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India needs to enhance social security benefits

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FIGHTING BACK

Nicholls and Phillips rescue New Zealand

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Trump hails 'historic' summit with Xi, Putin

- U.S., China and Russia release a 'declaration on peace'; to launch talks on reducing nuclear risks
- Chinese leader says major nations must 'respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity'
- Three nations 'have many converging interests on resolving of regional conflicts', says Putin

Anantha Krishnan
BEIJING

The leaders of the United States, China and Russia on Thursday held a historic trilateral summit in Shenzhen that made for striking optics even if it did not yield substantive outcomes on the war in Ukraine, the crisis in Iran or other pressing global issues.

The holding of the summit, in itself, was a success, according to U.S. President Donald Trump, who said the three leaders were "making history".

Chinese President Xi Jinping, for his part, laid out his view of how major countries should engage, saying they should "respect one another's sovereignty and territorial integrity" and "in particular, not to challenge the red lines of one another".

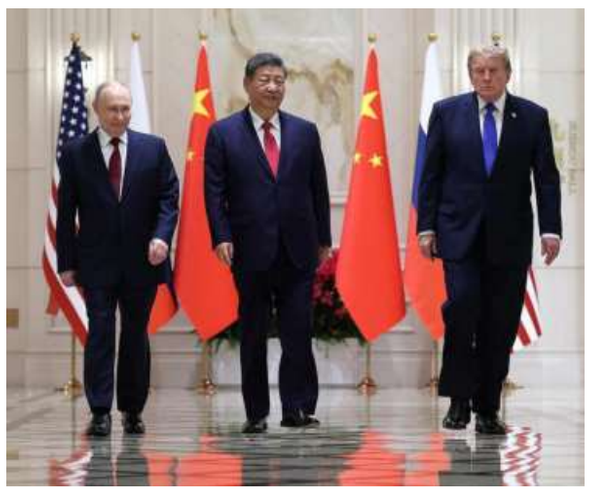
Russian President Vladimir Putin said the three countries "have many converging interests when it comes to resolving regional conflicts, including, of course, the conflict in Ukraine", adding that the talks would address food and energy security issues.

The three leaders' opening remarks underlined their different priorities as they came together for a summit of striking optics.

Mr. Trump, embattled after bruising midterm elections, is looking to shore up his legacy.

For China, holding the summit on Chinese soil, and in the city that has come to symbolise China's economic resurgence, has been framed as a landmark moment for what Mr. Xi calls major country diplomacy.

For Mr. Putin, the summit reinforced Russia's global influence amid recent isolation after the Ukraine war. This was Mr. Putin's first in-person attendance at an APEC summit in nine years.



Power move: Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Donald Trump in Shenzhen. REUTERS

A joint "China-Russia-U.S. Heads of State Declaration toward Peace" released after 90 minutes of talks had mostly broad points of consensus. There was agreement to launch a dialogue on reducing nuclear risks, with the three leaders "reaffirming that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought".

Mr. Xi described nuclear weapons as "the Sword of Damocles that hangs over humanity".

The three countries said they would "increase the production and supply of refined petroleum products for the benefit of all nations", and "recognised that the principle of state consent and respect for immunities of state officials are of paramount importance and concurred that the International Criminal Court and other similar bodies must not abuse their jurisdiction."

Mr. Trump in his remarks said the three countries as "the world's three largest nuclear powers by far" were "uniquely positioned to discuss how to reduce the number of nuclear weapons on earth and also to lessen the risk that those weapons will ever be used".

"I'm delighted this trip has given us the opportunity for this first ever trilateral meeting between leaders of the U.S., Russia and China, and today, so in that sense, and I think in lots of other ways, we are really making history," he said.

Mr. Xi said China, Russia and the U.S. "should not go for conflict or confrontation, but should hold the line on peaceful coexistence and make efforts to avoid the Thucydides Trap", referring to the idea that an established power and rising power could fall into conflict.

"As the main victors of the Second World War, China, Russia and the U.S. should steadfastly safeguard the postwar international order," he said.

Before the summit, Mr. Xi and Mr. Trump also held bilateral talks. The U.S. President said both were "looking to help with respect to the war with Russia and Ukraine, [and] would like to see it ended." "We have a very special relationship and I think as long as you and I are in charge of things, we will never have a problem," Mr. Trump told Mr. Xi.

The Chinese President, in remarks released by the Foreign Ministry, told Mr. Trump on the Taiwan issue that "the U.S. side should continue to do the right thing and avoid major disruptions to China-U.S. relations." "In the economic and trade fields, the two sides should strengthen communication, address each other's concerns, and strive for mutually beneficial outcomes," he said.

Both sides have recently clashed over several trade issues, including semiconductors and rare earths. Earlier this week, China said the U.S. was "abusing export control measures", after the introduction of new rules aimed at curbing Chinese firms' remote access to advanced AI chips through data centres in third party countries.

The rules were announced amid scrutiny over chipmaker Nvidia and its relationships with firms in the region, including those with links to China.

INSIDE



Anthropic raises $81 billion amid market volatility

CHENNAI
Anthropic, the maker of AI chatbot Claude, has priced its initial public offering (IPO) at $83 a share, valuing the offering at approximately $81.34 billion, the company said on Nov. 18. » PAGE 12

Graca Machel receives Indira Gandhi Prize

NEW DELHI
Mozambican politician and women's rights advocate Graca Machel was conferred the 2025 Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development on Thursday, coinciding with the former Prime Minister's 109th birth anniversary. » PAGE 5

Myanmar responsible for Rohingya genocide: ICJ

Associated Press
THE HAGUE

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled on Thursday that Myanmar committed genocide against the Rohingya in a brutal 2017 military operation and ordered the nation to allow people who fled the violence to return.

The decision marks the first time the ICJ has ruled a state committed genocide and comes as it is also handling genocide allegations linked to the Gaza conflict and Ukraine war.

FULL REPORT ON » PAGE 14

Chilling out



Nip in the air: Geese gather near a water body amid dense fog during a winter sunrise in New Delhi. The national capital recorded its coldest morning of the season so far on Thursday, with the minimum temperature dropping to 10.6 degrees Celsius. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

PM slams industry leaders on stagnant wages, failure to increase employment

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday tore into gathered industry leaders on a variety of issues, including the lack of progress in the manufacturing sector, companies' failure to increase employment and wages, the trend of exporters sending their best-quality items out of the country, and industry's lack of preparedness to exploit benefits unleashed by Free Trade Agreements.

"Have you increased the salaries of your employees," he asked them, while addressing the inaugural session of FICCI's Annual General Meeting here.

The Congress took Mr. Modi's statements as a sign that he was "nervous and rattled". "For the first time in 12 years, a nervous and rattled PM has pulled up the captains of industry," Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh posted on social media platform X.

"He parroted what the Indian National Congress has been saying for long: (i) that wages have not increased; (ii) tax rates have been cut but investment has not boomed; and (iii) jobs are simply not expanding at the desired rate," Mr. Ramesh said.

At the meeting, Mr. Modi voiced several points of criticism against the Indian private sector. One of these pertained to the Make in India mission, aimed at making the country self-reliant.

"In 1930, Gandhi came to you and said exactly this," Mr. Modi said. "And even today, after all these years, I have to say the same thing. Is this your success or your failure?"



Narendra Modi

At the meeting, Mr. Modi also spoke about the various strengths of the economy, including its move from a 'fragile five' economy to the fastest-growing major economy in the world, the increase in per capita income, and the World Bank's recognition of India's poverty reduction efforts.

"Don't take my word for it, at least listen to Gandhi," he exhorted the assembled industry leaders. "He too spoke of *Swadeshi*, he too spoke of a self-reliant India. And you have completed 100 years, yet things remain exactly where they were!"

'Tax cuts not passed on'

The Prime Minister spoke about how this government had reduced corporate taxes to 22% and had ensured that individuals earning up to ₹12 lakh a year did not have to pay income tax.

However, he also castigated the assembled leaders for wanting even more, rather than passing on the benefits. "Have you increased the number of your employees? No! 'Modiji, you do it, we'll watch'. This is how it will continue."

The Prime Minister also called on the private sector to improve the quality of products it sells in India, saying that the mindset where 'export quality' denotes high-quality products should change.

"We have our own market of 1.4 billion people, and sometimes I feel that this itself becomes your biggest problem," he said.

"You will have to change your quality," Mr. Modi added. "Do not take our 1.4 billion countrymen as an 'assured market'. What do you think of the people of this country? Aren't they entitled to good quality? Even today, do you still have to tell them, 'it is export quality'? This mindset has to change."

FTA opportunity

Sticking to the topic of trade, the Prime Minister also pulled up the assembled leaders for not being prepared enough to take advantage of the various FTAs that India was entering into, calling it a "historic opportunity".

"In the past few years, India has entered into trade agreements with several countries around the world," Mr. Modi said.

"Have you people at FICCI ever sat down and thought about this?"

