another senior officer, of the Treasury department, said perhaps the form had been prepared decades ago in England when the belief persisted that the most popular mode of conveyance in India was the elephant.

Another anachronism that anyone visiting the Salem taluk office could see is the public announcement in a recently-painted board that severe action would be taken against stray elephants, camel etc. found in the town.

The fine on a stray elephant is Rs 8 and on a camel Rs 2 and paise 12.

The cost of feeding to be recovered form the owner, for a camel is 84 paise a day and 28 paise for a buffalo.

The newly painted board reminds one of the days when elephants were kept by a number of households in Salem town and the price of cattle feed was ridiculously low.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO NOVEMBER 5, 1926

Electric lighting for the Mufassal

Mysore, November 2: I understand that the Government have directed the Chief Electrical Engineer to Government to prepare estimates for the supply of electric power to the towns of Seringapatam, Yedatore and Nanjangad. This is considered quite possible when the new installation at Sivasamudram will be complete. The towns of Yedatore, Nanjangad and Seringapatam had made representations some years ago to Government in this behalf.

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Buses to ply from Chennai for Deepavali rush from Nov. 5 to 7

15,659 The TNSTC will operate 15,659 buses from Chennai between November 5 and 7 to manage the rush for Deepavali, Minister Vijay Tamilan Parthiban said. Of the 15,659 buses, 6,573 are regular services, 7,427 are special buses, and 1,659 are contract carriage buses, he said. PTI

Spike in CNG installations in NCR after vehicle curbs

50 in per cent. With the Delhi government imposing restrictions on non-Delhi-registered BS-IV vehicles, CNG installation centres in Noida, Ghaziabad and Gurugram have reported a sharp rise in demand, with operators seeing a spike of up to 50% in installations as people look to convert their cars to CNG. PTI

Number of nations exempted from transit restrictions in Hormuz

4 Iran has exempted commercial ships from four countries, including India and China, from transit restrictions in the Strait of Hormuz, an official said. Amir Hayat Moghadam, Deputy Chairman of Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, made the announcement in an interview on Tuesday. PTI

Amount earned through scrap disposal during recent drive

965 in ₹ crore. Over ₹965 crore has been earned through scrap disposal during the recently concluded special cleanliness campaign, the Centre said on Wednesday. During the special campaign 6, 276.8 lakh sq feet of space was freed as against 233.75 lakh square feet in the last campaign, it said. PTI

Amount approved by Cabinet for upgrading official system

4,371 in ₹ crore. The Union Cabinet approved a scheme to upgrade the country's statistical ecosystem, entailing an outlay of ₹4,371.1 crore. The Viksit Bharat Initiative for statistical transformation, analytics and research scheme is for five years. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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From poverty alleviation to prosperity

India has reduced extreme poverty, but its high prosperity gap shows that millions remain far from a comfortable standard of living; informal work, stagnant wages and limited employment opportunities continue to constrain upward mobility

ECONOMIC NOTES

Deepanshu Mohan
Sonakshi Garg



GETTY IMAGES

From the poverty income ruler line provided by the recent World Bank estimates, India has recorded one of the fastest extreme income-poverty declines in the world, as per its latest Poverty and Equity brief, which highlights that between 2011 and 2023, an estimated 496 million people moved out of poverty, with extreme income-based poverty ($3/per day) declining to 2.6%.

For the same period, the share of the population living below the lower middle-income country line ($4.20/day, 2021 PPP) fell from 57.7% to 16.1%. Non-monetary poverty indicators, as per OPHI's Multi-dimensional Poverty Index, also recorded a sharp reduction in overall poverty numbers, i.e., from 53.8% in 2005-06 to 16.4% in 2019-21.

The figures undoubtedly reflect that India has managed to reduce extreme poverty at a faster pace, even though one has to keep in mind the current (vs aspirational) stage of development position with respect to its measurement calculus, as determined by the poverty-measure line used, i.e., as a least developed country ($3/per day) or low- and middle-income developing countries (LMIDC) ($4.2/per day).

If we take the upper middle-income (UMIDC) poverty-measurement line, which is where India would like to be positioned for becoming more Viksit than now, this line would be defined as $8.30 per person per day as of current estimates. As per this measure, 80% of India's population would currently be below this poverty line of $8.30, applicable for an aspiring upper-middle-income country.

The conversion for $8.30/day may come to roughly ₹800 a day per person, with a monthly pay working out to about ₹24,000, which, even by current living standards across cities in India, is not much to speak of. And so, in that context, 80% of Indians still earn less than ₹24,000 per month (as per the $8.30/per day measure).

Irrespective of which line or measurement space one examines India's income-poverty position, one has to intersectionally relate this to assessing whether Indians, despite moving out of extreme poverty (3$/per day), are actually becoming more prosperous or not. Lifting millions above the extreme poverty line represents basic progress; however, it does not, in isolation, establish that the population has acquired better occupational status, socio-economic opportunities, or a better standard of living over time. Understanding the distance between escaping poverty and attaining prosperity is therefore critical to holistically evaluate whether India's economic growth is inclusive.

Measuring the prosperity gap

The prosperity gap is an indicator adopted by the World Bank that measures how far a society is from the baseline standard of prosperity. Introduced to promote the goal of prosperity, the criteria aim to increase sensitivity to distributional issues, shifting the conventional understanding of economic development away from average per capita income, and emphasising that good growth should benefit the least advantaged in society.

As per the recent brief, India's prosperity gap is 4.9, measured against the global benchmark of $28 per person per day (in 2021 purchasing power parity terms). Hence, the average consumption levels across India's population will need to increase by a factor of 4.9 to reach the desired standard of prosperity.

Since improvements in the earnings of poorer persons contribute more significantly to reducing the prosperity gap, India's score of 4.9 leads to the implication that despite substantial reduction in poverty, the nation must still strive for prosperity. A closer inquiry into the World Bank's poverty estimates reveals this marked unevenness in development.

In 2023, an estimated 2.6% of the population lived below $3.00 a day (the extreme poverty line), 16.1% below $4.20 (the lower-middle-income line) and 80.0% below $8.30 (the upper-middle-income line). Calculating the difference between successive thresholds, about 64% of the population lay between $4.20 and $8.30.

These percentages assist in inferring a segmentation of the prosperity gap, which is the average, across all people, of $28 divided by each person's daily income. The resulting gap is the factor by which that person's income must rise to reach the benchmark. For instance, a person earning $8.30 needs a factor of 3.4 to be considered prosperous.

Hence, it can be estimated that the 63.9% between $4.20 and $8.30 constitute the largest share of 4.9, leading to the inference that India's prosperity gap remains high because many Indians who have left poverty require their incomes to rise three to sevenfold to reach prosperity (Table 1).

This estimate indicates that this aspirational upward hike is difficult, and the factors that have helped escape poverty are not necessarily the same as those needed to achieve prosperity.

Mobility and human capital markets

While escaping poverty is a statistical phenomenon, building a secure socio-economic life is a labour-market-driven occurrence, and evidence suggests that India's labour market is still not seamlessly transforming the first event into the second. The World Bank brief itself flags this issue by stating that real earnings are broadly flat, employment growth is concentrated in low-productivity work, and youth unemployment rose from 14.6% to 15.9% (Q1 FY2026 to Q1 FY2027).

The data suggest that individuals exiting poverty are being met with weak jobs and uncertain routes to middle-income subgroups. Consequently, the underlying factors explaining the friction in a shift to a prosperous life imply that while employment is expanding, the quality of available jobs is concerning.

For instance, the ILO India Employment Report 2024 found that approximately 90% of India's workers were informally employed, with self-employment accounting for 55.8% of employment in 2022. The 2025 PLFS annual report provided only a modest relief, with regular wage work noted to have risen from 22.4% in 2024 to only 23.6% in 2025.

Informality is reinforced by research that unveils that an increase in employment can be the result of distress, rather than opportunity. Using PLFS data, it has been recorded that the share of unpaid family helpers among all workers increased from 12.41% in 2017-18 to 17.10% in 2023-24. This leads to an unfortunate deduction that increased employment does not necessarily translate to an expansion of well-paying, tertiary sector jobs.

One of the strongest indicators that the market is not functioning at its best is the fact that young entrants face the harshest undercurrents when entering the workforce. NCAER's analysis of the Time Use Survey 2024 found that only 46.7% of 20-29-year-olds were employed, with occupational opportunities varying across States.

The most startling figures pertain to the educated youth, as according to The India Employment Report 2024, educated young people accounted for approximately 65.7% of India's unemployed youth in 2022. This phenomenon highlights a mismatch between the qualifications young people are acquiring and the employment opportunities available to them.

Interestingly, households striving to enter the middle class through improved education and healthcare find themselves buying services they may not be able to easily evaluate when selecting.

Das and Dobbin describe 'human capital markets' as riddled with a plethora of fee-charging private providers of education and health, in which quality is difficult to determine, and services are a consumption and an investment. Paid schooling and care do not always guarantee the intended human capital formation, materialising in graduates being unable to convert their investments into employment opportunities.

A paradox that minimises the gains sought to follow increased employment is that even when people are employed, their earnings may not be sufficient to nudge them into a more comfortable economic position. This can occur because real wages have remained broadly flat, as observed by the World Bank brief, and substantiated by the ILO's India Employment Report 2024, which pegged real wages for regular, salaried workers as having remained stagnant or having declined between 2012 and 2022.

The report highlights that being able to consume has very little to do with one's job security, if earnings are not adjusted to the inflationary currents of the market. India has proven that it can combat poverty; however, it is yet to prove that it can foster prosperity. Even though many have breached the poverty line, the prosperity gap remains a caution that for an average Indian, a stable, comfortable life is still out of reach.

For Indians, the journey from escaping poverty to attaining prosperity will require tackling structural and institutional barriers that dictate who can progress and who only survive. The country has already achieved the first basic feat in extreme income poverty. Now, the focus for an aspiring country to become developed would require a transformational shift in supporting more prosperity-enhancing growth that secures and promises better livelihoods, effective human capital-building services, and genuine economic and social opportunities across the socio-economic pyramid. The road to doing that seems far ahead at this point.

(Deepanshu Mohan is Dean and Professor of Economics at O.P. Jindal Global University. He is a Visiting Professor at LSE and University of Oxford. Sonakshi Garg is a Senior Research Assistant at Centre for New Economics Studies, O.P. Jindal Global University)

Beyond the **poverty line**

India's gains in poverty reduction have yet to translate into secure livelihoods and a better standard of living

Graph 1: Decline in poverty rates across three income thresholds between 2011 and 2023

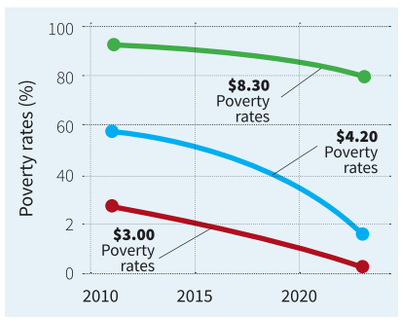


Table 1: The $4.20–$8.30 income group accounts for the largest share of India's prosperity gap

Band (2023)	Share of people	Factor needed	Contribution to 4.9
Below $3.00	2.6%	at least 9.3	at least 0.24
$3.00 to $4.20	13.5%	6.7 to 9.3	0.90 to 1.26
$4.20 to $8.30	63.9%	3.4 to 6.7	about 2.2 to 4.3
Above $8.30	20.0%	below 3.4	at most 0.67

THE GIST

- The World Bank's prosperity gap measures how far incomes are from the global benchmark of $28 per person per day; India's score of 4.9 points to the scale of the income increase required
- Nearly 64% of Indians fall in the $4.20-$8.30 daily income band, highlighting the concentration of the population just above the lower-middle-income poverty threshold
- Poor-quality human capital services, the prevalence of informal work, and the mismatch between educational qualifications and available jobs impede socio-economic mobility

‘The purpose of history is not to construct statements for contemporary political use’

Professor Romila Thapar says a Hindutva reading of Indian history cannot be ‘single and fixed’ and argues that historical inquiry must explain the evolution of Indian society rather than construct statements for contemporary political use

Edited excerpts from a speech delivered by Professor Romila Thapar on ‘Historiography and Early Indian History’, during the second Sitaram Yechury Memorial Lecture



Prof. Romila Thapar speaks during the second Sitaram Yechury Memorial Lecture in New Delhi on October 25. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

I would like to thank the Sitaram Yechury Foundation for the invitation to deliver a memorial lecture. The subject I have chosen to speak on is one on which I had a small conversation with Sitaram some time back, but we did not have the opportunity to discuss it at length. I am now speaking on it in remembrance.

Every society aspires to a past that explains how it came into being. Inevitably, this sometimes draws from the present and legitimizes it. The claims vary, as there is a difference between different sections of society. The questions we have to ask are: whose past are the sources referring to, who are the authors of the sources, and why and how do they want to appropriate the past? How authentic is their version of the past?

New historical perspectives now prevail. Slowly, the importance of historiography is being recognised in questions such as who is investigating the past today, how is the past being propagated, and with what intention? This was to be expected in the process of decolonising. We had to be clear as to what we were decolonising. Were we just replacing Mill and Max Müller with a partisan perspective on the past where Indian commentators were often basing themselves on colonial theories anyway, or were we going to open up the analysis of the past to a range of explanations that were needed to comprehend a complex society? A more analytical understanding of the past society was required, as also an awareness of what it was being replaced with, and by whom.

Theories of explanation surfaced in these readings. Those discussed more widely were not only the Marxist, but also others. For social history, the very different readings of Max Weber were also appraised. Clarifying the functions of social and economic institutions revealed fresh facets of history as in the analyses of texts. Thus, the political use of the past has become apparent in the adaptation of history to the ideology and requirements of Hindutva.

Historiography led to better-directed questions on the social infrastructures. Many questions began to surface. For example, did the polity change? Were there only kingdoms for four millennia or did some chiefships - gana-sanghas - change into kingdoms - rajyas - with a few kingdoms becoming the hub of empires in different periods? That all empires are highly centralized and uniform may be a convenient theory to underline political control, but does it explain the actual functioning of empires? The most substantial change was when, in modern times, kingdoms and colonies mutated into democratic nations. (or hoped to do so). The new national identity brought diverse groups into a single nation, which was also a historical process of change. Nationalism splintered into a Hindu and a Muslim nationalism, and now secular nationalism is fighting for survival. History was read differently by secular nationalists from those insisting on a Hindu or a Muslim nationalism.