"When a free trade agreement is signed with the world's major economies, it means that the doors have been opened for you," he emphasised.

"Have you made any plans to seize the opportunity, or do I still have to come to you and tell you what to do?"

In a first, Japanese forces to train on Indian soil

Saurabh Trivedi
Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

India and Japan on Thursday held a '2+2' Foreign and Defence Ministers' dialogue in Tokyo, where both sides welcomed the signing of a Letter of Intent (LoI) that will, for the first time, allow Japan's Self-Defence Forces to use Indian test ranges for live-fire training, including those involving surface-to-ship missiles.

The two sides also indicated forward movement towards India receiving the Unified Complex Radio Antenna, or UNICORN, naval radar system from Japan, and discussed the ongoing revisions in Japan's national security and defence policies.

"They welcomed the signing of LOI toward the utilisation of firing ranges in India, whereby Japan Self-Defence Forces would, for the first time, conduct live-fire training etc., including those involving surface-to-ship missiles, at firing ranges in India," said a joint statement that also announced that the two sides will deepen security and defence cooperation and hold "bilateral and multilateral exercises at short notice".



Closer ties: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with his Japanese counterpart, Shinjiro Koizumi, in Tokyo on Thursday. X/PTI

The Ministers also planned a dialogue and tabletop exercise (TTX) involving the consular authorities of India and Japan to help in cases where evacuation of Indian and Japanese nationals would be required.

The two-plus-two dialogue featured Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and their Japanese counterparts, Toshimitsu Motegi and Shinjiro Koizumi. The Japanese side "explained the ongoing efforts to revise Japan's National Security Strategy, National Defence Strategy and Defence Buildup Program".

The current government in Japan, led by Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, is carrying out several reforms in the country's strategic and security culture in view of the ongoing wars in West Asia and Ukraine, as well as global trends.

Following the meeting, Mr. Jaishankar said, "Reviewed the entire gamut of our bilateral cooperation, focusing on strengthening economic security and deepening G2G, B2B and P2P linkages. Our discussions also covered challenges and opportunities in the Indo-Pacific, regional hotspots, global issues, and multilateral cooperation." The joint statement said the Ministers discussed the UNICORN naval radar system Japan has proposed for India, and added that an "early formulation" of "Acceptance of Necessity" by February of next year is on track.

Further collaborations

The two sides also discussed enhancing "mine countermeasures capabilities" and "joint development in naval ship building and design". The Ministers also agreed to deepen information-sharing arrangements between the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force and the Indian Navy.

In an interview with *The Japan News*, Mr. Jaishankar said that Japan and India, alongside 'Quad' partners United States and Australia, would advance a free Indo-Pacific through "practical cooperation".

INBRIEF





Rape, extortion charges: FIR against 2 ex-Bengal Ministers

A zero FIR has been lodged against two former Ministers in the West Bengal government, Indranil Sen and Bratya Basu, along with several senior government officials, over multiple charges. The FIR was lodged at the Baguiati police station under the Bidhannagar Commissionerate by social activist Rajib Sarkar on behalf of multiple women who have either been artistes or employed under the Information and Cultural Affairs Department. They have been accused of rape, extortion, criminal breach of trust, wrongful confinement, cheating, sexual assault, corruption, and criminal conspiracy.

Nashik court grants bail to AIMIM leader in TCS case

The Nashik District and Sessions Court on Thursday granted bail on a surety of ₹50,000 to All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader Imtiaz Jaleel, a co-accused in the sexual harassment and religious conversion case at TCS's Nashik unit in Maharashtra. Though the counsel representing the State government opposed Mr. Jaleel bail plea, the court approved his release on submission of the bond as the sections invoked against him were bailable. The Maharashtra AIMIM president is accused of helping Nida Khan, a key accused in the TCS case, while she was absconding.

Teenager's death triggers a war of words between Adityanath, SP president

Five SP leaders, 66 others booked after BJP worker says his son was hit by bulldozer at Akhilesh's rally in Gorakhpur; CM meets kin, vows action; Oppn. party releases spot 'footage', disputes claim

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

A war of words erupted on Thursday over the death of a 14-year-old boy, who was reportedly hit by a bulldozer during Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav's roadshow in Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur on Wednesday. While the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) blamed SP's "hooliganism" for the child's death, Mr. Yadav sought a high-level investigation into the incident. Five SP leaders and 66 unidentified party workers have been booked in connection with the death of Aryavardhan Singh, the son of BJP worker Onkar Singh.

Mr. Onkar has alleged in the FIR that a speeding bulldozer, which was part of the SP chief's roadshow, hit his son, following which the driver and organisers of the event fled the scene. The police have registered a case under BNS Sections 281 (negligent driving) and 106(1) (causing death by a rash or negligent act).



U.P. CM Yogi Adityanath consoling BJP's Onkar Singh on Thursday, following the death of his son in Gorakhpur on Wednesday. PTI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath met the deceased's family and hit out at the Opposition party leader over what he termed a "deliberate and brutal murder". "The 14-year-old was returning from school. After being hit by a JCB, he was deliberately run over by a vehicle and killed. Aren't the SP chief and his goons ashamed of themselves?" Mr. Adityanath said. He added, "Action will be taken against every goon who has created disorder and attempted to create an atmosphere of fear and terror."

The Opposition party disputed the circumstances of Aryavardhan's death as alleged in the FIR and accused the ruling BJP of politicising the minor's death. It put out purported CCTV footage of the spot, which showed a State roadways bus hitting the boy followed by the bulldozer. The party claimed that the footage indicated that no roadshow or rally was held at the spot.

'Providing all support'

"Heartless and insensitive people only engage in politics; only family members can truly understand the pain of losing a child. We are all deeply saddened by the death of an innocent child and express our deepest condolences to the family. We have asked our team to meet them and provide all possible support," said the SP chief.

He added that those politicising the accident must remember how a grieving mother of a young victim was mistreated in the Lucknow fire incident. "The public sees through the pretence of those who appear to mourn," he added.

He was referring to the June 22 blaze at a three-storey commercial building in Lucknow's Aliganj area, which killed 15 people – mostly students and young professionals.

HC stays Punjab PCS recruitment process; Oppn. hits out at AAP

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH



Akali Dal has sought resignation of Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Thursday stayed the Punjab Civil Services (PCS) and Allied Services recruitment process, even as it gave the Opposition parties political ammunition to target the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in State in the run-up to the 2027 Assembly election.

The High Court issued the direction on petitions by candidates that alleged irregularities in the selection and recruitment process conducted by the Punjab Public Service Commission (PPSC), the result of which was declared on November 4. The petitions sought probe into the matter.

'Timely intervention'

Senior Bharatiya Janata Prty (BJP) president Sunil Jakhar said the Court's decision was a timely intervention, which is an important step towards protecting the future of Punjab's promising young people.

Mr. Jakhar alleged that the AAP government had designed the entire recruitment process to benefit its favourites. He said the allegations went beyond a paper leak and raised the more serious question of whether the entire examination process had been manipulated.

"From the time the recruitment advertisement was issued, repeated changes were made to the application deadline," he said in a statement.

Senior Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Bikram Singh Majithia demanded a Central Bureau of Investigation probe into the matter. Asserting that the High Court's action vindicated the stand of the meritorious candidates, who challenged the process, he termed the court order as a slap on the face of AAP government. He demanded Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann to resign. The PPSC has refuted the allegations of any irregularity.

Video of Bihar CM's security 'pushing' Nishant sparks row

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

A row erupted in Bihar on Thursday after a video went viral on social media purportedly showing a security officer of Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary 'pushing' State Health Minister Nishant Kumar.

The incident took place in Vaishali district on Wednesday when both leaders went to inspect the venue that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit on November 21 to inaugurate a six-lane bridge named after Mr. Nishant's father and former Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

JD(U) seeks probe

Janata Dal (United) [JD(U)] MLC and chief spokesperson Neeraj Kumar raised strong objection over the incident and demanded that the Bihar police investigate the matter and find out whether it was done intentionally or inadvertently. He also termed the video "disturbing and painful".



Nishant Kumar

"Nishant Kumar is the Minister in-charge of Vaishali district and had gone with the Chief Minister,"Mr. Neeraj told reporters at his official residence in Patna.

The Opposition Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) also took a dig at the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government by sharing the video on X. "As soon as poor Nitish Kumar fell ill and became unconscious, the BJP first snatched his Chief Minister's post. Now, poor Nitish is having his son pushed around by the BJP's CM police officers," the RJD said.

Asked about any possibility of the RJD and the JD (U) coming together once again, Leader of the Opposition and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said, "I do now know what people are talking, but whatever I had said before the election, everything is coming true. I had said the BJP will not allow Nitish*ji* to remain in the CM's post, it has happened."

'Human error'

The Special Security Group tasked with the protection of the CM conducted a probe and termed the incident 'human error'.

No relief from HC to Rajasthan IAS officer in corruption case

Mohammed Iqbal
JAIPUR

The Rajasthan High Court on Thursday declined to grant an interim stay on the investigation launched against senior Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer Shikhar Agrawal in a case of alleged corruption, involving the purchase of 40 villas in luxury resorts operated by a private firm in Udaipur and Alwar districts.

Mr. Agrawal, who was placed on awaiting posting order (APO) last month, has challenged the State government's permission to the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) to conduct an enquiry against him under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.

While the IAS officer sought protection against punitive action during the pendency of his petition, Justice Anil Kumar Upman directed the State government to respond within three weeks to the plea. Mr. Agrawal is facing charges of abusing his position and influence and extending "undue benefits" to the firm.

'Undue benefits given'

The alleged purchases of villas were made in the names of Mr. Agrawal, his wife and Indian Police Service officer Prashakha Mathur, their two sons, and Mr. Agrawal's parents-in-law. The ACB has alleged that Mr. Agrawal gave benefits such as relaxations in resort construction conditions, approvals without verification of certificates and special concessional packages to the firm.

TVK legislator, who defeated Stalin in Kolathur, passes away

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) MLA V.S. Babu, who defeated DMK president and former Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in the Kolathur constituency in the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly election, died following a cardiac arrest on Thursday.

Mr. Babu, 75, was admitted to MGM Hospital at Aminjikarai in Chennai on September 9 with a respiratory illness. According to the medical bulletin issued by the hospital, he was under intensive care.

His condition continued to deteriorate, and he suffered a cardiac arrest and died at 2.24 p.m. on Thursday.

Mr. Babu started his political career in the DMK as an area secretary and went on to become the party's north Chennai district secretary. He was first elected to the Assembly from Purasawalkam in 2006 as a DMK candidate. Following the 2008 delimitation, Purasawalkam ceased to exist, and many areas falling under it became part of the newly formed Kolathur constituency.



V.S. Babu

Mr. Babu, then the local face of the DMK, reportedly played a considerable role in Mr. Stalin's victory in Kolathur in 2011. After 2011, Mr. Babu stayed away from politics for a while before joining the AIADMK in 2016. He joined the TVK earlier this year.

Condolences pour in

Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar condoled the death of Babu. In a post on X, the Lok Bhavan, Tamil Nadu, said the Governor remembers the departed leader's public life and service and prays to the almighty to grant strength and courage to the bereaved family to bear with this irreparable loss.

In his message, TVK president and Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay said Mr. Babu dedicated himself wholeheartedly to public life, earning the love, support, and trust of the people. His death is an irreparable loss, he said.

Mr. Stalin, in a post on X, expressed shock over the death of Mr. Babu and extended condolences to his family members.

Nearing 3 years as Rajasthan CM, Bhajan Lal Sharma seeks to assert his authority

NEWS ANALYSIS

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

Bhajan Lal Sharma, a first-time MLA who had largely remained in the background of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Rajasthan unit, was named Chief Minister in December 2023, Congress State president Govind Singh Dotasara dismissed him as a "*parchi* CM", a leader chosen by the party's central leadership rather than one with his own political base.

Nearly three years later, Mr. Dotasara has changed his line of attack. He now accuses the CM of being a leader "*jisne poori BJP ko Rajasthan me khatam kar dala* (who has finished off the BJP in Rajasthan)".

That rhetorical shift captures the central paradox of Mr. Sharma's chief ministership.

Having entered office with virtually no administrative experience, he has walked a continuous tightrope between balancing the demands of the party's central leadership and building authority of his own.

Finding his voice

In his first speech in the Assembly as the CM, Mr. Sharma relied heavily on a sheet of paper. Much of his address was devoted to praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Union government.

By the time of his Deepavali address this year, he appeared more comfortable speaking without notes and maintaining eye contact with his audience.

His growing ease with the microphone, however, has yet to bring much change in the substance of his public addresses. He continued to speak about Antyodaya, the Centre's welfare initiatives and the PM's 12 years in office. He also cited a World Bank report which, he claimed, had reported that 500 million people had risen above the poverty line in India.



The Cong. continues to portray the first-time MLA as the weakest CM in the State in recent times while Bhajan Lal Sharma's supporters argue that he has gradually consolidated his position. FILE PHOTO

Assertion over officials

Mr. Sharma has tried to establish his authority in the State bureaucracy. Besides routine transfers of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and Indian Police Service (IPS) officers, he, in the last week of October, placed IAS officer Shikhar Agrawal under an Anti-Corruption Bureau inquiry over allegations relating to property purchases and official dealings.

He had served as the Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) to the CM until November last year. Mr. Agrawal's wife, IPS officer Prashakha Mathur, was placed on awaiting posting order.

"Acting against a serving senior IAS couple is something that any politician would avoid. Even during the tenures of former Chief Ministers Ashok Gehlot and Vasundhara Raje, there were allegations against their ACSs and Chief Secretaries, but neither was able to take action," said Avdhesh Pareek, a senior journalist who has covered Rajasthan for decades.

Mr. Agrawal has challenged the approval for the inquiry in the Rajasthan High Court.

Also, over the past two years, several party MLAs, MPs and Ministers, including Lalsot MLA Ram Bilas Meena, Forest Minister Sanjay Sharma and MPs Mannalal Rawat and Manju Sharma, have publicly criticised their own government. They have accused bureaucrats of ignoring elected representatives and running the administration on their own.

These complaints suggest that Mr. Sharma's hold over the bureaucracy has not necessarily translated into a wider resolution of the tensions between elected representatives and the administration.

Civic poll victories

The urban local body elections held in Rajasthan in September provided another test of Mr. Sharma's leadership.

Rather than leave the campaign to the local BJP units, the CM took to the streets himself, holding roadshows across municipalities. Former CM and senior Congress leader Mr. Gehlot questioned the need for a sitting CM to campaign in municipal elections, which are among the lowest levels of electoral contests.

The BJP subsequently secured majorities in nine of the 10 municipal corporations, even as the Statewide gap in the vote share of the BJP and the Congress was less than one percentage point.

The BJP's success in retaining nine of the 10 civic bodies also came to be seen both as a measure of his success and a political attack, with the Congress accused him of "engineering defections through coercion".

"I am shocked that the BJP in Rajasthan resorted to intimidation and inducements to bring independent candidates to its side. Otherwise, the party won only four of the ten seats," said senior Congress leader and Rajya Sabha member from Rajasthan Neeraj Dangi.

The ruling party's overall performance also concealed setbacks in some of its traditional strongholds. In Ajmer, the Congress ended the BJP's uninterrupted 36-year hold over the civic body, dating back to 1990. It won 37 of the 80 seats against the BJP's 32, though the ruling party eventually managed to form a majority with the support of Independents.

The Congress also made gains in Jhalawar, the home turf of Ms. Raje.

The road to 2028

The Congress continues to portray Mr. Sharma as the weakest CM in the State's recent political history.

His supporters, meanwhile, argue that he has gradually consolidated his position. An impending Cabinet reshuffle could be an important test of that claim in which he has to accommodate supporters and deal with opposition within the party.

But before that, the rural local body election results, due on November 20, will offer a measure of the government's standing outside the urban centres.

The larger test, however, will come in 2028, as in a State that changes the political party in power every election since 1993, Mr. Sharma will be tested to see if he is able to secure a second consecutive term for his party.

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INBRIEF



K. Karunakaran's daughter leaves BJP, rejoins Congress

Padmaja Venugopal, daughter of former Keralam Chief Minister and Congress stalwart K. Karunakaran, has quit the Bharatiya Janata Party, barely three years after crossing over from the Congress, admitting that joining the saffron party was a mistake that she wishes to correct. She joined the BJP on March 7, 2024. Ms. Venugopal confirmed her resignation on Thursday, saying she had taken the decision to leave the Congress without understanding the BJP's ideology.

Kerala court quashes FIR against Minister in assets case

The Kerala High Court has quashed an FIR pertaining to an assets case against IUML leader and Minister for Local Self-Government K.M. Shaji. He was accused of amassing assets disproportionate to his known sources of income between 2011 and 2020. The Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau had filed the FIR under the Prevention of Corruption Act, on a complaint that Mr. Shaji had built a house using money whose source is yet to be ascertained.

Kidnapped toddler rescued within 12 hours in Hyderabad

A 44-year-old woman was arrested by the police in Hyderabad on charges of kidnapping a two-and-half year old girl from her residence in Ameenpur on Wednesday. The child was rescued safely within 12 hours. The girl's mother lodged a complaint stating that her younger daughter went missing around 12.30 p.m. Following the complaint, police formed five special teams from three police stations along with a Special Operations Team to trace the child.

Court acquits CPI(M) leaders in 2012 Kannur murder case

CBI court convicts 13 accused and acquits 18, including CPI(M)'s Jayarajan and Rajesh, in IUML activist Ariyil Shukkoor's murder case; it strikes down conspiracy charges against the accused

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

A Special CBI Court in Keralam on Thursday convicted 13 accused and acquitted 18, including CPI(M) leaders P. Jayarajan and T.V. Rajesh, in the case related to the murder of Ariyil Shukkoor, an Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) activist, in Kannur in 2012.