Recognizing patterns of political control in history - whether of chiefships, kingdoms, or empires - required investigating the social basis of their economy, among other aspects. This is common sense. It doesn’t need a theory to say so. If land relations were based on a different pattern in post-Gupta times from that of pre-Gupta times, as the evidence from inscriptions suggests, then how did the change happen? What permitted Mauryan administration to control large parts of the sub-continent and even beyond? What was the impact of the very lucrative long-distance trade, both overland and maritime? There were impressively large places of worship, mosques and temples in the second millennium CE. The temples were for Shaiva, Vaishnava and Shakta worship, and some Jaina as well, on all of which much wealth was spent. Where did kings and devotees get the wealth to finance these? This would be added information of considerable interest.

References to varna and jatis/castes go back to early times. Curiously there is no mention of them in Ashoka’s edicts centrally concerned with society. But other sources register changes through the centuries. The cause of this may be variations in regional economies and social norms, diverse kinship systems, and changing ownership of resources. Religious sects also had a presence. Society was not static, so change would be expected. The change has to be explained. For example, why did the two Semitic religions, Christianity and Islam, although professing the equality of all, nevertheless permit the continuance of discrimination by their converted elite groups against the lesser castes?

Colonial scholars explained Hinduism as a somewhat exotic religion. It was assumed that all religions were monotheistic. But the religions of India were, in belief and practice, largely pluralistic, with many sects emanating from diverse teachings. Some were flexible and some rigid, some were more agglutinative and some pared down, some shone in their extensive plurality whereas others stayed close to a narrower singular belief. Religious sects were prolific and juxtaposed and proximity meant that some exchanges between them were inevitable, as also the evolution of new sects. This suggests the need for new ways of studying the religion and comprehending the diverse patterns.

The pluralism of the religion is even more evident in the absence of restriction in the range and form of devotion, as is evident from the multiple Bhakti sects. The rituals of worship could be particular to a sect. The projection of the same deity could be exclusive to a region, for example, Vishnu as Jagannath in Odisha and as Vitthala in Maharashtra. Each had different identities. The idiom of worship was devotion, but the form could differ. It was later, in colonial times, that new kinds of institutions evolved, the samajs, that seemed closer to an organized religion.

The Shramana religions held views that differed from the Hinduism of the Puranas, as did the materialist philosophy of the Charvaka. The same goes for some of the Bhakti teachers. Dissent was expressed, even if occasionally it led to serious conflict. Debating opposing views on a subject was recognized as a philosophical procedure, the outcome of which could bring a possible solution – a procedure somewhat similar to the dialectic in philosophical ideas.

For the historian, therefore, the history of Hinduism, as also of Indian Islam, Christianity and other religions, evokes formulations and explanations from diverse backgrounds. When, on the contrary, it is maintained that there is only one strand to Hinduism and that it is a simple monotheistic religion, one does rather wonder which religion is being discussed. This kind of formulation does not reflect the historian’s research into the history of the religion, where history is different from belief. It is more appropriate to the manner in which a religion can be put to political use, arguing for the priority claimed for the majority community, aspiring to establish a nation, in this case a Hindu Rashtra. These questions in relation to a religion have to be asked if its history is sought. They are not anti-religious but are simply reiterating that religion is always embedded in a society, and knowing the ambience of the society is necessary to even fully comprehend the religion.

Let me say in conclusion that the facets I have spoken of are but a part of what historians are investigating. These questions, so essential to studying the past, have their genesis in historiography. We need to give historiography the intellectual status that it is entitled to. This will not happen through a Hindutva reading of Indian history which is single and fixed, with no scope for further discussion.

In this interpretation, the purpose of history is not to explain what happened in the past, but instead to construct statements for contemporary political use. These statements deny the centrality of secularism and democracy, as essential components of the new nation, emerging from a colonial experience. However, the denial is already being challenged, despite the malicious attacks at various levels, by those who challenge the denial. Professional historians and some among those associated with them are researching the historical evolution of Indian society and economy, quite distinct from that imagined and propagated by Hindutva. We look forward to the new dimensions that historiography will reveal about our history.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

What is the difference between “megalomaniac” and “kleptomaniac”? (A. Jayaraman, Hyderabad)

First, let’s deal with the pronunciation of these words. The “e” in the first syllable of “megalomaniac” is like the “e” in “set”, “bet”, and “pet”. The “a” in the second syllable and the “o” in the following syllable sound like the “a” in “china”. The “a” in “man” is like the “ay” in “day”, “may”, and “say”, while the “a” in the final syllable is like the “a” in “bat” and “hat”. The “i” is like the “i” in “hit” and “sit”. The stress is on the fourth syllable “ma”. Megalomania is a form of madness; the individual has delusions of grandeur. He/she has an exaggerated sense of his/her importance. I guess we could say that many politicians are megalomaniacs.

‘If I were you, I wouldn’t go anywhere near that megalomaniac.’

In the word “kleptomaniac,” the “e” and the “o” are pronounced like the “e” and “o” in megalomaniac. The main stress once again is on “ma”. A “kleptomaniac” is someone who has a compulsive desire to steal things. It’s a kind of disease; the individual cannot control himself. He may have a lot of money, but wherever he goes, he will walk away with something. He may come to your house and walk away with a spoon or two.

‘The millionaire is a confirmed kleptomaniac.’

What is the meaning and origin of the idiom “the apple of one’s eye”? (A. S. Kaushik, Hyderabad)

When you say something is the apple of your eye, what you are implying is that the object is a prized possession; it’s an object that you look after with a great deal of devotion. Similarly, when the apple of your eye happens to be a person, then he/she is a person whom you like very much.

The idiom has been around for several hundred years. The “apple” here doesn’t refer to the fruit, but the “pupil” in one’s eye. People felt that the shape of the pupil was similar to that of an apple. In fact, for quite some time the word “appel” was used to refer to both the eye and the fruit.

Which of the following sentences is correct? I am suffering from a headache or I am suffering from headache? – S. Geethanjali, Hyderabad.

The article “a” usually precedes minor aches and pains. One usually says “a headache”, “a sore throat”, “a cold”, etc. In the case of other aches like “stomach-ache”, “earache” and “toothache”, there is a difference in the manner in which Americans and the British treat them. In British English, these words are considered uncountable nouns. As a result, the article “a” does not precede them. In American English, they are considered countable nouns; therefore, it is common to hear Americans say “a cold” or “a stomach-ache”. Also, while it is common for us Indians to “suffer from a headache/toothache”, native speakers of English generally do not use “suffer” with these minor ailments. They usually say, “I have a headache”, “I have a stomach ache” and “I have a toothache”.

Published in The Hindu on June 18, 2002

Word of the day

Fulsome:
unpleasantly and excessively suave or ingratiating in manner or speech

Synonyms: sickening, gushy, abundant

Usage: *His fulsome praise made her feel uncomfortable.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/fulsome

International Phonetic Alphabet: /fʊlsəm/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject ‘Text & Context’

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

The Democrats have won control of the both the House and the Senate in the U.S. A quiz on the midterm elections:

Radhika Santhanam

QUESTION 1
Since 1845, Americans have been voting on this day of the week in November. This is to give people time to travel to a polling station after church and before market day. Which day of the week is this?

QUESTION 2
What is the last session of Congress called before new members are appointed?

QUESTION 3
Dorothy, from The Wizard of Oz, lives in this landlocked State, which is named after a river. This State has elected a Democratic U.S. senator after a record 94 years. Which State is this?

QUESTION 4
The first Black Governor has been elected in this State. It is known for its casinos and gambling. It features in popular films such as The Godfather and The Hangover. Name this State.

QUESTION 5
Historically, the party of the sitting president loses ground in midterm elections. More than two decades ago, the Republicans defied this longstanding electoral trend, gaining six seats in the House and two in the Senate. Which President led the party’s campaign, and what major incident was a reason for this?



Visual Question:
He is an epidemiologist and a Rhodes scholar from the University of Oxford. J.D. Vance once said he “supported Sharia law”; Donald Trump has repeatedly called him a “jihadist” and a “terrorist sympathiser”. Name this man, who made history in the 2026 midterm elections and whose first name is also the first name of a former Indian president. AFP

Questions and Answers to the previous day’s daily quiz: 1. Simple one to begin with. Expand the acronym UNESCO. **Ans: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**
2. UNESCO has a distinctive logo based on what type of edifice? And how many members does it have? **Ans: A classic Greek temple (similar to the Parthenon), and it has 194 members**
3. In 1960, UNESCO launched the ‘Nubian Campaign’ for what specific purpose? **Ans: To save ancient Egyptian monuments (like Abu Simbel and Philae) from being flooded by the Aswan Dam**
4. The resolution to establish one of the world’s largest and most respected centres for scientific research was adopted in 1954. Name the establishment located in Europe. **Ans: CERN**
5. Thanks to UNESCO making a request in the 1960s, scholars have completed nine volumes of which continent’s history from their own perspective? **Ans: Africa**
6. Name the organisation’s magazine that has brought local perspectives on global issues since 1948. **Ans: ‘The UNESCO Courier’**
Visual: This image shows Pope Leo XIV watering an olive tree alongside UNESCO Director-General Khaled El-Enany at the UNESCO HQ. Where is it located? **Ans: Paris**
Early Birds: Prem Nath Tiwari | Sadhan Panda | Ravindra Kumar Sahu | Prem Raj P. | Aryansh Raj Saxena

INBRIEF



Centre earmarks ₹2,814 crore for lithium, nickel processing

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a ₹2,814-crore capital expenditure support scheme to establish domestic processing facilities for lithium and nickel, seeking to strengthen India's critical mineral ecosystem and reduce import dependence. The scheme will remain in force for five years. Union Minister for Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy said the scheme would strengthen domestic capabilities, boost manufacturing and reduce dependence on imports.

Cabinet approves scheme to overhaul statistical system

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a ₹4,371 crore scheme – Viksit Bharat Initiative for Statistical Transformation, Analytics & Research (VISTAR) – to overhaul the statistical architecture at both the Central and State levels, for the period 2026-27 to 2030-31. The scheme will be divided into three components: Comprehensive statistical operations and strengthening of the ecosystem, support for statistical strengthening, and an economic census.

Gold prices rise 3% as U.S. dollar slips to five-week low

Gold prices rose 3% on Wednesday following the biggest decline in the dollar index in over a month as investors awaited U.S. mid-term election results. The dollar index, which measures the strength of the greenback against a basket of six major currencies, slipped to a 5-week low of 101.3 on Wednesday. A weaker dollar makes dollar-denominated assets like gold less expensive for consumers of other currencies, boosting demand for the yellow metal.

India secures $400-billion investment commitments in renewables

Saptaparno Ghosh
NEW DELHI

India has secured preliminary investment commitments worth $400 billion across the renewable energy sector, including green hydrogen, energy storage and transmission, among others, Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi said on Wednesday.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the Bharat Renewable Energy Summit and Expo, he said the commitments were made during a CEO roundtable involving global investors and fund managers. "The fund managers have taken all the details and have given a commitment of $400 billion," he said, adding that the figures were preliminary.

Separately, the government will consult industry stakeholders over the next 10-15 days before deciding whether to extend the Approved List of Models and Manufacturers (ALMM) framework, Mr. Joshi said.

Volatility index stays elevated despite five-day market rally

VIX surges 65.4% YTD, reflecting heightened investor anxiety despite recent recovery in equities; crude crisis, flaring up of West Asia conflict, U.S. results and Trump's response add to tension

Gowri Lakshmi
MUMBAI

India's stock markets may have extended their winning streak to five consecutive sessions, but the persistence of the volatility index (VIX) around 15 points suggests that investors remain far from reassured.

The so-called 'fear gauge', which measures the market's expected volatility over the next 30 days, has eased from its late-October high of 17 but remains elevated amid mounting global uncertainties. While the Nifty 50 has declined nearly 8% since the beginning of 2026, the VIX has surged 65.4% year-to-date, reflecting heightened investor anxiety despite the recent recovery in equities.

"VIX basically suggests potential for volatility in markets. The market has been on a rally but investors fear a decline for several reasons. The crude crisis, flaring up of West Asia conflict, U.S. results and Trump's response, all add to anxieties for global investors," V. K. Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said.



On Wednesday, Sensex gained 383 points, or 0.5%, to close at 77,301, while Nifty advanced 149 points to settle at 23,960. PTI

On Wednesday, the 30-share Sensex gained 383 points, or 0.5%, to close at 77,301, while the Nifty 50 advanced 149 points, or 0.6%, to settle at 23,960, extending the market's recovery for a fifth straight session.

However, the gains were partly restrained by weakness in information technology stocks. The Nifty IT index declined 1.5% to 32,061 after falling as much as 3% during the session, weighing on broader market sentiment.

"Post the U.S. midterm elections, investor focus will shift to the U.S. administration's next course of action on West Asia, as any further escalation or diplomatic progress could significantly influence crude oil prices and global market sentiment in the near term," Siddhartha Khemka, head of research, wealth management at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said in a note.

Strong corporate earnings for the September quarter have provided domestic equities with some support.

Analysts also point to a possible shift in global capital flows towards India as concerns over stretched valuations in artificial intelligence-linked stocks trigger a reassessment of investment allocations.

The AI-led rally over the past two years had attracted substantial foreign capital to markets such as South Korea, Taiwan and the U.S., diverting flows away from India.

Crude oil remains another critical variable.

"Crude has to sustain the current levels or below $100 a barrel for markets to recover completely," Ajit Mishra, senior vice-president, Research, Religare Broking, said, adding, "A reversal in AI deceleration could also potentially risk reverse the gains we have seen so far."

Mercedes-Benz Group AG to scale up tech, parts sourcing from India

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

India will play an important role in Mercedes-Benz Group AG's global business as the company would source more technology and components from India for its global operations before exporting vehicles from the country, Ola Källenius. Mercedes-Benz's Group AG Chairman of the Board of Management said in a select interaction.

"And these tech partnerships and supply partnerships are going from strength to strength. And the fact that we have the biggest R&D centre outside of Germany here in Bengaluru, we also have a very competent production setup since more than 30 years," he stated.

The company on Wednesday announced fresh investment of ₹200 crore in India, taking the total investment to ₹3,200 crore, and introduced the electric GLC SUV starting ₹78.5 lakh with 711 km range on a single charge.

Cabinet okays ₹14,500 cr. VGF scheme for large scale energy storage

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet has approved a ₹14,500 crore Viability Gap Funding (VGF) scheme for the development of grid-scale energy storage systems for the period 2026-27 to 2030-31, the government announced on Wednesday.

The scheme is aimed at supporting the development of 92 GWh of fresh, yet-to-be-commissioned, energy storage capacity across the country.