Judge P. Sabarinathan sentenced seven convicts to life imprisonment, while the other six were sentenced to two years in prison and granted bail.

The Special CBI court in Ernakulam struck down the conspiracy charges against all the accused, including Mr. Jayarajan and Mr. Rajesh

Shukkoor, 21, a native of Ariyil, near Taliparamba, was killed by a group of assailants at Keezhara on February 20, 2012. The murder was allegedly committed in retaliation for an attack on Mr. Jayarajan and Mr. Rajesh during their visit to tension-hit Ariyil earlier that morning. Shukkoor and four other youth, who had taken refuge in a house at Keezhara, were allegedly forced to leave the premises after a group of CPI(M) workers intimidated the houseowners.

The police said their captors verified their identities with party workers. Three of them were released. Shukkoor and Zakaria were then taken to a nearby field and stabbed. Zakaria, who sustained stab injuries, managed to escape.



T.V. Rajesh and P. Jayarajan after their acquittal by the CBI Special Court in Ernakulam on Thursday. THULASI KAKKAT

A political plot, says acquitted leader Jayarajan

P. Jayarajan alleged on Thursday that the Ariyil Shukkoor case was a political hatchet job orchestrated by the then ruling United Democratic Front and the Indian Union Muslim League leadership to target the CPI(M).

Investigators had alleged that Mr. Jayarajan and Mr. Rajesh had prior knowledge of the Shukkoor murder conspiracy, allegedly hatched at Taliparamba Co-operative Hospital, where they had been admitted on February 20 following an attack on Mr. Jayarajan's convoy allegedly by IUML workers earlier that day.

Chennai techie dies after assault in Delhi

Lavpreet Kaur
NEW DELHI

A 28-year-old IT employee who travelled nearly 2,000 kilometres to Delhi to meet a YouTuber and social media influencer died after allegedly being assaulted by her family members when he tried to enter her house in east Delhi's Madhu Vihar, police sources said on Thursday.

The deceased, identified as Abhinav, was a native of eastern Uttar Pradesh and worked with an IT company in Chennai. He died of his injuries on November 14.

The incident took place on November 7, when Abhinav allegedly tried to enter the woman's house by jumping over its boundary wall, triggering a confrontation with her family members and neighbours. He was then beaten up during the altercation and sustained grievous injuries.

The investigation revealed that Abhinav had come in contact with the woman through Instagram.

According to police sources, Abhinav had travelled to Delhi around two months earlier and met the woman. "The influencer thought he was a fan and agreed to meet him. However, he had developed feelings for her. On learning that she was due to get married later this year, he travelled to Delhi again on November 7 and tried to enter her house by jumping over the boundary wall," a police source said.

The woman's father and a neighbour, who were seen assaulting Abhinav in the CCTV footage, have been arrested and are currently in judicial custody.

Over 70 kg of heroin worth ₹700 cr. seized in Chennai; two held

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has seized more than 70 kg of heroin from two persons hailing from southern districts of Tamil Nadu. The seized heroin has been valued at ₹700 crore.

According to a senior officer of the Avadi Police Commissionerate, on information that a huge consignment of heroin was being smuggled in the guise of ice cream packets, DRI officials raided an ice-manufacturing factory at Madhavaram.

While searching a vehicle that was waiting to load ice, they recovered packets of heroin stashed in the vehicle's refrigeration unit and arrested the two men waiting in the vehicle.

The officials identified the accused persons as Abdul Shukoor and Shafiq Ahmed, who have been residing in the city.

According to the police officer, unidentified persons had tasked the duo with transporting the consignment to another location. DRI officials are trying to determine the origin of the heroin and identify the network.

A judicial magistrate's court in Alandur remanded the arrested persons in judicial custody.



The heroin packets were found stashed in the refrigeration unit of a vehicle.

'Vice city': Stalin

Commenting on the seizure, DMK president M.K. Stalin asked why the police had failed to monitor drug-trafficking networks and arrest those involved. In a statement, he said the deterioration in law and order, alleged sexual misconduct by ruling TVK functionaries, robberies and burglaries, and custodial deaths had turned Tamil Nadu into a "vice city".

Mr. Stalin also questioned whether the Director-General of Police, who had cited statistics to divert public attention from the incidents of crime, had any response to the heroin seizure.

"He may say that a case has been registered. But he should explain why the police have been unable to arrest drug traffickers. What has happened to the 65 units formed to prevent drug use and trafficking? Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay holds the Home portfolio. If he is not prepared to offer an explanation now, when will he do so? The TVK's 'reel' fans illegally open dams, but no one seems able to make the Chief Minister speak," he added.

Will never act against State's interests, says Revanth amid BRS attack

R. Ravikanth Reddy
HYDERABAD

Rejecting the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) allegations that he was releasing Telangana's water to Andhra Pradesh, Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy said he was a "son of Telangana, born and brought up on its soil", and would remain committed to protecting its interests.

He was addressing a public meeting at Siddipet after launching the Indiramma Kutumba Jeevita Bima (Family Life Insurance Scheme) providing coverage of ₹5 lakh each to one crore families in the State. The scheme would be beneficial to different sections of society, right from the workers engaged under the rural employment guarantee scheme.

"I was born on this soil, grew up here and will merge with it. Will I ever do injustice to my people, my land and my State?" Mr. Reddy asked.

His response comes in the wake of relentless attacks by the BRS, accusing the State government of turning a blind eye when Andhra Pradesh was drawing water illegally from the Nagarjunasagar project and also Srisailam.

Questioning the allegations against him, Mr. Revanth said even an elected sarpanch, councillor, mandal parishad president or municipal chairperson would work for the interests of the area represented by them. Having received the support and mandate of the people of Telangana, he asked why he would act against the State's interests.

Eager wait



A vendor stacks large-sized hybrid cauliflowers for sale near Kankipadu in Krishna district on Thursday. G.N. RAO

SIR: 1,635 voters reappear on rolls with same EPIC numbers

Rishita Khanna
BENGALURU

At least 1,635 people across Bengaluru who were listed for deletion from the electoral rolls during the special intensive revision (SIR) on the grounds that they were absent, had shifted, were dead or had duplicate entries – categories collectively referred to as ASDD – are in the final roll with the same Electors' Photo Identity Card (EPIC) numbers they held before the revision.

Many of them are now listed as voters in constituencies different from those in which they were originally enrolled.

During the SIR, people who were found to be absent, shifted, dead, or to have duplicate entries were placed on the ASDD list for deletion because their enumeration forms were not returned. To get their names back on the rolls, they had to apply afresh through Form 6 as "new voters." Under the ECI's Manual on Electoral Rolls, anyone who ceases to be enrolled and applies again through Form 6 must be allotted a new EPIC number.



Deleted names can be restored only through Form 6 as per ECI.

Yet, all 1,635 people identified by *The Hindu* appear in the final roll with the same EPIC numbers they held before the SIR. If these electors were deleted and subsequently re-enrolled through Form 6, they would have been issued a new EPIC number. The SIR has therefore retained in the final roll the very entries it was meant to weed out in its drive to make electoral rolls "clean and accurate".

For instance, Patil Girinath, who was enrolled in Rajarajeshwari Nagar before the SIR, was marked as dead in the ASDD list. He is now in the final roll with the same EPIC number, but as a voter in Anekal.

The Hindu found such cases across 28 Assembly constituencies, covering all four ASDD categories.

Karnataka Cabinet orders seizure of *Basava Mantapa*

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

With several Veerashaiva-Lingayat community leaders up in arms against the book *Basava Mantapa*, alleging that it distorts the teachings and philosophy of Basavanna and insults him, the Karnataka Cabinet on Thursday decided to confiscate copies of the book by Ravi Hanj, which are in circulation.

It has also cleared action against publisher-journalist Vishveshwar Bhat.

After a prolonged discussion in the Cabinet meeting, a decision to confiscate the book and take legal action against the author was arrived at, announced Deputy Chief Minister G. Parameshwara.

Basava Samiti filed a police complaint seeking action against the author and the publisher

Earlier in the day, the Basava Samiti not only demanded a ban of the book, but also filed a police complaint seeking action against the author and the publisher. In a social media post, BJP State president B.Y. Vijayendra had also sought action against the publisher and the author.

When asked why an expert committee was not set up and an immediate decision taken after the samiti petitioned Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, the Deputy Chief Minister said that senior Ministers had discussed the issue in the Cabinet meeting.

Addressing a press conference, Basava Samiti president Aravind Jatti said the book hurt the sentiments of the Lingayat community and Basavanna's followers in the name of research. He also called for criminal cases to be registered against those responsible for disturbing the society.

Wayanad collects nearly 100 tonnes of e-waste, set to earn model district tag

The Hindu Bureau
KOZHIKODE

After a month-long intensive campaign, Wayanad will become the first district in India to be officially declared e-waste-free on November 27. Keralam Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan will make the declaration at a function in Kalpetta at 4 p.m.

Agriculture Minister T. Siddique said all local bodies and Haritha Karma Sena members who participated in the e-waste collection drive would be honoured.

Suchitwa Mission district programme officer K. Anoop said Wayanad was set to become India's first e-waste-free model district, a distinction no other district in the country had achieved so far. "This is not merely an achievement for a district in Keralam but a first for the country. Although some model villages have achieved e-waste-free status, no district has so far attained this distinction," he said.



A total of 38.46 metric tonnes of e-waste was collected from the district's 26 local self-government institutions. GETTY IMAGES

Ahead of the declaration, the Suchitwa Mission and the Clean Kerala Company have collected a total of 97.26 tonnes of electronic waste (e-waste) through coordinated efforts.

The Clean Kerala Company directly collected e-waste from government institutions, while the Haritha Karma Sena was tasked with collecting it from households.

A total of 38.46 metric tonnes of e-waste was collected from the district's 26 local self-government institutions, while another 58.8 metric tonnes was collected from various government offices and schools.

Producing accused beyond 24-hour limit is illegal: HC

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI


Image for representational purpose only.

The Manipur High Court has held that the 24-hour period for producing a person before a magistrate, as prescribed under Article 22(2) of the Constitution of India, begins when an accused person's liberty is curtailed, not when his or her arrest is formally recorded.

Hearing a petition filed by the wife of a man arrested in a drug trafficking case more than a year ago, Justice Ahanthem Bimol Singh said the time spent by investigating officers on "search-cum-seizure" cannot be excluded from these 24 hours.

In its order on November 17, the court quashed a remand after finding that two people, Seimang Kipgen and Letminthang Khongsai, arrested in the drug trafficking case on September 25, 2025, were produced before the Special Judge (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances) in Chandel beyond the constitutionally mandated period.

Mr. Khongsai's wife, Tinneihing Khongsai, challenged the September 26, 2025, remand order, arguing that the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) produced him before the magistrate more than 24 hours after his detention.

The court said detention during a search-and-seizure operation must be distinguished from formal arrest, but the 24-hour period begins once a person's liberty is curtailed.

According to the High Court's order, an NCB team arrested the two in Chandel district at 3 a.m. on September 25, 2025, for allegedly transporting drugs in a motorcycle-escorted SUV. The team intercepted the vehicles and allegedly recovered 29 packets of methamphetamine pills weighing 67.19 kg.

The NCB claimed Mr. Kipgen and Mr. Khongsai were formally arrested at 1 p.m. and 1.30 p.m. on September 25, 2025. They were remanded to judicial custody the next day after they were produced before the Special Judge (NDPS).

The petitioner relied on Supreme Court judgments and other High Court rulings, arguing that arrest begins when an authority physically restrains a person's liberty. Countering the petition, the NCB said the 24 hours should be calculated from the formal arrest recorded in the arrest memo.

Multi-Agency Centre is tracking radicalisation hotspots, says Amit Shah

Union Home Minister says govt. is putting in place a system that makes every police station work under uniform strategy to combat terror; calls on anti-terrorism squads to strengthen cyber units

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI


Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the inaugural session of the two-day counter-terrorism conference, in New Delhi. X/PTI

The Multi-Agency Centre (MAC), a centralised intelligence-sharing platform, now tracks cybersecurity, narcotics, organised crime networks, and emerging radicalisation hotspots, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Thursday.

The MAC, which also acts as a common counter-terrorism grid and functions under the Intelligence Bureau (IB), was conceptualised in 2001, in the aftermath of the Kargil war, and became fully operational in 2009.

In 2025, the MAC network was revamped to connect all police districts in the country through a secure network. Mr. Shah said that the functioning of MAC has been reorganised.

He said the anti-terrorism squads (ATS) of every State need to strengthen their cyber-expert units as technology is increasingly being used in such crimes.

He made the remarks while addressing the inaugural session of the two-day counter-terrorism conference organised by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in New Delhi. On the occasion, he released the publication *Fail-Safe Investigation*, brought out by the NIA. He also laid the foundation stone for the NIA's office complex in Chandigarh and inaugurated the NIA's residential complex at Maidangarhi in Delhi. He also e-launched the NIA's 'Pushti' portal and conferred decorations on seven officers and personnel of the agency.

Confronting terrorism

Mr. Shah said that India has been confronting terrorism for a long time, and noted that while the police forces of different States had made various kinds of efforts, a lack of coordinated action was clearly visible. Over time, during the tenures of successive governments, gradual efforts were made to overcome these shortcomings, he said.

"Today, we can say with satisfaction that in this vast country – from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Dwarka to Kamakhya – we are putting in place a system under which a uniform strategy to combat terrorism will operate right down to the level of every police station," he said.

He said that with the killing of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist Latif Bhat, Kashmir has become free from the presence of India-born terrorists, adding that this situation has come about after 35 years. He also said that more than 40 modules of the Shahzad Bhatti network, which has been declared a terrorist organisation under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, have been neutralised across the country.

Mr. Shah said that the hallmark of a successful agency is apprehending terrorists and putting them behind bars before they can carry out their plans. He said the police in every State should analyse this model and implement it in their respective areas.

Unified action plan

The Minister said that in September 2019, a unified action plan was prepared to counter radicalisation, which was finalised in December 2019 after discussions with various Ministries.

A National Memory Bank was established, and efforts were made to create a centralised database. He said that during this period, not only were the legal powers of the NIA enhanced, but its national character was expanded. NIA officers have been trained to gain international exposure, and 70 new NIA Special Courts have been established, he said. He also highlighted the implementation of a new comprehensive approach to border security,and improved coordination among various agencies.

Women are yet to achieve substantive equality: SC judge

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI


Justice B.V. Nagarathna

Justice B.V. Nagarathna, one of the senior most judges of the Supreme Court and in line to be the first woman Chief Justice of India, has said that the mere existence of women in high public office does not establish that equality has been achieved throughout society.

"A woman may hold a senior position while other women remain excluded from education, employment, property, or effective legal remedies," Justice Nagarathna said at the inaugural Cornelia Sorabji Memorial Lecture at Somerville College in the University of Oxford on Wednesday.

Only the practice of substantive equality could take care of these differences among women hailing from and living through diverse life experiences, the judge said.

Justice Nagarathna said a judgment cannot, by itself, guarantee that every workplace becomes safe, every girl receives education, every woman obtains her lawful inheritance, or every victim of domestic violence secures timely protection.

Likewise, legislation cannot achieve its full purpose if remedies were inaccessible, public authorities failed to act, or social attitudes prevent women from asserting their rights.

The judge said the enactment of Constitutional amendments which give women one-third of the seats in Parliament and the State legislatures was proof to show that women should participate in decision-making and not be content with just a formal right to vote.

'Historical exclusion'

"These developments reflect an important insight: where historical exclusion has shaped the composition of institutions, formal equality alone may not be sufficient to secure meaningful representation," Justice Nagarathna pointed out.

She said that the progress of Indian women's rights cannot be measured by the number of discriminatory provisions struck down or the enactment of a few beneficial laws.

The judge said recognition of violence against women as a violation of constitutional rights has not really translated in the real world to women seeking the protection of law.

Police, magistrates, and sessions judges cannot refuse bail if offences are bailable: Madras HC

Mohamed Imranullah S.
CHENNAI

Expressing shock over a metropolitan magistrate and a sessions judge in Chennai denying bail in a case booked for bailable offences, the Madras High Court has reminded judicial officers in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry that they do not enjoy any such discretion.

Justice N. Ramesh held that even if the accused had mentioned a wrong provision of the law under which they had sought bail, it would be the duty of the judicial officers to find out whether the offences for which the petitioners had been arrested were bailable or not, and then take an appropriate decision. "If the offences are bailable and the accused is prepared to give bail, he shall be released under Section 478(1) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). The police officer, the magistrate, the court of session, or this court would have no discretion to refuse," the judge wrote.

The judge made it clear that the gravity of an accusation, the stage of investigation, an awaited forensic report, antecedents of the petitioner, or the apprehension of absconding or tampering with evidence could be cited as grounds only for denying bail in non-bailable offences and not in cases of bailable offences. Further, while granting bail for bailable offences, "the court may fix the amount of the bond and decide whether sureties are required. It may not attach any other condition. An accused who is indigent or unable to give a bail bond within a week of his arrest must be released on his own bond," he said.

Justice Ramesh further made it clear that a bail granted in respect of bailable offences could be cancelled only by the High Court if the conduct of the accused, after his release, was found to be prejudicial to fair trial. He also said that if a person had violated the conditions of bail bond in one case, then he could be denied bail in the next case even if the offences in the subsequent case were bailable.