"The scheme will support creation of new capacities equivalent to 170% of the present-day grid scale energy storage system capacity in the country and help meet the required grid scale ESS capacity of 411 GWh by 2031-32," the government said in a release.

The scheme is designed to provide for the development of 60 GWh of hydro pumped storage plant (PSP) capacity, 30 GWh of battery energy storage system (BESS) capacity and 2 GWh of capacity through alternative energy storage technologies, with a total estimated investment of ₹97,600 crore. "The VGF support will help improve the financial viability of these projects and accelerate the deployment of large-scale energy storage infrastructure in the country," the government said, adding that the scheme will also provide an impetus to domestic manufacturing of BESS

Energy storage capacity will be allocated through a tariff-based competitive bidding process with both public and private sector electricity discoms eligible for VGF support for BESS and hydro PSP projects.

U.S. midterm impact on India: faster trade deal talks, higher tariffs likely

NEWS ANALYSIS

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI





Difficult choices: U.S. President Donald Trump may exert pressure on India to reach a trade deal. AP/ REUTERS

> Trump will now use his executive powers to pressure India for a quick deal that secures market access for U.S. farm, industrial goods, alongside other sops
>
> **AJAY SRIVASTAVA**
> Global Trade Research Initiative

The results of the U.S. midterm polls, which show that the Democrats having gained control of both the Senate and the House of Representatives, will likely hasten talks between India and the U.S. on a trade deal but could also see higher tariffs on India until the deal is closed, experts said.

On one hand, a desire to quickly close the trade pact to show strength domestically may induce Mr. Trump to raise tariff pressure on India, while on the other, Indian negotiators will likely see this election result as an opportunity to push through a favourable deal for India.

U.S. pressure to rise

According to Ajay Srivastava, founder of trade think-tank Global Trade Research Initiative, this loss will push U.S. President Donald Trump to increase his exercise of his executive powers to pressure India into accepting a deal.

"With foreign policy leverage failing against Russia, China and Iran, Trump needs a quick win," Mr. Srivastava said. "Expect heightened pressure on India for a trade deal to prove American clout."

Leaders in the U.S. and India have repeatedly said over the last few months that the deal between the two countries is almost ready and is awaiting final approvals.

India, in particular, has been holding out until it receives an assurance that it will win a clear advantage over its competitors.

"Trump will now use his executive powers to pressure India for a quick deal that secures market access for U.S. agricultural and industrial goods, alongside other major concessions for U.S. companies," Mr. Srivastava said.

While the U.S. Supreme Court in February defanged Mr. Trump's reciprocal tariff policy that had seen tariffs of up to 50% being levied on India, the President has other tools through which he can levy tariffs.

According to Deep Pal, director of geopolitics and policy at the Koan Advisory Group, the implications of these election results might lead to some difficulty for Mr. Trump in gaining support for his policies.

"For this administration, especially after tonight, any decision has to look like a win domestically, to core Republican voters," Mr. Pal said.

"With Congress out of his hands, a lot will depend on how much control Mr. Trump has over the Republican party and if there will be any purchase for his ideas."

However, Mr. Pal pointed out that the Indian government might view this new reality in the U.S. with greater optimism.

"Indian negotiators, on the other hand, may think that the new realities will make the Trump administration amenable to a better trade deal for India, breaking the current deadlock, and leading to a flurry of new conversations," Mr. Pal said.

He added, though, that the White House has so far shown it does not believe in stepping back, but rather in doubling down.

Tariffs may surge

The U.S. has already implemented several tariffs on India and other nations and has put into place tools that empower it to levy more.

The Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026, which envisages tariffs of up to 100% on countries such as India that import large quantities of Russian oil and gas, was first co-proposed by a Republican and Democrat senator and received significant bipartisan support during its passage in both the Senate and the House.

Act in abeyance

Mr. Trump has kept the provisions of the Act in abeyance for now in national interest, but even if he were to decide to implement the tariffs, he will not receive resistance from the Democrat-controlled Congress due to the bipartisan support the Act received.

The U.S. is also currently investigating India and other countries under Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act of 1974 into whether they are using strategic excess manufacturing capacity to hurt the U.S. economy. Mr. Trump can authorise additional tariffs on the basis of the findings of this investigation without the need for Congress approval.

10% tariff

He has already imposed a tariff of 10% on India on the basis of a Section 301 investigation into whether U.S. trade partners were doing enough to prevent the import of goods made using forced labour.

These Section 301 tariffs will come on top of the 50% tariffs Mr. Trump imposed last year under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 on the import of all steel and aluminium, including from India. The U.S. Supreme Court, while striking down the legal basis for the reciprocal tariff system, allowed the Section 232 tariffs to remain. Even a Democrat-led Congress will not be able to revoke these tariffs.

Draft SAF policy proposes 90% local fuel uplift for international airlines

Rohit Vaid
NEW DELHI

The Centre's draft National Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) policy proposes that airlines buy at least 90% of their annual fuel requirements for international flights departing India at domestic airports, to ensure demand certainty for SAF.

The proposal seeks to discourage "economic tankering", or carrying additional fuel purchased elsewhere to reduce refuelling at Indian airports. The obligation would apply to Indian and foreign airlines operating scheduled international services. According to the draft reviewed by *businessline*, the requirement would cover trip and taxi fuel, excluding contingency, alternate reserve and additional fuel.

The 90% requirement relates to aviation fuel uplift, rather than the proportion of SAF blended into conventional jet fuel.



The obligation would apply to Indian and foreign airlines operating scheduled services.

Besides, the draft sets out financial and fiscal support measures for developing the domestic SAF ecosystem.

On October 16, *businessline* first reported that the Centre was considering funding and tax support for early SAF deployment, including viability gap funding for initial production plants, concessional finance and feedstock assistance. The draft now confirms that such support measures form part of the proposed policy framework. It envisages viability gap funding, green financing and long-term offtake agreements, alongside possible GST relief, import duty waivers, income-tax holidays and accelerated depreciation.

Financial outlay

However, the measures remain proposals. The overall financial outlay would be determined by the Petroleum Ministry in coordination with the Civil Aviation Ministry.

Meanwhile, the proposed fuel-uplift obligation would exclude domestic operations of Indian carriers. Moreover, safety requirements, operational difficulties and supply constraints would be considered while assessing compliance.

Additionally, airlines would submit independently verified annual reports on actual fuel uplift at each airport to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

Nevertheless, unjustified deviations could attract penalties, with detailed rules to be developed by the civil aviation ministry in consultation with the petroleum ministry.

Separately, the draft proposes mandatory SAF blending shares for international aviation falling within the scope of the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation.

The proposed trajectory is 1% in 2027, 2% in 2028, 3% in 2029 and 5% in 2030.

Subsequent targets, including 10% in 2035 and 20% in 2040, are indicative and would be subject to further decisions.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

Unilever to invest €40 million in India R&D and bio-futures innovation

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The €35 million investment builds on more than €20 million invested over the past five years

Unilever will invest €40 million in India to strengthen its research and development (R&D) capabilities and accelerate innovation in biosciences, biotechnology and AI-led product development, reinforcing the country's position as a key global research hub for the consumer goods major.

The investment includes an additional €35 million to transform its Mumbai and Bengaluru R&D centres into a next-generation research and innovation ecosystem, along with €5 million over five years for a strategic Bio-Futures partnership to connect Unilever's global R&D capabilities with India's expanding bioscience ecosystem.

The €35 million investment builds on more than €20 million invested over the past five years in facilities and capabilities such as the Liquids Lab of the Future, Unilever Fragrance House, Advanced Manufacturing Centre for Bars, Packaging and Flexibles Design Lab, and AI and digital modelling platforms.

India is among Unilever's largest global R&D hubs. The Mumbai centre will be developed into a new Product Innovation Centre integrating AI-powered insights, product and format science, packaging design, rapid prototyping, scale-up capabilities and market-facing deployment.

The separate €5 million Bio-Futures partnership will bring together scientific institutions, start-ups, advanced infrastructure and talent to drive innovation in human biology, microbiome science, biotechnology, biomanufacturing and digital and artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled biology.

Wage unrest tests Bangladesh garment industry's low-cost edge



Wage wars: Garment workers exchange words with security forces outside factory in Dhaka. REUTERS

NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters
DHAKA

Low wages and duty-free access to key Western markets helped Bangladesh become the world's second-largest apparel exporter after China, but protests over pay are testing the cost advantage of an industry that generates more than 80% of the country's export earnings.

Protests began on Saturday in industrial areas around the capital Dhaka, forcing hundreds of garment factories to suspend production. Workers are demanding a 140% wage hike and have clashed with police, who used tear gas and sound grenades.

Low cost, reliability

The unrest comes as the garment industry, which employs 4 million people and is known for its low costs and reliability, was about to begin manufacturing spring collections for major brands such as H&M, Associated British Foods-owned Primark and Walmart, and exposes the challenge of raising wages as global competition intensifies.

Garment company executives say worried clients have already called about shipments, after earlier disruptions from severe fuel and power shortages from the Middle East war and 2024's mass anti-government protests.

Sparrow Group, whose clients include Inditex's Zara, Gap and Marks and Spencer, said it halted production on Monday after a large crowd attacked its factory. CCTV footage showed people throwing bricks and stones, smashing windows and damaging exterior walls while attempting to force open the main gates. Sparrow head Shovon Islam said more than 5,000 workers were evacuated safely. It was not immediately clear who was behind the attack.

Busiest season

"This is the industry's busiest season," Islam told *Reuters*, adding major shipments were scheduled for November. "Any disruption at this stage is extremely damaging and is hampering production at the worst possible time. All my buyers are concerned."

Erode price advantage

Workers want a minimum monthly wage of 30,000 taka ($243), from 12,500 taka ($100) currently. The last pay increase was in 2023 when wages went up by more than 56%. Previous hikes were between 50% and 77%.

Bangladesh's government formed a wage board on Sunday to make a pay recommendation after considering factors including inflation, economic conditions, living costs and export performance, said Abdur Rahman Tarafder, secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

The American Apparel & Footwear Association, which includes the top U.S. companies in the sector, said the board was a "critical opportunity to deliver a fair wage that allows garment workers to support themselves and their families" and called for an annual review process. The garment industry contributes about 10% of Bangladesh's GDP.

Any increase that is similar to past raises could push Bangladesh's minimum wage above India, the world's fourth-largest textile exporter.

Industry officials say minimum garment sector wages in India typically range from ₹13,000 ($137) to ₹15,000 a month. Pay in China and Vietnam is roughly twice as much as in Bangladesh, according to 2024 data from the International Labour Organization.

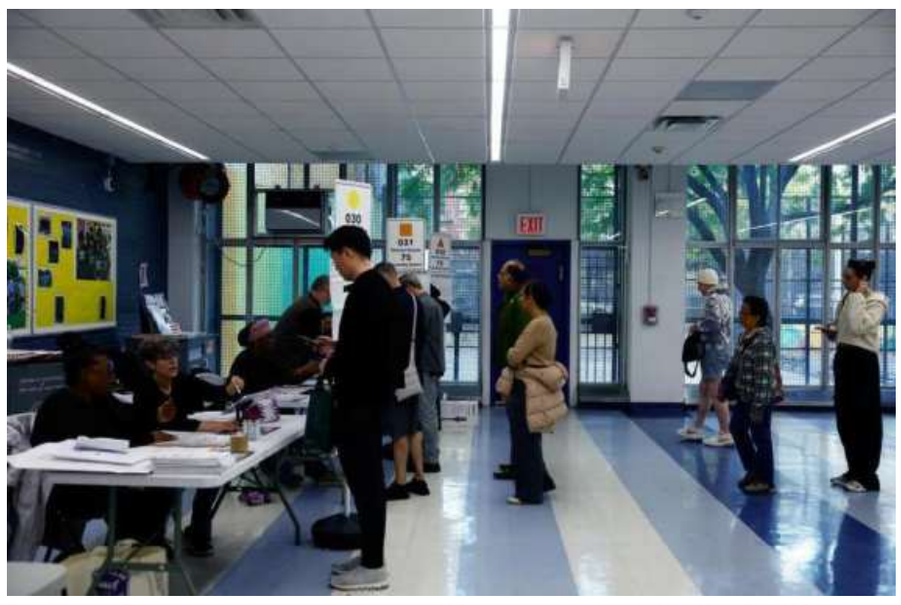
M. Mohiuddin Chowdhury, CEO of Clifton Group, a garment company in Bangladesh's port city of Chittagong, said India was also an increasingly strong competitor because it had its own cotton and a strong yarn industry, as well as government incentives to support the industry. While Bangladesh enjoys duty-free and quota-free access to places including the EU, Britain and Canada, India has a free trade deal with the U.K., the second-biggest destination for Bangladeshi garments. In the financial year ended June 30, Bangladesh's garment export earnings fell 1.65% from a year earlier to $38.7 billion.

Trump's midterm drubbing exhibits the power of data-centre opponents

Democrats promising data-centre moratoriums win state offices; bonds rally, AI stocks drop on AI slowdown fears in markets; size and breadth of the Democratic wave are coming into focus; the victories hand political heft to backlash against projects which are at the heart of AI boom

NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters
HONG KONG



Fresh wave: People wait in line to vote during the U.S. midterm elections in New York City, U.S. REUTERS

Opponents of data centres were among the biggest winners of the Democrats' landslide wins in the U.S. midterm elections, pointing to a shifting public mood on AI and, investors said, a possible slowdown of the boom that has propelled U.S. economic growth and stock markets.

The size and breadth of the Democratic wave were still coming into focus. But in gubernatorial races in Texas and Georgia, Democrats who campaigned in part on a moratorium on data centre development won offices that the party had not held for decades.

Their victories hand political heft to the backlash against the projects, which are at the heart of the AI boom but are loud, thirsty for water, hungry for electricity and increasingly unpopular with their neighbours, investors said.

Tough norms likely

Investors say the results are likely to usher in tougher regulation and could ripple across financial markets where AI stocks were falling on Wednesday; big bets have already started to wobble due to concerns about spending and overcapacity.

"In our view, the significance of these midterm elections is more like a referendum on AI than a referendum on (Donald) Trump," said Aidan Yao, a senior investment strategist at the Amundi Investment Institute, the research arm of Europe's largest asset manager.

"If the AI theme is subject to some restrictions, then the U.S. economy, U.S. inflation and U.S. monetary policy all become very, very uncertain."

In the mix too is the upcoming IPO of Anthropic. The world's largest AI company is preparing to begin formally marketing shares to prospective investors next week. An amended regulatory filing on Monday showed Anthropic's net loss narrowed in the third quarter, as revenue surged 47% from a quarter earlier to $16.96 billion, though the pace of growth slowed.

> But even Republicans turned against data centres, which opponents say, drive up utility bills, pollute the night sky and do not create sufficient jobs or taxes to justify sops states pay

Texas sweep

The most stunning ballot box repudiation was in Texas, which GLJ Research has estimated accounts for about a quarter of U.S. data-centre capacity that is due to come online by 2030. Democrat Gina Hinojosa ousted Greg Abbott as governor in an upset that ended three decades of Republican hold on the office, while fellow party member James Talarico became the senator-elect.

A conservative, oil-rich state, Texas has worked for years to reinvent itself as a tech hub, attracting companies like SpaceX and entrepreneurs like Elon Musk, who donated more than $150 million to the Republican campaign.

But even Republicans turned against data centres, which opponents say drive up utility bills, pollute the night sky with lights and do not create sufficient jobs or taxes to justify the incentives that states pay.

"Data centres in space looking pretty appealing right now," Musk said on social media after the election.

"Guess my election-interfering space lasers didn't work this time."

In Georgia, where commercial real estate services and investment firm CBRE says Atlanta is the most active data-centre construction market in the country, Democrat Keisha Lance Bottoms won the gubernatorial contest, ending more than two decades of Republican control.

The AI trade

AI has been a dominant theme this year in the financial markets, driving stocks higher due to bets on chip demand while pushing up bond yields, as the data centre construction boom boosts economic growth.

Chip and AI firms like TSMC, Samsung Electronics, SK Hynix and Kioxia fell in Asia - along with bond yields - on Wednesday.

"The Democrats will likely push for greater regulation," said Nick Ferres, chief investment officer of Vantage Point Asset Management, a fund manager in Singapore.

"The two key risks ... have been the return on investment and the financing of the boom. Both have likely become more challenging now."

Shares in U.S. data centre operators Applied Digital,Terawulf, Core Scientific and Irenfell in pre-market trading, with losses ranging from 0.16% to 2.9%. Neocloud company Nebius rose nearly 2%, while rival Coreweave dipped 0.32%.

To be sure, many analysts said a slowdown in the building of data centres in the U.S. did not necessarily herald a change in demand for AI or computing power, and some view a roughly 8% drawdown in the Nasdaq over the past month as an opportunity to buy.

Still, Ilan Benhamou on J.P. Morgan's equity sales desk inNew York called the Texas race "the only thing that matters" in a pre-election note to clients, and investors are taking it as awake-up call.

"Companies do have to have the social license operate, and I think the current AI providers really have a PR crisis right now on their hands," said Katie Koch, chief executive of asset manager TCW, at a Hong Kong financial summit.

"They need to define what the social utility is going to be of AI and data centres to Americans, and so far they've been failing to do that."

Anthropic's new consulting venture: why are AI model firms moving into the services business?

EXPLAINER

Balasubramanyam C.P.
CHENNAI



The unknown: Indian IT services firms could face competition for work they have traditionally undertaken for clients. REUTERS

The story so far: Anthropic's reported plan to set up an Artificial Intelligence (AI) consultancy in Europe with private equity firm Hg has brought a new dimension to the competition between AI developers and traditional technology services companies.

The two companies had agreed to establish an independent consultancy, expected to begin operations by the end of 2026, with hubs in London and Berlin. It is expected to place AI consultants and engineers inside businesses to develop AI-powered products and support adoption. The report said it would also serve firms in Hg's investment portfolio.

Anthropic has not publicly confirmed the European consultancy in announcements available at the time of writing. However, the reported plan follows an earlier move in the U.S. and comes as AI developers increasingly build capabilities to aid businesses implement technology.

What's happening?

Anthropic announced in May 2026 that it was forming an enterprise AI services firm with Blackstone, Hellman & Friedman and Goldman Sachs alongside other investors. The venture was formally unveiled in July as Ode with Anthropic, a standalone AI services company built on the foundation of applied AI firm Fractional AI, which it acquired in May.

The firm combines Anthropic's AI models with a team of engineers and operators. It works with businesses to identify where Claude can be used, build customised systems and support deployment. Anthropic said the venture would initially focus on mid-sized firms, including community banks, manufacturers and regional healthcare providers that may not have the resources to build and operate own advanced AI systems.

OpenAI announced a similar move in May with OpenAI Deployment Company or DeployCo. It said the firm would embed specialised engineers, known as forward-deployed engineers, within firms. The teams would spot business problems, redesign workflows and build, test and deploy AI systems connected to client's data, software and business processes.

OpenAI said DeployCo would be majority-owned and controlled by it and would launch with more than $4 billion in initial investment from a group of investment firms, consultancies and systems integrators. OpenAI also agreed to buy applied AI consultancy Tomoro, bringing about 150 engineers and deployment specialists into the venture, subject to the completion of the acquisition. The firms are not only selling subscriptions to Claude or ChatGPT. They are building teams who can work with clients to spot business problems and develop technology to solve them.

Why consulting?

Building a powerful AI model is only a part of getting firms to use AI. A firm that wants to automate insurance claims, for example, needs to connect the model to internal data, existing software, approval processes and compliance systems. It must also test the system, train staff and ensure reliable working.

This is where consulting and IT services firms have traditionally played a major role. They understand clients' businesses, manage large technology projects and integrate software with complex enterprise systems.

Anthropic said in its May announcement that many mid-sized businesses lack the in-house resources to build and run advanced AI deployments. Its CFO Krishna Rao, said enterprise demand for Claude was outpacing any single delivery model, while partnerships with large systems integrators stayed central to serving the world's largest enterprises.

OpenAI made a similar case in DeployCo announcement, saying the next stage of enterprise AI would depend on how effectively firms deployed technology in real-world use cases and how well it and partners aided them do so. It said Deployment Company would embed engineers within firms to spot opportunities, redesign workflows and build and deploy AI systems tailored to their needs.

There is also a commercial opportunity. By participating in implementation, model developers can potentially earn revenue from engineering and deployment services in addition to the use of models. They also work more closely with clients and gain better understanding of how technology is being used.

It's competitors

Consulting firms such as Deloitte, PwC, EY and KPMG advise firms on strategy and operations. Some of the practices also undertake technology execution, including enterprise software deployment, systems integration and AI adoption. IT services firms such as TCS, Infosys, Wipro, HCLTech and Cognizant operate in these areas too alongside large-scale software development and technology maintenance. This creates an overlap, particularly in enterprise technology execution.

When Anthropic or OpenAI sends its own engineers into a client's organisation to design and deploy AI systems, it enters work that has traditionally been handled by consulting and technology services firms. This could put pressure on the fee the firms earn via implementation and application development.

Investor Chamath Palihapitiya warned in a LinkedIn post consulting firms such as PwC and Accenture risk helping build the capabilities of potential competitors by deploying Anthropic's and OpenAI's technology. He argued the AI firms were simultaneously developing services businesses that could compete with traditional consultancies. He said consulting firms must retain control over which AI models are used via an independent technology layer.

Phil Fersht, founder and CEO of HFS Research, argued AI model developers such as Anthropic should not treat service providers merely as distribution channels. He stressed the importance of the enterprise technology layer, or "harness", that services firms build around AI models to make them work within businesses. These are industry assessments not evidence that consulting firms have already lost business to model developers. But they are increasingly asking who will control customer relationship and capture the revenue when AI is implemented inside a business?

Why partner IT services

AI developers need the reach, industry knowledge and execution capabilities of established services firms. Anthropic's Claude Partner Network includes Accenture, Deloitte, PwC, Cognizant, Infosys and other services firms. In a June announcement, Anthropic said Cognizant had rolled Claude out to roughly 3,50,000 associates, Deloitte was making it available to 4,70,000 people across its global network, and KPMG was integrating it across a workforce of more than 2,76,000. It also said Infosys was building Claude-powered agents for specific industries.

Anthropic's partnership with TCS, announced in June, is another example. Under the pact, TCS will provide Claude to 50,000 staff across 56 countries and establish a dedicated practice of consultants, engineers and industry specialists to design and run Claude-based systems for clients.

OpenAI has also built a partner ecosystem. Its Frontier Alliance includes consulting firms BCG and McKinsey, as well as IT services firms Accenture and Capgemini.

For Indian IT services

For India's IT services industry, the concern is how much of the consulting, implementation and maintenance work and the revenue attached to it, could shift to AI model companies. Mr. Fersht warned that move strikes at the core economic model of services firms, which has traditionally relied on large teams handling implementation, maintenance and process management.

As OpenAI and Anthropic build their own enterprise deployment capabilities, Indian IT services companies could face competition for work they have traditionally undertaken for clients. The extent of that shift will depend on how much of the implementation and ongoing management of AI systems businesses choose to outsource to established services firms or take directly to model developers.

SEOUL

N. Korea launches missiles as it protests against U.S. claims on hack



AFP

North Korea launched multiple missiles toward the sea on Wednesday, South Korea's military said, hours after Pyongyang said it saw no need to resume diplomacy with Washington in protest of accusations that North Korean hackers were behind the recent cryptocurrency heist at Binance. AP

WASHINGTON

U.S. court blocks administration's plan to deport Afghan immigrants



AP

The U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York blocked on Tuesday the Trump administration's plans to deport Afghan immigrants back to Afghanistan, a move advocacy groups said could endanger their lives. Among the group were relatives of Afghans who assisted the U.S. military prior to the fall of Kabul. AFP

JOHANNESBURG

South Africans vote as anger over failing services threatens ANC



AFP

South Africans queued from early on Wednesday to vote in municipal elections, with anger over corruption, crime and failing public services threatening to inflict fresh losses on the African National Congress (ANC). The outcome will help shape the political landscape ahead of the 2029 national election. REUTERS

KYIV

Ukraine's Zelenskyy awards U.S. first lady Melania state honour



AFP

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has awarded U.S. first lady Melania Trump a state honour for her role in helping to organise a humanitarian evacuation from a frontline town last week. The award, the Order of Princess Olga, first class, honours women who have made exceptional contributions. REUTERS

Indian-American Democratic lawmakers make strong showing in U.S. midterm polls

Ami Bera, Ro Khanna, Suhas Subramanyam and Pramila Jayapal retain their seats in the House of Representatives; Pia Dandiya enters Congress for the first time; Trump-backed Republican Vivek Ramaswamy loses Ohio Governor's race; Indian-American community is estimated to be over 5 mn

Press Trust of India
WASHINGTON

Indian-American Democratic lawmakers Ami Bera, Ro Khanna, Suhas Subramanyam and Pramila Jayapal have been re-elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, while Pia Dandiya has made her debut in the U.S. Congress, marking a strong showing by the community in the midterm elections.

Several other Indian-American candidates contested elections for offices ranging from governor to state legislatures and local bodies.

The elections, held on Tuesday, covered all 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, 35 Senate seats, 36 gubernatorial posts and several local public offices.

Mr. Bera, 61, has won re-election to the U.S. House from California's 3rd Congressional District, defeating Republican Robb Tucker. He has secured an eighth term, and is the longest-serving Indian-American in the U.S. Congress.

He was first elected to Congress in 2012 and took office in January 2013. He currently serves on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. Khanna, 50, has won re-election from California's 17th Congressional District, located in the heart of Silicon Valley. He is completing his fifth term and will begin his sixth in January.



Bagging wins: From top left, Aruna Miller, Pia Dandiya, Pramila Jayapal, Suhas Subramanyam, Ami Bera, and Ro Khanna. PTI

Mr. Subramanyam, 40, has been re-elected from Virginia's 10th Congressional District, defeating Republican Dave Beckwith. He secured over 61% of the vote against Mr. Beckwith. Mr. Subramanyam previously served as an adviser to former U.S. President Barack Obama.

Ms. Jayapal, who represents Washington's 7th Congressional District, has secured a sixth term in the House of Representatives.

Ms. Dandiya, 39, won Florida's 22nd Congressional District, defeating Republican Casey Askar. She secured 51.9% of the vote.

In Maryland, Indian-American Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller, a Democrat, secured another term.

Meanwhile, Indian-American Vivek Ramaswamy, who was backed by U.S. President Donald Trump, lost Ohio's gubernatorial race to Democrat Amy Acton. Mr. Ramaswamy, the son of immigrants from Keralam, had won the Republican primary in May. Several other Indian-American candidates were also awaiting the outcome of their contests.

The Indian-American community is estimated to number over 5 million, making it the second-largest Asian-origin population in the United States.

Trump congratulates Democrats on result, says war played role

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump had rare praise for rival Democrats on Tuesday after their stunning U.S. midterm elections victory and admitted the Iran war may have played a part in the defeat of his Republican Party.

But the 80-year-old refused to take any personal responsibility for the result that upends the final two years of his presidency, instead trying to shift the blame to his fellow Republicans.

"Well, I say this: congratulations to the Democrats. They did a good job," Mr. Trump said in a telephone interview with Fox News Democracy 26.

The complimentary comments were highly unusual for Mr. Trump, who spent much of the midterms campaign branding Democrats as everything from communists to Islamists.

Mr. Trump also reiterated that, unlike his 2020 presidential election loss, he accepted the vote results and was ready to work with Democrats now that they will control Congress.

"I can work with them on many things," Mr. Trump said.

Veto power

At the same time, Mr. Trump warned he was ready to use his executive power to veto any Democratic legislation he felt like. "They can send over, you know, 50 different great Bills that they're all excited about, and I send them back with a nice stamp – 'veto.'"

With polls showing the Iran war and resulting rise in oil prices was vastly unpopular with voters, Trump also acknowledged that the stalled conflict had contributed to the result.

Time and again on the campaign trail the 80-year-old told Republicans to "pretend I'm on the ballot." But on Tuesday he insisted that the opposite was the problem.

"I wasn't on the Ballot and if I was, we would have won IN A LANDSLIDE!" Mr. Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform.

Mr. Trump posted later that he was going to "become a political pundit" and give the reasons why Republicans lost.



Donald Trump

V-P Vance echoes Trump's remark on reason for loss

WASHINGTON

U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance said on Wednesday that the Iran war had doomed Republicans in the midterm elections, moving to distance himself from the unpopular conflict ahead of a possible 2028 White House run.

"The reason we lost is the war. The President himself said so last night," Mr. Vance said in a lengthy post on X — apparently referring to President Donald Trump's remarks that the Iran war was "part of it" but that it was still justified.

Mr. Vance, a longtime vocal critic of U.S. foreign interventionism, had reportedly been skeptical behind the scenes about the war on Iran that was launched in late February.