The judge pointed out that the BNSS and special legislations related to criminal offences clearly specify the list of offences, such as those which carry a maximum punishment of three years, which are bailable, and those which are non-bailable.

He directed the High Court's Registrar General Deepthi Arivunithi to circulate a copy of his order to all Principal District and Sessions Judges and the Chief Judicial Magistrates in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry so that it could be brought to the notice of judicial officers across the State and the Union Territory. A copy should also be sent to the Director of the Tamil Nadu State Judicial Academy, the judge said.

The orders were passed while granting bail to P. Rajagopal of Thiruvanmiyur in Chennai, who was arrested by the Chennai Cyber Crime police on October 22 for posting a remark against Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay on X on June 12.

The petitioner was booked under Sections 296(b) (using abusive words) of the BNSS and 67 of the Information Technology Act, 2000. However, there was nothing on record to show that the police had informed the accused that both the provisions were bailable, the judge added.

Consequently, the accused ended up filing a bail petition before a metropolitan magistrate in Saidapet under Section 480 of the BNSS, which deals with the grant of bail in non-bailable offences, instead of filing it under Section 478, which deals with the grant of bail in bailable offences.

The metropolitan magistrate, on October 27 dismissed the petitioner's first bail petition "considering the grave nature of the offence" and the fact that the investigation was pending.

Holding that the judicial officers had erred in denying bail in a case booked for bailable offences and thereby forced the petitioner to remain in jail for several days, Justice Ramesh ordered his release forthwith on executing a bond for ₹25,000 along with two sureties for a like sum.

Publication puts Rafale count at 32; officials dispute claims

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI


Defence Ministry officials said the figures in the directory did not originate from the IAF.

The number of active Rafale fighter jets in the Indian Air Force (IAF) inventory has been revised downward to 32 from 35 in the latest edition of the World Air Forces directory released by British aviation publication *FlightGlobal*.

However, sources in the Defence Ministry questioned the authenticity of the assessment, saying the information was not provided by the Ministry.

Senior Ministry officials said the figures published in the directory did not originate from the IAF. The latest assessment, compiled using aviation analytics firm Cirium's military fleet database, does not specify which aircraft were excluded from the active inventory or the reasons behind the revision.

The government procured 36 Rafale fighters from France, comprising 28 single-seat EH and eight twin-seat DH variants. *FlightGlobal*'s 2026 edition, published in late 2025, listed 35 aircraft as active, while the latest edition has reduced the number to 32.

After Operation Sindoor, the IAF said "losses are a part of combat", but it never disclosed the total number or the types of aircraft involved.

The officials added that, in June this year, the IAF issued a tender seeking "bridge support" for all 36 Rafale aircraft, underlining that the entire fleet remains part of its support and maintenance requirements.

Cirium tracks military aircraft at the individual airframe level using publicly available information, including aircraft sightings.

Variations in active fleet figures could reflect aircraft undergoing maintenance, upgrades, or structural repairs. However, the latest directory does not provide details to establish the reasons for the reduction.

The publication has also revised the inventory of Pakistan's Saab 2000 Erieye airborne early warning and control aircraft from nine to seven.

Green India Mission launched in 2014 a complete failure, says House panel

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI


K.C. Venugopal

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on Thursday pulled up the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change over its "failure" to implement the Green India Mission.

Under the mission launched in February 2014, the government was to bring 2.8 million hectares under green cover by 2018. The PAC, at its meeting on Thursday, pointed to an audit report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) that shows that only 5.3% of the area approved by the government had been brought under green cover, seven years after the 2018 deadline ended.

The PAC, headed by Congress leader K.C. Venugopal, asked the government to fix a timeframe for implementing the mission. The mission was revised in 2021, but the government had not yet issued revised guidelines, it said.

Mr. Venugopal, speaking to reporters, called the mission a complete failure. "Nothing has happened under this mission in the last 10 years. It is a total failure," he said. The panel, he said, was worried about the pollution situation, especially in the national capital, and noted that the mission failed to work on a green wall along the Aravallis, which was listed as a priority under the mission. He said the Ministry was unable to answer many of the questions raised by the panel members.

A study conducted by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) for the CAG found no change at 70% of the sites checked, and only about 10% of the mapped area showed tree cover. Saplings were planted inside forests and in a standing paddy field, while scrublands, ravines, and old mines were left out.

Even though the mission's own budget of ₹2,400 crore was approved for four years, only ₹1,149 crore was received in 10 years. The Governing Council, chaired by the Minister, met only twice in 10 years instead of once a year, as stipulated. No annual report has been prepared. No social audit was held in 14 of the 16 States, and carbon captured by the mission was never measured.

Govt. urges SC to revisit its order on private universities

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Following a change in the Supreme Court Bench, the Union government on Thursday urged the new combination of judges to reconsider earlier orders which transformed an individual grievance of a private university student into a nationwide judicial inquiry into the regulation and functioning of private universities.

The case concerns a writ petition filed in 2025 by a student, Ayesha Jain, against Amity University. Ms. Jain has alleged the university refused her request for a change of name in its rolls even though she had produced the required documents.

She alleged that the university harassed her for changing her name from Khushi to Ayesha and barred her from attending classes.

After name change

She accused the university of harassment for changing her first name from a traditionally Hindu sounding 'Khushi' to 'Ayesha'. She had alleged that the university barred her from attending classes.

The case was heard extensively by a Supreme Court Bench headed by Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah for several months.

Besides setting up a committee to look into whether Ms. Jain's allegations revealed any criminal offence or civil wrongs, the Bench had expanded the scope of the petition, from a mere individual grievance, to a sweeping examination into the functioning of private universities across the country.

Recently, the case was shifted from Justice Amanullah's Bench, despite the fact that the case had been heard substantially. The petition was allocated to a three-judge Bench headed by Justice Vikram Nath, the senior most puisne judge of the Supreme Court.

HC seeks ED's stand on Tina Ambani's plea

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday sought responses from the Bureau of Immigration, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) on a plea by Ms. Tina Ambani, wife of Reliance Group chairman Mr. Anil Ambani, seeking disclosure of any existing look-out circular against her. Justice Mini Pushkarna issued notices on Ms. Ambani's petition and listed it for hearing on December 8. "Let replies be filed by the respondents by the next date of hearing," the judge ordered.

Boycotting polls will end India's 'sacred' democracy, says Rahul

Speaking at the University of Chicago, Congress leader says the Opposition will 'take the beating' until people realise flaws in the system, rules out abstaining from polls; adds there is room for dialogue with Pakistan only if it stops backing terrorism

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi has said boycotting elections will end democracy in India, and described "Indian democracy as sacred". He made these remarks during a students' interaction programme at the University of Chicago on Wednesday, moderated by Robert Pape.

Mr. Gandhi said the Congress and the Opposition's strategy was to expose what was happening and "take the beating" until the people of India realised that the "system has been fully demolished".

Explaining why the Opposition had decided against boycotting elections despite its allegations of electoral irregularities, Mr. Gandhi said such a move would undermine the legitimacy of the democratic process.

"What happens to all the Opposition workers if we tell them, okay, don't contest the elections? If we say that we are not going to contest elections, we end Indian democracy that minute. And we don't want to end the structure of Indian democracy," he said.



Centre stage: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during a conversation with Robert Pape at the University of Chicago in Illinois. ANI

Mr. Gandhi claimed the Opposition was now receiving information from inside the Election Commission.

"The Election Commission itself is now giving us information from inside, so it is only a question of time that structure collapses. The senior people in the Election Commission are now saying 'we can't do this anymore'," he said. "2014 elections, we already believe that there was something wrong because the margins were just unexplainable... we could not say anything because we had no proof," he said, adding, "Even when I got the proof and I demonstrated the proof to our political leaders in the Congress party, they said – 'please don't say this'. For us, Indian democracy is sacred."

Iran war, Gaza conflict

Asked about how the Government of India navigated the Iran war, Mr. Gandhi said India had always had a very sophisticated geopolitical understanding and India, by its size, naturally had a global voice.

"India should be involved at the global level in these conversations. I am pretty shocked that Pakistan is busy negotiating with the Iranians and Americans and India is just watching," he said.

Mr. Gandhi also spoke about the Israel-Gaza conflict, saying India's foreign policy should be guided by its own national interests. "We have a good relationship with Israel... We are a country of 1.5 billion people and our foreign policy should be based on what is good for us and not based on what is good for someone else," he said.

"I condemn what happened in October. I think that was absolutely horrible, should never have happened. Killing innocent people is absolutely wrong. But I also condemn what Israel has done in Gaza," the former Congress president said.

Replying to a question on any possibility of a dialogue with Pakistan, Mr. Gandhi said there is room but the big problem is Pakistan's support and encouragement to terrorism.

"It is impossible for us to accept our innocent people being murdered while continuing to have a conversation with Pakistan. When it stops, a conversation can potentially begin," Mr. Gandhi said.

Rijiju slams Rahul

Responding to Mr. Gandhi's allegations, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju questioned how the Opposition could hold protests and criticise the government if democratic freedoms were absent in the country.

"As the Lok Sabha Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Gandhi should exercise responsibility while speaking about the country abroad," Mr. Rijiju told reporters, adding, "No true Indian would want any Indian to go abroad and make nonsensical statements about the country".

Women's rights advocate Graca Machel receives Indira Gandhi peace prize

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Mozambican politician and women's rights advocate Graca Machel was conferred the 2025 Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development on Thursday, coinciding with the former Prime Minister's 109th birth anniversary.

Sonia Gandhi, who heads the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust, presented the award, which comprised a citation and a cash prize of ₹1 crore.

Ms. Gandhi said Ms. Machel's life and work reflected Indira Gandhi's ideals, particularly the commitment to social justice, human dignity and equality. Both Indira Gandhi and Ms. Machel believed in people's power to shape their own futures, she said.

Their lives, Ms. Gandhi noted, demonstrated that leadership was measured by the courage to challenge injustice and the commitment to bring about change. Tracing Ms. Machel's journey from Mozambique's liberation struggle to her work on women's and children's rights, Ms. Gandhi recalled that Ms. Machel became the country's first Minister of Education after it gained independence in 1975. During her tenure, school participation rose from 40% to over 90% among boys and 75% among girls.



Much deserved: Senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi presenting the Indira Gandhi Prize for 2025 to Graca Machel. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Ms. Machel was also the wife of Mozambique's first President, Samora Machel, serving as First Lady until his death in 1986. In 1998, she married former South African President Nelson Mandela, becoming the only woman to have been First Lady of two countries.

Ms. Gandhi also referred to Ms. Machel's landmark 1996 United Nations report on the impact of armed conflict on children, which helped shape the international response to the suffering of children in conflict zones.

In her acceptance speech, Ms. Machel said India and Africa shared a legacy that needed to be carried forward. "Our lives and our families have been connected across generations, through shared convictions, public service, friendship, and profound personal loss," she said.

Ms. Machel said the next chapter of India-Africa relations should be written not merely in the language of trade and diplomacy but in that of "human possibility".

Grab every chance given by ECI for reinclusion: SC to voters

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday urged deleted voters to rigorously test the Election Commission of India (ECI)'s assurances that no elector, mistakenly branded 'absent, shifted, deceased, duplicate' or ASDD, will be left out of the electoral roll during the special enumeration phase of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR).

The court said voters can hold the ECI to account only by first acting on every opportunity thrown at them by the poll body before the special enumeration phase concludes on November 30.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said it would take stock on December 2, when a complete picture would emerge about the ground reality, particularly the extent of access deleted voters really had to enumeration forms. The court asked the ECI to provide in a tabular form the number of applications received for inclusions, deletions and correction of names in the electoral rolls during the SIR.

The court also indicated that it may even extend the November 30 deadline, if necessary. "But for now you [voters] see what happens when you utilise this window [till November 30]. See what is the extent of their [ECI] accommodation," Justice Joymalya Bagchi observed.

'Criminal offence'

The brief exchange came during the hearing of a petition filed by activists Anjali Bhardwaj and Amrita Johri, represented by advocates Prashant Bhushan, Cheryl D'Souza, and Neha Rathi.



Against time: Petitioner says the November 30 deadline is not enough for reaching the 47 lakh ASDD voters. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

These petitioners had highlighted that the ECI was compelling ASDD voters in Delhi to apply for reinclusion by filing Form 6 and by misrepresenting themselves as fresh applicants.

They said such misrepresentation was a criminal offence attracting imprisonment.

In a previous hearing on October 28, the top court 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 court had, instead, suggested the ECI to allow ASDD voters to either apply through enumeration forms or Form 8 (used by registered voters to update personal details like change of residence, etc).

On November 14, the ECI informed the court that ASDD voters would be allowed to submit enumeration forms communicating their current ordinary residence.

Those who had not shifted their residence had to only provide a statement giving reasons for not filling up the enumeration form earlier. Electors who shifted residence within the same State were not required to file Form 8.

Further, the ECI had made it clear that those who had already applied through Form 6 would not face criminal prosecution.

On Thursday, Mr. Bhushan alleged that there had hardly been any ground-level implementation of the court's October 28 suggestions.

"As per the timeline, the distribution and collection of enumeration forms will start only today (November 19), and only a period of 12 days has been allotted, which will be inadequate for reaching the 47 lakh ASDD voters," Mr. Bhushan said.

SC dismisses ED plea against bail given to SP leader Azam Khan

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to interfere with an order of interim bail granted by the Allahabad High Court to Samajwadi Party leader Mohd. Azam Khan in a money laundering case and dismissed a plea by the Enforcement Directorate.

A Bench of Justices M.M. Sundresh and P.B. Varale, however, noted that any observations made by the High Court in its bail order granting interim bail would not influence the final decision in the case.

The money laundering case relates to alleged financial irregularities concerning the leader's Mohammad Ali Jauhar University.

Additional Solicitor General, appearing for the ED, said the High Court had erroneously recorded a finding that the grounds of arrest was not supplied to Mr. Khan.

"We gave grounds of arrest. He refused," Mr. Raju submitted. The ED had appealed the Supreme Court against the High Court order granting the interim relief to the SP leader.

On November 18, the apex court had declined an oral plea by the ED to immediately freeze the High Court order.

SC asks ECI to verify, take remedial measures over misuse of Form 7s in Delhi

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed authorities to verify allegations that fabricated Form 7s were filed to delete genuine voters from electoral rolls in Delhi's Mustafabad Assembly Constituency during the ongoing special intensive revision process and take all remedial measures.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant even urged Congress leader Ali Mehdi, represented by advocate Shariq Ahmed, to approach the jurisdictional magistrate if the police have refused to register an FIR on his complaint about fabrication and forgery.

Ghost Form 7s

The order was passed on Mr. Mehdi's plea that a "substantial" number of ghost Form 7s seeking deletion of voters had been detected.



Ground scenario: 36 of the 37 forms examined by authorities were found to be false or fabricated, plea says. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

The writ petition said that voters whose names were put forward for deletion on the grounds of death, absence, or permanent shifting were found to be very much alive, present, and residing at their recorded addresses on the electoral roll. The persons in whose names Form 7s had been filed for deletion of these voters deny having filed or signed on the applications.

"The integrity of an electoral roll is compromised not only when an ineligible name remains upon it, it is equally compromised when an eligible elector is removed from it on a fact which never existed or upon an objection which the supposed objector never made," the writ petition said.

Of the 37 applications examined by electoral authorities, 36 were found to be false or fabricated, it said.

The petition drew attention to an investigation by *The Hindu*, which reported that 28 electors against whom deletion applications had been submitted were physically traced at the addresses at which they were enrolled.

In major rejig, Cong. assigns fresh charge to 81 office-bearers

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday carried out a major organisational reshuffle, relieving 25 All India Congress Committee (AICC) secretaries and joint secretaries of their current responsibilities and assigning fresh charge to 81 office-bearers across various States, Union Territories and organisational departments.

The changes, approved by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, involve reallocation of responsibilities among existing secretaries and new appointments, according to general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal.

Pranav Jha and Gaurav Pandhi will continue to serve in the Congress president's office, while Vineet Punia and Ruchira Chaturvedi have been retained as secretaries handling communications, publicity, and media, social media and digital media. There is no change in the responsibilities of the six secretaries handling Uttar Pradesh – Abhishek Dutt, Varun Chaudhary, Kunal Chaudhary, Jagdish Chander Jangid, Abdul Hannan and Sanjeev Arya.



Mallikarjun Kharge

For Rajasthan, Vishwa Vijay Singh, Porlak Kharte, Palak Verma and Manoj Bagri have been appointed secretaries.

Former MP Abdul Khaleque has been made an AICC secretary of West Bengal and Manoj Tyagi has been assigned to the administration department. Among those relieved of their responsibilities are Amba Prasad, B.M. Sandeep, Chetan Chauhan, Chiranjeev Rao, Christopher Tilak, Devender Yadav, Divya Maderna among others.

Reply to Baramulla MP Engineer Rashid's plea in PMLA case: Delhi HC to ED

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday sought the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) response on a plea challenging the framing of charges against Baramulla MP Abdul Rashid Sheikh, jailed separatist leader Yasin Malik, and five others in a money laundering case linked to alleged funding from Pakistan through hawala channels for secessionist activities in Jammu and Kashmir.

Justice Sachin Datta issued notice to the ED on Mr. Rashid's plea and listed it for further hearing next week.

Framing of charges

Mr. Rashid, also known as Engineer Rashid, has challenged a September 9 order by which the trial court had ordered framing of charges against the accused. On October 24, the special court had formally framed charges against the accused and put them on trial under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act after finding sufficient material on record to raise a strong suspicion of their involvement in the offence.