Mapping the blue wave

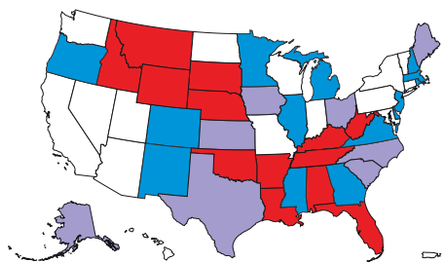
In the last two years of his presidency, Donald Trump will face a changed White House, as Democrats surged to full control of Congress in the November 2026 U.S. midterm elections



ILLUSTRATION: SAAI

Democrats flipped at least seven Senate seats in ruby-red States and battlegrounds as well

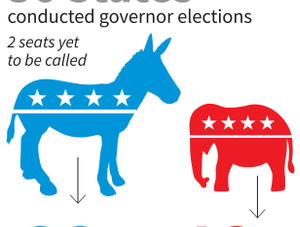
Democrats · Democrats (flipped) · Republicans · No race



Democrats 54 | Republicans 44

36 States conducted governor elections

2 seats yet to be called



22 seats Won by Democrats

12 seats Won by Republicans

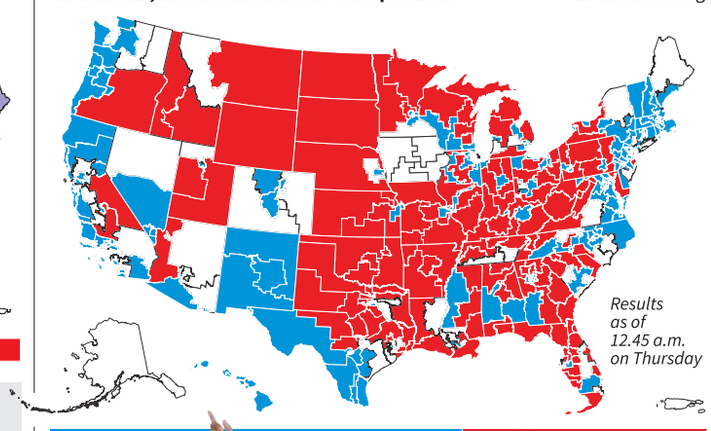
5 States flipped from Republican governors to Democrats

Democrats will control a majority of governors' offices for the first time since 2010

Of the two gubernatorial races yet to be called, Democrats were leading comfortably in Alaska and with a thin margin in Kansas

In the House, Democrats flipped over 30 districts, some that voted for Trump in 2024

☐ Still counting



Results as of 12.45 a.m. on Thursday

Democrats 237 | Republicans 139

This was the second consecutive election in which the party that spent more lost, after former Vice-President **Kamala Harris lost to Trump** in 2024 presidential polls



The vote reflected deep anger over living costs, tariffs and Trump's war against Iran, which has sent fuel prices soaring and compounded dissatisfaction with an already deeply unpopular President

The election included many historic firsts, including the first Black female governor in U.S., the first Muslim in the U.S. Senate, and the first openly gay man elected to U.S. Senate

Republicans lost in southern House districts with 'gerrymandered' maps

Iran says tankers destroyed after hitting mines in strait

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Four oil tankers caught fire after hitting mines while attempting to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, Iran said on Wednesday, after it warned no one would benefit from a return to war.

It came a day after President Donald Trump said the U.S. had launched strikes on the Islamic republic, following reports of a raid on Qeshm, the largest island in the strait.

"Four non-compliant oil tankers attempting to pass through the prohibited passage south of the Strait of Hormuz were destroyed after striking naval mines and are still burning," Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps said in a statement quoted by the state TV.

A statement by IRGC said they had shot down a drone over the vital waterway

"Two other non-compliant ships or vessels have also been halted."

The Guards also said they had shot down a drone over the strait.

'Finger on trigger'

Tehran claims control over Hormuz, a vital global energy conduit, and has targeted vessels that attempt to cross without its authorisation since the war erupted.

Indirect contact between the U.S. and Iran via mediators has continued with little sign of any diplomatic breakthrough, and Iran has said it is ready to reopen the strait but only if Washington agrees to a long-standing list of demands.

Tehran's chief negotiator in talks with the U.S., Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, said the Islamic republic was "ready for battle with its finger on the trigger", although President Masoud Pezeshkian insisted his government was trying to resolve the crisis "through dialogue".

"No one will benefit from this war" if fighting resumes, Mr. Pezeshkian said on Tuesday.

U.S. slaps new sanctions on Indian firms for aiding Iran

Reuters
WASHINGTON

The U.S. Treasury issued fresh sanctions on Wednesday against companies and individuals based in India and Turkiye for their support of Iran, warning that it would continue to go after anyone who supported the Iranian government.

The sanctions are part of the Trump administration's "Operation Economic Outcast," which aims to cut off Iran's ability to sell oil to fund the war with the U.S. and Israel.

Treasury had last week said its actions were decimating Iran's economy.

Bhutan sets Guinness World Record for erecting 108 stupas in nine hours

Rahul Karmakar
GELEPHU

Bhutan has set a Guinness World Record by erecting 108 Buddhist stupas in nine hours, Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC) Governor Lotay Tshering said.

A Guinness World Records representative handed Dr. Tshering the certificate on Tuesday evening acknowledging the feat at Gelephu.

About 40,000 trained volunteers raised the 108 stupas, also called Jangchub Chortens, between 3 a.m. and 11.55 a.m. on November 1, marking the 18th coronation anniversary of King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.



Collective effort: Lotay Tshering, Governor of Gelephu Mindfulness City, holds a certificate acknowledging the feat. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Officials who oversaw the feat said the volunteers were divided into teams of 20-23 members, who worked simultaneously across designated sites to raise the stupas, each 14 metres tall and 108 metres apart along the banks of the Mau Chhu River.

The Bhutanese King's vision to build a country for the future, but rooted in tradition, drove Project 108 (stupas). He also envisaged the project as a foundation of GMC, a spirituality-based ethical global economic hub.

Each chorten cost an estimated $200,000, and individuals, families, communities and institutions worldwide have contributed to the project. One of these, Chorten No. 76, was dedicated to Prime Minister Narendra Modi as an "enduring symbol" of the King's "profound admiration" of India's "steadfast commitment for the realisation" of GMC.

"To raise 108 Stupas in a matter of hours is a remarkable accomplishment. But the true fruit of those blessings, those prayers, and that labour is seen in us, the Bhutanese people. In our values and virtues, in our loyalty, and in the joy we take in service," King Wangchuck said.

UN panel's report says genocide continues in Gaza

The Commission of Inquiry says Israeli violations include widespread or systematic attacks directed against the Palestinian civilian population, state policy, and the fact that the security forces knew the acts constituted part of an attack against the civilian population and so intended them; it emphasises harm inflicted on children is not incidental but forms part of a pattern of intentional violence

NEWS ANALYSIS

Rizmi Lia M.

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel has concluded that Israeli authorities and forces have continued to commit war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide in the occupied Palestinian territory even after the ceasefire agreement in Gaza.

In its report, submitted to the United Nations General Assembly on October 14, the Commission examines killings and serious bodily and mental harm inflicted by Israeli and Palestinian security forces since October 2023.

The commission sets out its findings regarding the drivers of Israeli and Palestinian state violence, in particular killings and bodily and mental harm, including sexual and gender-based violence. As part of a broader investigation into the root causes of recurrent tensions, instability, and protraction of the conflict, this report also reviews policies and practices examining drivers of violence.

As part of its mandate to look into underlying root causes, the Commission also asked for information relating to incidents from the periods 1948-1949, the 1950s, and the years 2000-2005.

The analysis was against the backdrop of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 from 1947, which terminated the British Mandate on Palestine and adopted the partition plan, dividing the territory into three parts: two states, one Arab and one Jewish, and Jerusalem under International Control.

Threat perception

The report noted that the perception of Palestinians and a possible Palestinian state as "a threat to Israel and the desire to reduce Palestinian population" contributed to a permissive military culture where Israeli soldiers, with or without directives from commanders, directly target Palestinians whether or not they pose a real or immediate threat.

According to the report, from October 7, 2023 to October 9, 2025, more than 72,600 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza and more than 1,000 in the West Bank. From October 10, 2025 to September 30, 2026, 1,431 Palestinians were killed in Gaza and 137 in the West Bank.

The commission has made findings in its previous reports on the actions of Israeli forces in Gaza amounting to genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, in addition to violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

It also found that the killing and harming of children and sexual- and gender-based violence are included among elements that established specific intent of the Israeli authorities to commit genocide against the Palestinian group in Gaza.

The Commission had previously reported on the Israeli forces' use of artificial intelligence tools and autonomous weapons systems in Gaza, expressing its concerns about these weapons' compliance with International law.

There are permissive rules, said the report, which are interpreted and implemented in a discriminatory manner, applying exclusively to Palestinians based on their nationality, race, and ethnicity. Israeli security personnel are prohibited from using lethal force against Jewish Israelis in the West Bank. Israeli forces have been responsible for approximately 95% of killings and 82% of injuries caused to Palestinians in the West Bank since October 2023.



A file photo shows Israeli soldiers conducting a foot patrol through the market, in the Old City of Nablus, in the northern Israeli-occupied West Bank on August 9 this year. AFP

Intentional killings

The Commission investigated multiple cases and cited illustrative cases throughout the report and concluded that Israeli soldiers intentionally killed all the victims though they did not pose any threat. They also noted that Israeli authorities have repeatedly provided false justifications for the use of lethal force, intending to deflect responsibility. They also documented cases indicating a pattern of extra judicial executions of Palestinians by Israeli forces and noted continuous sexual and reproductive violence.

The Commission found that the patterns of unguided munitions have continued after the so-called ceasefire in October 2025. They noted that this contradicts the report by the Board of Peace to the Security Council in May this year, which claimed that the ceasefire has largely held, bringing "enormous relief to the civilian population". Israeli officials allege that the attacks are in response to ceasefire breaches.

The report noted that on May 28, 2026, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that he had instructed Israeli forces to seize 70% of Gaza, indicating that territorial expansion will continue.

The Commission found violations of International law and analysed Chapeau elements which are the contextual requirements that must be proven to elevate ordinary crimes into crimes against humanity. These include widespread or systematic attacks directed against the civilian population, state policy, clear nexus between the acts committed and the attack, and the fact that the security forces knew the acts constituted part of an attack against the civilian population and so intended them (*mens rea*).

The Commission concluded that the Israeli authorities and security forces have committed the crime against humanity of extermination, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence, persecution against the civilian population, based principally on nationality, race, and ethnicity, intersecting with gender and age. The acts also amount to the war crimes of wilful killing and wilfully causing serious injury to body.

The Commission finds that Israel consistently, and unlawfully, applies the conduct of hostilities paradigm to law enforcement operations in the West Bank in violation of its obligation under international human rights law.

Israel's conduct violates its obligations to protect Palestinians under international human rights law, including: (i) right to life; (ii) right not to be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, including sexual violence; (iii) right to liberty and security; (iv) right not to be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy, family and home; (v) right to adequate standard of living, particularly housing; (vi) right to highest attainable standard of health; (vii) right to education; and (viii) right of children to engage in play and recreational activities. Israel further breached international human rights law by neglecting to prevent foreseeable harm to Palestinians, including women and children, to prosecute perpetrators and to provide remedies for victims.

Genocidal intent

The Commission has previously concluded that the Israeli authorities and forces have committed war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. The cases investigated for this report show that the Israeli authorities and forces continue to commit genocidal acts with the genocidal intent to destroy, in whole or in part, the Palestinians in Gaza. Furthermore, the Commission found that much of the killing and harm caused to Palestinians is a direct result of Israel's expansion of territorial control.

The intentional killing and harming of Palestinians have clear demographic and ethnic considerations that stem from Israel's colonising policies, the report found, that is seizing maximum land while minimising the Palestinian population in relation to size, autonomy, and viability.

The report emphasised that the recurrence and widespread nature of attacks causing grave physical injuries and psychological harm demonstrate that the harm inflicted on children is not incidental or collateral to the broader violence affecting civilian population, but forms part of a pattern of intentional violence directed against Palestinian children.

The Palestinian Authority was established to assume interim governing responsibilities in parts of the West Bank and Gaza pursuant to the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (Oslo Accord) in September 1993 and the Gaza-Jericho Agreement in May 1994.

The Commission has previously made findings on the targeting of human rights defenders and civil society activists by the Palestinian Authority to silence dissenting opinions. The Commission also concluded that the Palestinian Authority resorted to widespread sexual and gender-based violence to silence women human rights defenders and deter them from activism online or in public places through violence, threats and the reinforcement of negative gender stereotypes.

The Commission concluded that the State of Palestine has violated the right to life and the right to security of the person. The Commission also found that acts against children further violated their rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, namely the rights to life, survival and development and the right to be protected from all forms of physical violence, including violence committed by state actors.

Recommendations

The commission recommended that the State of Israel end the unlawful occupation of Palestinian Territory, end the commission of genocide, comply fully with international humanitarian and human rights law, cease the perpetration of sexual and gender-based violence and crimes against children, among others.

To the government of the state of Palestine, the Commission made recommendations including to conduct independent investigation into alleged violations of International human rights law and cease persecution and mistreatment of human rights defenders and journalists.

The Commission also called upon the member states to employ all means reasonably available to them and also investigate and prosecute suspects and to establish clear regulation and frameworks governing the use of artificial intelligence, including its use during armed conflicts and law enforcement operations. It has also the asked the prosecutor of International Criminal Court to examine and continue its investigation on the situation in the State of Palestine, the crimes committed in Gaza and the West Bank, including genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes for amendment to existing arrest warrants and addition to future application for arrest warrants.

20,000 troops being deployed to Jakarta after arrest of top generals

Associated Press
JAKARTA

Indonesia's military is deploying more than 20,000 troops and personnel to the capital, Jakarta, officials said on Wednesday, as authorities investigate an alleged illegal wiretapping operation targeting the President that has led to the detention of three senior police generals.

The scandal took on added significance after the presidential palace said the alleged wiretapping targeting President Prabowo Subianto could be regarded as conduct "leading toward treason". Sensitive information accessible through a head of state's communications could endanger the state and national leadership, it said.



Gen. Listyo Sigit Prabowo, the presidential chief of staff and former police chief, is among those implicated in the scandal. AFP

Among those implicated in the scandal is the presidential chief of staff, Gen. Listyo Sigit Prabowo.

There are allegations that Cabinet officials, politicians, journalists, civil society leaders, and business executives were also subjected to unauthorised surveillance.

Authorities have not confirmed that the deployment is connected to the wiretapping probe. The first phase began on Monday with 2,100 personnel from units already stationed in Jakarta. Troops from outside the capital were to start arriving on Wednesday, bringing the total number of personnel involved to 20,980, according to the navy operations assistant, Vice Adm. Yayan Sofiyan.

Sofiyan did not elaborate on the purpose of the deployment or respond to questions about whether there were concerns about security or political tensions in Jakarta.

Indonesian armed forces spokesperson Maj. Gen. Muhammad Nas said the troop movement was standard procedure for maintaining national security and territorial integrity.

Seeking a rollback



'Draconian' law: Activists demonstrate in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on Wednesday, demanding the rollback of proposed anti-terror legislation denounced by rights groups as draconian. The government of President Anura Kumara Dissanayake is planning to replace the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1979, but campaigners say the new law would hand sweeping powers to authorities and threaten civil liberties. AFP

Americans said no to war, say Iranian officials as U.S. voters deal blow to Trump

Reuters

Iran's government savoured the stinging rebuke delivered to Donald Trump in the U.S. midterm elections, declaring voters had rejected the war launched by the U.S. President even as Tehran remained on high alert for the possibility of renewed strikes.

"Conscience or the cost of living, Americans said NO TO WAR, and we endorse this message," Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Iran's chief negotiator, posted on X, adding that Washington should not ignore public opinion by attacking his country again.

Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei said in a written statement that U.S. hostility would persist regardless of which party was in power, warning against "even the slightest inclination towards submission" to the U.S.

'End of hegemnony'

"The U.S. sees the end of its hegemony as distant; we see it as near," he added.

Democrats captured majorities in both the Senate and House in Tuesday's election, with victories in Republican strongholds underscoring deep frustration with Mr. Trump's stewardship of the economy and his decision to launch a war that drove up gas prices.

In Iran, a news outlet run by the judiciary shared a joke circulating on X that "Trump failed at regime change in Iran but he succeeded in Texas", a reference to the southern state where a Democrat won a Senate race for the first time in decades.

But two senior Iranian sources told *Reuters* that while Iranian leaders welcomed the Democrats' victory, Tehran was concerned that Mr. Trump could seek to compensate for it with a military strike, and remained on high alert.



Iranians hold a portrait of Mojtaba Khamenei and a placard depicting Donald Trump at a rally in Tehran on Wednesday. AFP

Mediators have intensified efforts to end the war amid fears it could reignite after the election, with Mr. Trump on Tuesday declining to rule out a resumption of combat operations after the vote and Iran planning wider retaliation if war resumes.

Ahead of the vote, senior Iranian officials told *Reuters* that Tehran was deliberately prolonging talks with the U.S. to weaken Mr. Trump politically ahead of the election.

Major Iranian newspaper Hamshahri linked the events with a front-page image showing Mr. Trump blindfolded with his head bowed, and a headline declaring "Iran's shadow over US elections".

The Iran war has been unpopular among Americans since it began, and blaming the war for driving up costs was a focus of the Democrats' campaign.

'Cost of delusions'

Mr. Khamenei's message signalled that Tehran had no intention of showing flexibility on its demands for lasting control over the Strait of Hormuz or conditions to end the conflict.

"The consequences of (U.S.) miscalculations and arrogant delusions have manifested as a heavy burden of costs, borne by the American people and the puppet regimes subservient to the U.S. government," he said.

Mr. Trump has offered shifting goals and timelines for the war that is now in its ninth month. "I think a part of it was Iran, but at the same time people understood the importance of what I've done with Iran," Mr. Trump told Fox News, referring to the election result.

The conservative Iranian newspaper Jam-e Jam declared the election result "The twilight of Trumpism".

MASTER OF ALL CONDITIONS

Kohli the first to have 50-plus average across all SENA nations



X@BCCI

Virat Kohli became the first in history of ODI cricket to achieve a batting average of 50 or more across South Africa (993 runs, 76.38 avg.), England (1493, 51.48), New Zealand (670, 51.53) and Australia (1401, 50.03). Kohli took his ODI average in SENA nations above 50 with a quick-fire 74 against New Zealand in the first match.

ON THE DOT

It was about bowling consistent lines and lengths, says Kamboj



X@BCCI

I think the key was bowling consistent lines and lengths. The basic plan was to bowl the right length. The wobble seam was working well and I was just using that. I also get good bounce. It's about the length and focussing on that — Anshul Kamboj, who bowled 46 dot-balls in his spell of two for 22 in the first ODI.

IMPACTFUL

Kohli a pretty good guy to break the chase easily: Duffy



X@BCCI

Kiwi pacer Jacob Duffy said there "was no hole" in Virat Kohli's game. "Yeah, it was a bit annoying, wasn't it? Yeah, small targets like that, if you get a guy to come out with that kind of intent to knock it off, it can break the chase pretty easily. And he's a pretty good guy to do it."

A CROSSOVER

Gill, Rohit and Kohli receive jerseys from All Blacks legend Mealamu



X@BCCI

India captain Shubman Gill and batting stalwarts Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma met rugby legend Keven Mealamu before the start of the first ODI against New Zealand on Wednesday and were presented with personalised jerseys by the All Blacks great. Mealamu made 132 appearances for New Zealand's rugby team.

Young pacers prove too hot for Kiwis before Kohli takes over

Arshdeep, Gurnoor and Kamboj rise to the occasion, send the home team packing for 185; the chase-master celebrates his 38th birthday a day early with a superb knock as Gill's men make a perfect start to the five-match ODI series

INDIA IN NZ

Press Trust of India
AUCKLAND

A young pace unit headlined by Arshdeep Singh and Gurnoor Brar scarred New Zealand with disconcerting bounce before Virat Kohli decided to celebrate his 38th birthday a day in advance by striking a chiselled 74 as India coasted to a five-wicket win in the rain-curtailed first ODI here on Wednesday.

The 6'5" Gurnoor repaid skipper Shubman Gill's faith by intimidating the home batters with his speed and bounce in the company of Arshdeep Singh as the visitors dismissed the Black Caps for a below-par 185 in 40.2 overs.

India reached the revised target of 143 in 22.4 overs with Kohli's 51-ball knock, comprising 13 boundaries and a maximum, doing the job.

With India's first choice troika of Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj and Prasidh Krishna not available due to workload management and injury-related issues, it was the Punjab duo of Arshdeep (four for 70 in 10 overs) and Gurnoor (three for 44 in 9.2 overs), which took up the mantle of unsettling the Black Caps.

Anshul Kamboj (10-2-22-2) was also remarkably accurate during the middle-overs. He bowled an eye-popping 46 dot balls in his spell.



Demolition men: Arshdeep and Gurnoor blasted out the home batters to set the stage for a Kohli masterclass. CREIMAS/BCCI

Controlled aggression

In pursuit of the modest target, Kohli's controlled aggression made all the difference for India after the early dismissal of Rohit Sharma (0).

Despite multiple rain interruptions, Kohli's intensity was unwavering as he played his customary cover-drives, the whips through mid-wicket and the imperious pull shots.

The Indian maestro, who will turn 38 on Thursday, hit his 80th ODI half-century, added 113 for the second wicket with Gill (37), who played second fiddle to perfection.

However, the story of the day was India's four-pronged pace attack with a cumulative experience of 29 ODIs that made life difficult for the home team on a good batting surface.

Arshdeep got a couple of wickets inside the PowerPlay as New Zealand managed only 45 in the first 10 overs.

Gill introduced Gurnoor after the field restrictions were eased and the lanky Chandigarh bowler repeatedly befuddled the batters with his back-of-length deliveries. He snared two wickets, the highlight being the sharp reflex return catch to send back Test skipper Tom Latham.

At the halfway stage, New Zealand was 109 for five and the Indian bowlers didn't allow the opposition any leeway. Blair Tickner, batting at No. 11, hit 34 which included three sixes in Arshdeep's last over, to get the home team past 180.

SCOREBOARD

NEW ZEALAND

Will Young c Shreyas b Arshdeep 9 *(11b, 2x4)*, Tim Seifert c sub (Ruturaj) b Gurnoor 38 *(43b, 3x4, 2x6)*, Henry Nicholls c Dhir b Arshdeep 9 *(11b, 2x4)*, Daryl Mitchell run out 28 *(41b, 3x4, 1x6)*, Tom Latham c & b Gurnoor 3 *(11b)*, Glenn Phillips c Shreyas b Arshdeep 30 *(51b, 2x4, 1x6)*, Mitchell Santner b Kamboj 4 *(16b)*, Nathan Smith c Kohli b Kamboj 1 *(9b)*, Kyle Jamieson c Kohli b Arshdeep 1 *(6b)*, Jacob Duffy (not out) 15 *(21b, 3x4)*, Blair Tickner c Rahul b Gurnoor 34 *(23b, 1x4, 4x6)*; Extras (lb-4, nb-1, w-8): 13; Total (in 40.2 overs): 185.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-22 (Young, 4.3 overs), 2-40 (Nicholls, 8.3), 3-73 (Seifert, 14.2), 4-84 (Latham, 16.6), 5-97 (Mitchell, 21.1), 6-113 (Santner, 26.1), 7-115 (Smith, 28.3), 8-131 (Jamieson, 31.1), 9-146 (Phillips, 35.1).

INDIA BOWLING

Arshdeep 10-0-70-4, Nabi 6-0-33-0, Kamboj 10-2-22-2, Gurnoor 9.2-0-44-3, Axar 5-0-12-0.

INDIA

Rohit Sharma c Santner b Jamieson 0 *(6b)*, Shubman Gill c Latham b Smith 37 *(56b, 5x4)*, Virat Kohli c Seifert b Duffy 74 *(51b, 13x4, 1x6)*, Shreyas Iyer c Nicholls b Duffy 15 *(13b, 1x4, 1x6)*, Axar Patel c Phillips b Duffy 0 *(2b)*, K.L. Rahul (not out) 3 *(5b)*, Naman Dhir (not out) 5 *(3b, 1x4)*; Extras (lb-1, w-8): 9; Total (for five wkts. in 22.4 overs): 143.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-1 (Rohit, 0.6), 2-114 (Gill, 18.2), 3-124 (Kohli, 19.4), 4-124 (Axar, 19.6), 5-136 (Shreyas, 21.4).

NEW ZEALAND BOWLING

Jamieson 7-0-34-1, Duffy 7-0-49-3, Tickner 4-0-38-0, Smith 4.4-0-21-1.

Toss: India; **PoM:** Kamboj.
India won by five wickets with 56 balls remaining (DLS Method) to lead the five-match series 1-0.
Second ODI: November 7, Wellington, 7.30 a.m. IST.

Kamboj tailor-made for these conditions: skipper Gill

Press Trust of India
AUCKLAND

India captain Shubman Gill was delighted to see Anshul Kamboj's excellent effort in the first ODI against New Zealand here on Wednesday, saying the pacer is "tailor-made" for the Antipodean conditions.

"Anshul is the kind of a bowler. I think he's tailor-made for these conditions, always nippy, trying to seam the ball, and good with the old ball," Gill told the broadcaster during the post-match presentation.

"We felt when there's not much happening from the wicket, he can create that extra bounce and with his pace and the way both of them bowled tonight was really magnificent to watch," he said.

"We were very good with the bowling and our fielding was also really good. That run out by Rohit bhai, I think changed the momentum of the game," Gill said.

"It was really that partnership as even in India also those two batted really well. Overall, a very good team performance for us".



Kamboj. CREIMAS/BCCI

WPL 2027 schedule



The Women's Premier League (WPL) 2027 runs from January 14 to February 7. While the opening 11 matches will be played in Vadodara, the remaining league fixtures and playoffs will be held at the Cricket Club of India in Mumbai.
The top-ranked team will advance to the final while the second- and third-placed teams will contest the Eliminator.

Jan. 14	Royal Challengers	Mumbai Indians	Vadodara	7.30 p.m.
Jan. 15	Gujarat Giants	UP Warriorz	Vadodara	7.30 p.m.
Jan. 16	Delhi Capitals	Royal Challengers	Vadodara	7.30 p.m.
Jan. 17	UP Warriorz	Mumbai Indians	Vadodara	7.30 p.m.
Jan. 18	Gujarat Giants	Delhi Capitals	Vadodara	7.30 p.m.
Jan. 19	Royal Challengers	UP Warriorz	Vadodara	7.30 p.m.
Jan. 20	Gujarat Giants	Mumbai Indians	Vadodara	7.30 p.m.
Jan. 21	UP Warriorz	Delhi Capitals	Vadodara	7.30 p.m.
Jan. 22	Gujarat Giants	Royal Challengers	Vadodara	7.30 p.m.
Jan. 23	Delhi Capitals	Mumbai Indians	Vadodara	7.30 p.m.
Jan. 24	UP Warriorz	Gujarat Giants	Vadodara	7.30 p.m.
Jan. 26	Mumbai Indians	Royal Challengers	Mumbai	7.30 p.m.
Jan. 27	Delhi Capitals	Gujarat Giants	Mumbai	7.30 p.m.
Jan. 28	Mumbai Indians	UP Warriorz	Mumbai	7.30 p.m.
Jan. 29	Royal Challengers	Delhi Capitals	Mumbai	7.30 p.m.
Jan. 30	Mumbai Indians	Gujarat Giants	Mumbai	7.30 p.m.
Jan. 31	UP Warriorz	Royal Challengers	Mumbai	7.30 p.m.
Feb. 1	Mumbai Indians	Delhi Capitals	Mumbai	7.30 p.m.
Feb. 2	Royal Challengers	Gujarat Giants	Mumbai	7.30 p.m.
Feb. 3	Delhi Capitals	UP Warriorz	Mumbai	7.30 p.m.
KNOCKOUTS				
Feb. 5	—	Eliminator	Mumbai	7.30 p.m.
Feb. 7	—	Final	Mumbai	7.30 p.m.

Sindhu credits her team for resurgence

BADMINTON

Anirudh Velamuri

P.V. Sindhu is no longer chasing her old self. She is rebuilding her, one title at a time.

Victory at the Hylo Open, Sindhu's second title in four months, has pushed her back to World No. 6 and into the top 10 for the first time since 2023.

It also ended a long wait for silverware. Before the Japan Open in July, she last won at the 2024 Syed Modi International.

"I've had a new team this year, and we've been working on every aspect. I'm very grateful to them because there are days where you're absolutely not at your best and you're sad, but I think as a team they pump you up every single time, get things together and make things work," the 31-year-old said in a media interaction facilitated by the Badminton Association of India.

Sindhu, who has secured a place in the season-ending BWF World Tour Finals, insisted that age is no barrier to competing at the highest level, as long as rest and recovery are prioritised.

"You're not 20 anymore, and you can't keep playing tournaments back-to-back. It's about giving 100% when you play but also knowing when your body is not feeling up to it, stepping back to recover and coming back stronger."

Regaining the dominance she once enjoyed is, for Sindhu, not a far-fetched dream. She reserved special praise for her husband, Venkata Datta Sai, who regularly features in her corner, for his support through it all.

"Datta also travels for some of the tournaments, understands sports, and what you're going through in those moments where you're really at your lowest. At the Australia Open this year, he sat in as coach and it was nice to have his perspective watching me from the outside."



Frank talk: Sindhu feels age is not a barrier to compete at the elite level. BWF/BADMINTON PHOTO

Rampant India storms into the final, meets Japan



Opening salvo: Lakra began India's goal-rush with a fourth-minute strike. R.V. MOORTHY

ACT

Uthra Ganesan
MOHALI

India marched towards its sixth Asian Champions Trophy title in seven finals with a 8-1 thumping of Korea in the semifinal at the Olympian Balbir Singh International Stadium here on Wednesday.

Up next would be Japan on Thursday in the first-ever final between the two sides in the competition after the latter upset Malaysia for the second time running, via the shoot-out.

The scoreline was different but the domination that the host displayed in its final league match two days ago in Jalandhar against the same opponent was not.

India began with a bang and kept the foot on the pedal all through, barring a small period in the third quarter that was not as productive in terms of goals as the others. The Koreans, in a transition phase with mostly youngsters and just five members from the side that played the recent Asian Games, tried their best to match the Indians but it was soon evident that the gap was too huge to break a seven-year losing streak.

A fourth-minute goal lifted into the net by Shilanand Lakra set the ball rolling and then the goals kept coming at regular intervals. Han Sangjun levelled five minutes later that was the only time Korea surprised India with a sudden burst of pace and acceleration. By the end of first quarter, India was up 3-1 that became 6-1 at half time.

The pace dropped a notch after break but there was never any danger of Korea bouncing back, India was always in control. A couple of close chances towards the end of the third quarter were parried by desperate defending from Korea, goalkeeper Kim Jaehyeon pulling off-some impressive saves to minimise the damage.

Earlier, Japan entered its third ACT final and the first since 2021 with a second consecutive win against higher-ranked Malaysia, this time in a shoot-out after being goalless in regulation time. With an airtight defence and stand-out performance from goalkeeper Takumi Kitagawa, Japan frustrated the Malaysian forwards despite repeated attempts and five penalty corners. Japan's lone PC in the 57th minute saw them come agonisingly close to breaking the deadlock, captain Raiki Fujishima's shot rebounding off the post.

The results:

Semifinals: Japan 0 drew with Malaysia 0; Japan won the shootout 5-3; India 8 (Shilanand Lakra 4, 13 pc, Harmanpreet Singh 10, Sukhjeet Singh 21, Dilpreet Singh 21, 25, Angad Bir Singh 36, Vivek Sagar Prasad 54) bt Korea 1 (Han Sangjun 8).

5th-6th place: China 3 (Yulai Zhao 10, Yaqi Wang 18, Chen Chongcong 22-ps) bt Bangladesh 1 (Md. Shohanur Rahman 48 pc).

INBRIEF



Chanu clinches bronze medal in wushu in Youth Olympics

Rajkumari Lanchenbi Chanu on Tuesday became the first Indian to win a wushu medal in Youth Olympic Games, clinching a bronze in the women's Changquan combined event, in Dakar on Tuesday. Chanu scored 18.039 points to finish third behind Egypt's Sondos Sonbol (18.660) and Valeria Frannerys Dudamel (18.199) of Venezuela. The Indian finished second in Changquan with 9.316 points, while she was third in Gunshu with 8.723 points.



Divyanshi-Abhinandh duo the No. 1 in u-19 mixed doubles

The Indian pair of P.B. Abhinandh and Divyanshi Bhowmick became World No. 1 in the youth (under-19) mixed doubles category, according to the latest rankings. The pair's rise was largely driven by its gold-medal-winning performance in the WTT Youth Star Contender in Doha in January, followed by a bronze-medal finish in the Asian youth championships in Bangkok in June-July.

Anmol and Tanvi advance, Prannoy, Dhruv-Maneesha out

India's Anmol Kharb and Tanvi Sharma advances to the women's singles second round of the Korea Open Super 500 badminton tournament in Yeosu, South Korea, on Wednesday. However, H.S. Prannoy in men's singles and the mixed doubles team of Dhruv and Maneesha lost.

The results: Men: Yoo Tae-bin bt H.S. Prannoy 23-21, 21-15. **Women:** Anmol Kharb bt Rachel Chan 21-19, 21-18; Tanvi Sharma bt Manami Suizu 21-16, 12-21, 21-17. **Mixed Doubles:** Zhu Yi Jun & Li Qian bt Dhruv Rawat & Maneesha K. 20-22, 21-12, 24-22.

AITA pencils in 21 international junior tournaments in 2027

The All India Tennis Association, on Wednesday, announced a programme of 21 international junior tennis tournaments in India in 2027. Events are set to run from January to November, and will be held across multiple cities. The calendar comprises one J300 tournament, two J200s, three J100s, five J60s, nine J30s, and one JB1 event, which corresponds to the former ITF Grade 1 classification.



Indian artist Sehgal designs special Bayern Munich shirt

On the occasion of Deepavali, FC Bayern Munich has collaborated with Indian artist Abhay Sehgal for a special edition of the third kit. Sehgal's design, made using traditional Indian craft techniques, focuses on the dreams of young footballers. Harry Kane and his teammates displayed the jersey while wishing their fans for the festival.

Haas F1 Team sacks French driver Ocon

French driver Esteban Ocon was sacked by American Formula One team Haas, it was announced on Tuesday. Ocon, a veteran of 198 GPs in a 10-year career with six different teams, had been replaced by Japan's Ryo Hirakawa for the Mexico Grand Prix over the weekend after Ocon took part in the practice sessions on Friday. "Such decisions are never made lightly," Haas team chief Ayao Komatsu said on *X* of parting ways with Ocon. "As was the case in Mexico City – but then, as now, we feel this is firmly in the best interest of the team moving forward."

Sonu and Ajith Ram push Tamil Nadu closer to victory against Chandigarh

Their four-wicket hauls help the visitors bundle out the hosts for 94 in the first innings and reduce them to 189 for seven in the second

RANJI TROPHY

Tarun Shastry
CHANDIGARH

Just before taking the field on Wednesday, the entire Tamil Nadu unit, including the support staff, gathered in a huddle. Head coach Yo Mahesh yelled: "What do we have?" The players roared: "Freedom!"

"How do we do it?" came the next question. "Together!" the group roared.

Those two words – freedom and togetherness – dictated the third day's play as TN tightened its grip on its Ranji Trophy Elite Group D fourth-round clash against Chandigarh at the Sector-16 Ground here.

The visitor needed just 17.3 overs in the morning session to dismiss the host for 94 in its first innings.

Following on, Chandigarh reached 189 for seven at stumps, still trailing by 288 runs and staring at an innings defeat.



Job well done! Sonu, second from right, is cheered on by teammates after a strike in the first essay. R.V. MOORTHY



Opening the floodgates: Arjun Azad was in full flow before being stumped by Jagadeesan off Ajith Ram. R.V. MOORTHY

The host began its second essay with greater composure. Openers Nehal Pajni and Arjun Azad (60, 90b, 8x4, 1x6) rotated the strike and took the score past 50 before skipper R. Sai Kishore broke the 73-run stand, thanks to a stunning effort at forward short-leg by G. Ajitesh just before lunch.

With the surface easing out in the afternoon, Manan Vohra (59, 72b, 11x4) and Arjun looked assured, adding 82 for the second wicket. However, a moment of madness changed the course of the innings. Arjun danced down the track to left-arm spinner S. Ajith Ram, only to be stumped, opening the gates for the visitor.

The wickets then came in a hurry. Saravana Kumar trapped Manan in front, while Ajith removed Akshit Rana and Bhagmender Lather. Sai Kishore dismissed Chiragvir Dhindsa before Ajith ended Arjit Pannu's stubborn 57-ball, nine-run resistance.

Earlier, with the festivities just around the corner, the procession began in the second over of the morning, with medium-pacer Sonu Yadav leading the way.

He flattened overnight batter Arjit's stumps with a full-length delivery before sending Bhagmender's timber cartwheeling.

Chiragvir then departed following a needless run-out, before Sonu disturbed Nikhil Sharma's furniture as Chandigarh slipped to 76 for seven.

Saravana Kumar dismissed Akshit Rana and sent Jagjit Singh's stumps for a morning walk. Fittingly, Sonu returned to end the host's misery, dismissing Nishunk Birla.

The scores: Tamil Nadu – 1st innings: 571 for seven decl.

Chandigarh – 1st innings: Nehal Pajni b Gurjapneet 8, Arjun Azad lbw b Sai Kishore 21, Manan Vohra b Sai Kishore 15, Arjit Pannu b Sonu 3, Akshit Rana c Jagadeesan b Saravana Kumar 12, Bhagmender Lather b Sonu 1, Chiragvir Dhindsa run out 14, Nikhil Sharma b Sonu 0, Nishunk Birla c Vimal b Sonu 14, Jagjit Sandhu b Saravana Kumar 0, Rohit Dhanda (not out) 0; Extras (b-4, lb-2): 6; Total (in 37.3 overs): 94.

Fall of wickets: 1-28, 2-34, 3-48, 4-49, 5-51, 6-76, 7-76, 8-88, 9-90.

Tamil Nadu bowling: Gurjapneet 11-3-31-1, Saravana Kumar 8-1-21-2, Sai Kishore 7-3-14-2, Ajith Ram 3-1-4-0, Sonu 8.3-4-18-4.

Chandigarh – 2nd innings: Nehal Pajni c Ajitesh b Sai Kishore 26, Arjun Azad st. Jagadeesan b Ajith Ram 60, Manan Vohra lbw b Saravana Kumar 59, Arjit Pannu c & b Ajith 9, Akshit Rana lbw b Ajith 13, Bhagmender Lather c Indrajith b Ajith 0, Chiragvir Dhindsa c Ajitesh b Sai Kishore 1, Nikhil Sharma (batting) 13, Rohit Dhanda (batting) 1; Extras (b-2, lb-3, w-1, nb-1): 7; Total (for seven wkts. in 57 overs): 189.

Fall of wickets: 1-73, 2-122, 3-155, 4-174, 5-174, 6-175, 7-185.

Tamil Nadu bowling: Gurjapneet 10-1-44-0, Saravana Kumar 11-2-34-1, Sai Kishore 11-1-41-2, Sonu 8-3-28-0, Ajith Ram 16-5-32-4, Pradosh 1-0-5-0.

RANJI TROPHY SCORES — ROUND FOUR, DAY THREE

Elite: Group A: At Kanpur: Baroda 355 vs. Uttar Pradesh 455/8 in 133 overs (Adarsh Singh 162, Madhav Kaushik 137, Aryan Juyal 67, Mahesh Pithiya 5/112). **At Panaji:** Goa 397 bt Bihar 107 & 113 in 45.3 overs (Ayush Loharuka 47, Lalit Yadav 5/23); **Points: Goa 7(7), Bihar 0(0).** **At Nagpur:** Madhya Pradesh 209 & 105 in 33.3 overs (Parth Rekhade 5/14, Harsh Dubey 5/37) lost to Vidarbha 334; **Vidarbha 7(26), MP 0(13).** **At Srinagar**: Pondicherry 385 vs. Jammu & Kashmir 491/5 in 130 overs (Qamran Iqbal 160, Shubham Khajuria 190, Kawalpreet Singh 53 batting). **Group B: At Guwahati:** Assam 135 & 128 in 40.2 overs (Denish Das 50, Shreyas Gopal 4/39) lost to Karnataka 577/6 decl. in 133.2 overs (Rohan Patil 89, Mayank Agarwal 72, K.V. Aneesh 145, Aneeshwar Gautam 83, Manvanth Kumar 100 n.o.); **Karnataka 7(16), Assam 0(7).** **At Agartala:** Tripura 268 & 191 in 64.4 overs (Sridam Paul 50, Sentu Sarkar 46) vs. Saurashtra 118 & 131/7 in 41 overs (Sandip Sarkar 4/55). **At Hyderabad:** Chhattisgarh 284 & 254 in 68.4 overs (Mayank Verma 81, Sanjeet Desai 51) vs. Hyderabad 280 in 86.1 overs (Rahul Radesh 72, K. Himateja 46, Dharmendrasinh Jadeja 5/84) & 13/2 in 4.5 overs. **At New Chandigarh:** Punjab 592/9 decl. vs. Andhra Pradesh 240/2 in 87 overs (C.R. Gnaneshwar 49, Shaik Rasheed 110 batting, Karan Shinde 73 batting). **Group C: At Bhubaneswar:** Jharkhand 433/8 decl. in 142.1 overs (Aditya Singh 104 n.o., Anukul Roy 89, Robin Minz 100 n.o., Shubh Sharma 58) vs. Odisha 23/0 in five overs. **At Kolkata:** Bengal 143 & 76/4 in 24 overs vs. Maharashtra 218 in 82.5 overs (Tanay Sanghvi 60 n.o., Mohammed Shami 4/37). **At Ahmedabad:** Gujarat 534/9 decl. vs. Kerala 279 in 88.2 overs (Sachin Baby 42, Vishnu Vinod 66, Mohammed Azharuddeen 57, Aditya Sarwate 58, Arzan Nagwaswalla 4/59) & 41/1 in 16 overs. **At New Delhi:** Services 266 & 280/5 in 66 overs (Ravi Chauhan 56, Mohit Ahlawat 142, Rajat Paliwal 62 batting) vs. Delhi 344 in 105.4 overs (Priyansh Arya 58, Ayush Doseja 78, Sumit Mathur 99, Jayant Goyat 5/65). **Group D: At Dehradun:** Haryana 153 & 159 in 55.5 overs (Jagadeesha Suchith 4/50) lost to Uttarakhand 305 in 125.4 overs (Aarav Mahajan 51, Dega Nischal 153, Kunal Chandela 56, Nishant Sindhu 5/89, Kanishk Chouhan 4/58) & 9/0 in 1.2 overs; **Uttarakhand 7(11), Haryana 0(13).** **At Mumbai:** Mumbai 396 & 174/4 in 36 overs (Divyaansh Saxena 68 batting, Angkrish Raghuvanshi 79) vs. Railways 259 in 79.5 overs (Ravi Singh 43, Tanush Kotian 7/45). **At Chandigarh:** Tamil Nadu 571/7 decl. vs. Chandigarh 94 in 37.3 overs (Sonu Yadav 4/18) & 189/7 in 57 overs (Arjun Azad 60, Manan Vohra 59, Ajith Ram 4/32). **At Dharamshala:** Rajasthan 78 & 521/8 decl. in 131.1 overs (Rohan Rajbar 140, Mahipal Lomror 97, Kartik Sharma 63, Vishal Harsh 50, Kunal Singh Rathore 86) vs. Himachal Pradesh 153 & 83/4 in 29 overs. **Plate: At Anand:** Arunachal Pradesh 285 & 86/1 in 32 overs (Techi Doria 40 batting, Techi Neri 42 batting) vs. Mizoram 571/9 decl. in 157 overs (Lalhruaizela 69, Chinmay Sutar 175, Manender Singh 73, Jehu Anderson 50, Joseph Lalthankhuma 86, Khiangte Vanrotlinga 53 n.o.). **At Ahmedabad:** Sikkim 432 & 81/0 in 25 overs (Amit Rajera 41 batting) vs. Manipur 289 in 108.2 overs (Pheiroijam Jotin 137, Satyajeet Bachhav 6/50). **At Shillong:** Nagaland 254 & 184 in 78.5 overs (Rongsen Jonathan 48) vs. Meghalaya 144.



Run feast: Shubham (190) and Qamran (160) put the Pondicherry attack to the sword. IMRAN NISSAR

Gauff, Pegula in Rybakina's group in WTA Finals

Associated Press
INDIAN WELLS

Top-ranked Elena Rybakina and World No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka head their respective singles groups for the WTA Finals, with Americans Coco Gauff and Jessica Pegula landing in the same group.

The draw on Tuesday divided the eight qualifying singles and doubles teams into round-robin groups for the season-ending championships, which begin on Sunday and run through November 15 at Indian Wells Tennis Garden.

Each player and team will face the other three in their group over the first six days, with the top two advancing to semifinals.

Besides defending WTA Finals champion Rybakina, fourth-seeded Gauff, fifth-seeded Pegula and No. 8 seed Linda Noskova are in Group-1.

After Sabalenka, the others in Group 2 are No. 3 seed Mirra Andreeva, No. 6 Elina Svitolina and No. 7 Karolina Muchova.

Last year, Rybakina defeated Sabalenka in the final to win the title.

French Open champion Andreeva, Muchova and Wimbledon champion Noskova are making their Finals debuts.

Athlete Parvej's sanction reduced on technical grounds

ATHLETICS

Y.B. Sarangi
KOLKATA

In a rare case, the National Anti-Doping Appeal Panel (NADAP) has reduced athlete Parvej Khan's suspension to five years on technical grounds.

Parvej had been suspended for six years for two anti-doping violations by a NADA disciplinary panel on August 6, 2025.

Since Parvej was notified about his three whereabouts failures committed in 2023 on November 24, 2024, and about his adverse analytical finding (AAF) for EPO on August 28, 2024, NADAP said, as per the Article 10.9.3.1 of anti-doping rules, these two "shall be considered together as one single first Anti-Doping Rule Violation."

The NADAP said Parvej would carry out the more severe sanction (four years) for the AAF besides an additional one-year sanction on the basis of Aggravating Circumstances. Since Parvej was provisionally suspended, his suspension would be carried out from August 28, 2024.

While welcoming the reduction in sanction, Parvej's counsel Saurabh Mishra said since the athlete admitted his EPO violation, he was entitled to another one-year reduction in sanction.

Mishra was concerned about the one-year suspension imposed on Parvej on the ground of Aggravating Circumstances.

"These circumstances were neither mentioned in the Notice of Charge nor pleaded by NADA during the proceedings. The athlete was never put on notice that such an enhancement was being sought, nor was he given an opportunity to defend himself against it. This raises a fundamental question of procedural fairness," said Mishra, adding the NADAP order would be challenged at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

Indian shooters miss medal targets

Press Trust of India
DOHA

Indian shooters endured another disappointing day at the ISSF World Championships here on Wednesday, failing to compete for medals in both the 10m air rifle mixed team and 25m rapid fire pistol events.

The 10m air rifle mixed team pair of Sonam Uttam Maskar and Himanshu Dhillon failed to qualify for the four-team final, finishing seventh with an aggregate of 632.4. Sonam shot 316.6, while Himanshu returned 315.8.

The other Indian pair, Shambhavi Kshirsagar and Parth Mane, was disqualified after the former fell foul of the ISSF rules pertaining to apparel and equipment.

It was Shambhavi's second disqualification in a major competition in five months for a similar violation. She had also been disqualified at the ISSF Junior World Championships in Suhl in June.

India's medal hopes also fizzled out in the 25m rapid fire pistol event, with none of the three shooters managing to make the eight-shooter final.

On Tuesday, the Indian troika of Ravinder Singh, Saurabh Chaudhary and Amanpreet Singh clinched the team gold in men's 50m pistol competition.

Ravinder also won the silver in individual competition of the event that is not on the Olympic roster.

Sports journalist Bhasi Malaparamba no more

Sports Bureau
KOZHIKODE

Bhasi Malaparamba, sports journalist and novelist, passed away, aged 85.

Though he was an engineer by profession, and he worked in the PWD, he was better known for his coverage of several football World Cups as a freelance journalist.

He reported eight World Cups, between 1982 and 2010, as well as the European championship in 2008.

He also published several novels in Malayalam.

He was a competitive footballer who represented Kozhikode district.

Bhasi's was a friendly presence in the sporting and cultural spheres of Kozhikode.

Until he fell ill, he would attend most of the football matches held in the city, even when he was not on a reporting assignment.

Bhasi's contribution to Malayalam sports journalism as a knowledgeable football writer was significant, especially in the pre-Internet era.



Bhasi Malaparamba. K. RAGESH

He reported eight World Cups, between 1982 and 2010, as well as the European championship in 2008

LIVE TELECAST

Bangladesh vs West Indies: Second Test, Day 1, FanCode, 9.30 a.m.
Ranji Trophy: JioHotstar, 9.30 a.m.
Men's Under-19 Asia Cup: Sony Sports Ten 1, 5 & LIV, 10.30 a.m.
Afghanistan vs Zimbabwe: First Test, Day 1, FanCode, 11.30 a.m.
SAFF Championships: India vs Pakistan, VETO App, 3 p.m. & 7.30 p.m.
ISL: Sony Sports Ten 2 & LIV, 5 & 7.30 p.m.
Europa League: Sony Sports Ten 1, 2, 3 & LIV, 11.15 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Friday)

A new face for a new era

Mercedes team boss punted on Kimi Antonelli and backed him through a bruising rookie year, a barrage of doubts and a few departing sponsors. But he never once wavered in his belief. The youngest champion in F1 history has repaid that faith, and silenced the critics along the way



GETTY IMAGES

Anirudh Velamuri

Some nights, a whole country stops and looks at glowing screens, big and small. When people speak of the moon landing, they remember where they were. After this weekend, Italy will remember where it was too. A nation that lives and breathes motorsport sat glued to the television as Kimi Antonelli became the youngest champion in Formula One history.

He is not the first Italian to wear the crown, but he is the first to win it in front of a nation watching together. Alberto Ascari, the last Italian champion, was crowned on August 23, 1953, a few months before the country's first nationwide television broadcast on January 3, 1954.

The wait took 73 years. The moment, when it came, belonged to everyone.

At the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez in Mexico City, Antonelli needed only two points. He took a podium instead. He finished third, behind Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton, and crossed the line in tears. At 20 years and 68 days, he beat Sebastian Vettel's record, set at 23 years and 134 days, by more than three years.

Vettel was among the first to send congratulations.

"*Campione del mondo*. Wow! Only very few of us have managed to achieve that, and nobody has done it as young as you. You are curious. You listen. You learn fast. You are fearless. Your driving has been very clean and controlled, yet on the limit when it needed to be. You understood that you can only control what you can control. You have a unique drive, and we enjoy watching you. Lastly, a piece of advice: great achievements might change the way people look at you, but you don't have to change the way you look at people," he said.

Hamilton, the man whose seat he inherited, was among the first to embrace him. In truth, few saw it coming. In March, the hype belonged to his experienced Mercedes teammate George Russell, who was finally handed the strongest car on the grid. Antonelli was expected to merely grow after a tricky debut year in 2025.

That year left scars. He struggled with the ground-effect cars, and a run of poor results gave critics the ammunition to ask whether he had been promoted too soon. The questions followed him into 2026, when he crashed in final practice at the season opener in Australia. A fifth place in the China sprint, including a penalty for hitting Isack Hadjar, turned up the volume.

Then, just as the knives were being sharpened, he levelled up. In China he became the youngest pole-sitter in the sport's history and took his maiden win, five seconds clear of Russell. Toto Wolff came on the radio at once, to congratulate his driver and to answer the doubters. "He's too young. We shouldn't put him in a Mercedes. Put him in a smaller team. He needs the experience. Look at the mistakes he makes. Here we go Kimi. Victory!" Wolff calmly declared.

Doubt to dominance

Two weeks later in Japan, Antonelli dropped to sixth, then surged to the top step of the podium, and the championship lead he took there was never relinquished. Miami and Canada followed. Monaco sealed the story: pole, a near-flawless drive, and two restarts that erased a 30-second lead without shaking him. It was his fifth win on the trot, and it all but silenced the critics.

The road was not smooth. In Barcelona, an electrical shutdown stopped his Mercedes and handed Hamilton his first win for Ferrari. At Silverstone, a wheel shield failure turned a fight for victory into nothing. He answered with a win in Belgium and podiums in Hungary and the Netherlands.

Then came Monza, and even the staunchest of atheists might have found a little faith in the idea of a well-set plan. A year earlier, on the same soil, Wolff had been urging his driver to buckle up.

"Monza was the point where I for the first time said to him, listen, you've got to wake up here," he admitted.

This time, Antonelli started 19th after an engine penalty and carved his way to the front for a come-from-behind win for the ages. Only one driver has won from further back: John Watson, from P22 at the 1983 United States West Grand Prix. That drive is folklore, and now so is Antonelli's. It left Wolff reaching for a comparison beyond the human.

"It is still a surprise and amazing to see how quickly he develops. For me, it's like an AI agent that continuously self-improves and learns, that's the speed. And there also his age is, for sure, beneficial. The ability cognitively, intellectually to constantly become better," Wolff remarked. Even this run had a blemish. In Baku, he crashed in qualifying while Russell took pole, his first genuinely consequential mistake since Australia. On race day, he chose damage limitation over heroics, finished fifth, and kept owning the error.

Then he won in Austin, and the title became a matter of when. Russell needed a top-eight finish there just to stay notionally alive, got eighth after a five-second penalty, and admitted his pace was poor.

All that remained was Mexico where he triumphantly took the podium with Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton. The image that capped it all was Antonelli hoisted onto the shoulders of his veteran colleagues, a Hollywood-esque ending few could have scripted better.

Once the confetti settled in Mexico City, Wolff described the choppy waters Mercedes had navigated when the call was made to promote Antonelli.

"It's incredible, we have to pinch ourselves because it seems like yesterday he was 11 years old in the garage in junior karting. And it goes so fast. He wins the junior formula, then a difficult year in F2 and that's already where people started to doubt. Then when Lewis told me 'I'm going to Ferrari', it was my immediate reaction that we've got to put him in the car. But people were doubters," he told *Sky Sports*.



"I was thinking before, we had two sponsors leaving us because of that, because who is this kid? There were others who stayed with us until today, some are here that reap the full reward and then the difficult year. People said he shouldn't even be in F1, he should be at a smaller team, 10 races and no points, the tears in Spa, and then this. I'm just so proud of the team, all of them continued to trust him and he delivered."

Among the tifosi there is also a parallel universe in which Antonelli's celebrations are in scarlet red. At 11, the popular story goes, he was recommended to Ferrari by Massimo Rivola, then director of its driving academy, but was overruled by the then-team principal Maurizio Arrivabene, who felt he was 'too small' to be a serious prospect. It is one of the sport's more intriguing "what ifs."

With Ferrari struggling and Antonelli soaring, Italy said out loud what many wondered in their heads. *Gazzetta dello Sport,* celebrating the title, put its verdict on the front page: "Kimi Antonelli is the Formula 1 world champion. Thanks to his talent, his car, and not having raced for Ferrari."

The reaction back home was immediate. Jannik Sinner told him he had made the whole country happy, and celebrities from Valentino Rossi and Alessandro Del Piero to Marco Belinelli sent their warmest regards.

Singer-songwriter and poet Vasco Rossi called Antonelli 'a flash of light in this dark moment'. "It excites me to see him so strong on the track and so tender outside, able to get to the top without losing his simplicity. It reminds us that you can win with talent, work and a smile," Il Blasco said.

The Senna thread

Antonelli, who looks up to Ayrton Senna, is the first since the Brazilian to clinch the title while driving a car number 12.

Senna reached him through old season-review DVDs and documentaries. He never saw the Brazilian race, but what stayed with him was the person as much as the driver. He took Senna's number as his own and, in São Paulo last year, climbed to the grave at Morumbi Cemetery, twice in one day, to sit in the quiet with a book about his hero. After the race, he gave the Senna family the helmet he had worn at Interlagos.

Yet he has never claimed the throne. When Monaco brought a pole lap that echoed Senna's 1988 masterpiece, and Martin Brundle heard the Brazilian in it, Antonelli answered with humility: he was still very far from that level.

F1 chief executive Stefano Domenicali has said the title is "only the beginning of an extraordinary legacy."

Antonelli himself has said he believes more titles can follow. Wolff, for his part, sees him as the flag-bearer of a new generation, better equipped for success than those before it.

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Now the story turns full circle. This weekend, Antonelli heads to Senna's home soil for his first race as world champion, in a helmet honouring Senna's 1991 victory there, won 35 years ago with the car stuck in sixth gear.

THE GIST

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- Among the tifosi there is also a parallel universe in which Antonelli's celebrations are in scarlet red. At 11, the popular story goes, he was recommended to Ferrari by Massimo Rivola, then director of its driving academy, but was overruled by the then-team principal Maurizio Arrivabene, who felt he was 'too small' to be a serious prospect. It is one of the sport's more intriguing "what ifs"
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