In court: Engineer Rashid has challenged the charges framed against him in a money laundering case. PTI

The ED has alleged that proceeds of crime amounting to ₹8.94 crore were generated, routed, transferred, concealed, possessed, acquired and used by the accused through various channels.

The seven accused include Mr. Malik, separatist leader Shabir Ahmad Shah, Masarat Alam, Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali, Naval Kishore Kapoor, and M/s Trison Farms and Constructions Pvt. Ltd.

The Central probe agency's case stems from a 2017 National Investigation Agency case in which charges were framed under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The prosecution has alleged that the accused received funds from the "Pakistani establishment" through hawala channels and other means to propagate secessionist activities and carry out acts prejudicial to the law of the land.

INBRIEF



Ministry seeks tighter norms for antimicrobials, bulk trade

The Union Health Ministry has proposed an amendment to the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019, to include 'antimicrobials' in the definition of 'New Drug'. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a major global public health concern and the proposed amendment comes amid concerns regarding the grant of manufacturing licences for antimicrobial products without adequate regulatory scrutiny. The Ministry has also proposed amendments to the Drugs Rules, 1945, to introduce a separate application form and licence form for the sale of bulk drugs, distinct from the existing licensing provisions for formulations.

BCI cautions law aspirants against unverified colleges

The Bar Council of India (BCI) on Thursday issued a public advisory cautioning prospective law students and their parents against taking admission to universities and law colleges without independently verifying their affiliation, recognition and approval from the statutory regulator. The advisory, issued in compliance with a direction passed by the Supreme Court on October 9, 2026, also warns institutions against making misleading claims about their approval status, sanctioned student intake, and eligibility to impart professional legal education."Students, parents and members of the public are advised to consult the official website of the Bar Council of India at www.barcouncilofindia.org, relevant notifications, approval communications issued by the Bar Council, and records of the concerned affiliating university," the advisory reads.

EPFO approves systematic withdrawal plan for retirees

Members can opt for periodic post-retirement payouts while remaining corpus continues to earn returns; minimum balance cut to 10%; waiting period for final settlement reduced to two months

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Central Board of Trustees of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), in a meeting held here on Thursday, approved the Systematic Withdrawal Plan (SWP) for EPF members, enabling periodic payouts of retirement savings.

The meeting, chaired by Union Minister for Labour and Employment Mansukh Mandaviya, also relaxed EPF withdrawal norms. The minimum Provident Fund balance requirement was reduced from 25% to 10% of the corpus, and the waiting period for final withdrawal was cut from 12 months to two months.

Meanwhile, the Opposition Congress, reacted to the issue of EPFO funds being siphoned off by Reliance Capital Ltd. (RCL).

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said that under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016, banks have taken haircuts bordering on tonsures. "One *mundan* has also happened. Now lakhs of workers are being forced to bear the pains of somebody else's ill-gotten gains. This is unacceptable," he said. *The Hindu* reported on Thursday that the EPFO has told the CBT that no further legal remedy exists for additional recovery of the remaining ₹1,800 crore of workers' money that RCL defaulted on paying to the EPFO, in view of binding Supreme Court judgments, the resolution plan approved by the National Company Law Tribunal, and the full-and-final settlement nature of distributions received.



Retiring members can receive monthly, quarterly or half-yearly payouts under the voluntary withdrawal plan. FILE PHOTO

The meeting's agenda included pension reforms, provident fund flexibility, investment management, governance, exemption policy, digital transformation of the EPFO, the status of the outstanding default on the retirement fund's holdings, and the annual performance of its portfolio managers.

"This reform will enable retiring members to withdraw their accumulated provident fund savings at regular intervals, such as monthly, quarterly or half-yearly, based on their preference. This facility would provide members with a structured source of periodic income while allowing the remaining corpus to continue generating returns, thereby helping augment their retirement income and supplement their pension benefits," the Labour Ministry said in a release.

'No compulsion'

The facility would be entirely voluntary, with no compulsion on members to opt for withdrawals. "The option may also be extended to eligible family members/beneficiaries, ensuring greater flexibility and financial security for the family. This aims to ensure stable post-retirement income, reduce reinvestment risks, strengthen fund sustainability and facilitate the extension of social security coverage to gig and platform workers," the Ministry said.

"The necessary amendments to the EPF scheme will be notified accordingly after approval from the Ministry. The proposal for a corresponding amendment in the Income Tax Act is being taken up with the Ministry of Finance," the release added. The CBT also reduced the minimum balance requirement from the existing 25% to 10% and the waiting period from 12 months to two months.

The Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme was also amended to facilitate the settlement of pending and expired exemption cases, with a six-month window for renewal and relaxation from contributions, interest, and penal damages for the verified transitional period. The Board in principle approved permitting investment of up to 3% of fresh accretion in eligible Alternative Investment Funds, within the existing overall investment ceiling, initially through government-backed entities.

Odisha gears up for Cyclone Akvan, shifts 3 lakh people

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

Odisha on Thursday geared up to tackle severe cyclonic storm Akvan, which is expected to cross the State's coast near Gopalpur by noon on November 20, resulting in heavy rain and maximum sustained wind speeds of 90-100 kmph, gusting to 110 kmph. The State shifted close to three lakh people to safer places by evening.


An elderly woman being moved to safety in Puri on Thursday.

As many as 60 units of the Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force, 14 units of the National Disaster Response Force and 221 teams of State fire services have been positioned at vulnerable areas to carry out rescue and restoration operations.

"The administration is prepared to handle the situation arising out of sea surge and waterlogging in low-lying areas. We have relocated around 2.98 lakh people from more than 2,000 places," said Special Relief Commissioner Rajesh Pravakar Patil. The highest 1.38 lakh people were evacuated in Ganjam district, while in Gajapati and Kandhamal districts, prone to landslide, 22,000 and 13,000 people were shifted. Similarly, 4,200 pregnant women were kept in secured places, Mr. Patil said.

Ghat roads (hill passes) such as Kalinga and Gajalbadi connecting Ganjam and Kandhamal districts have been barricaded, apprehending landslides.

Red warning for heavy to very heavy rainfall has been issued for districts such as Kendrapada, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Ganjam, Gajapati, and Kandhamal.

East Coast Railway said with Cyclone Akvan approaching, 41 train services scheduled to operate on November 19, 20 and 21, 2026, were cancelled as a precautionary measure.

Bengal on alert

Several districts of southern West Bengal, including Kolkata, are set to get heavy rainfall till November 21 due to Akvan.

South Eastern Railway has cancelled 19 trains on November 19 and 20.

(With inputs from Senjuti Sengupta in Kolkata)

SC quashes land acquisition for Odisha mining project

Top court says prior Gram Sabha consent is mandatory under the 2013 land acquisition law

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

The Supreme Court has stuck down the process of land acquisition for limestone mining in Odisha's Sundargarh district after observing that the prior consent of the Gram Sabha was mandatory for land acquisition in the Scheduled Areas, as per Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013.

Hearing the case of Bibol Toppo versus Odisha government and others, wherein acquisition of lands by the Odisha government for the purpose of mining by Dalmia Cements Bharat Limited was challenged, a Supreme Court Bench comprising Justices Dipankar Datta and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma ruled that the land cannot be acquired without prior consent of the Gram Sabha as per Section 41 of the 2013 Act.

'Unsustainable'

"In finality we allow the writ petition and hold that the land acquisition in question is unsustainable. The acquisition, along with the relevant notifications and orders is hereby set aside," the judges ruled.

The State government had granted a mining lease to the company for conducting mining operations over an area of 893.55 hectares.

The company held the mining lease, extended until February 2040, but sought to acquire 273.57 hectares of the land across the three villages to obtain surface rights required for mining operations.

The land acquisition was challenged in the Orissa High Court. The High Court had, however, held that the requirement of prior consent did not apply as it was an acquisition by the State.

"A straightforward examination of the Act makes it clear that the subject acquisition not only required the prior consent of at least 80% of the affected families, but also that such consent was to be obtained along with the SIA study," the top court observed.

Govt. urged to refer complaints against journalists to PCI

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The 2026 edition of the Press Council of India's (PCI) Norms of Journalistic Conduct has recommended that, instead of booking journalists reporting from conflict zones under stringent laws such as the NSA and the UAPA, the government should refer complaints against them to the PCI or take action under laws related to the media.

The 2026 edition of the norms was released on November 16, which is National Press Day.

"Disagreement with the government should not be considered treason or a threat to national security," the recommendation says. The other recommendation states that journalists should not be unnecessarily pressured to reveal their sources and that the opinion of the Supreme Court should be respected in this regard.

Chairperson dissents

Dissenting from the recommendations, the PCI Chairperson Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai (retd) said the government could not be asked to send complaints to the PCI, as the Council could not decide whether a particular complaint should be filed or not. "The complainant has to approach the investigating agency directly. Procedure suggested by the sub-committee is unknown to the process of investigation of crimes," she said.

Govt. extends PUC certificate validity for newer vehicles

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Road Transport and Highways Ministry has revised rules governing the validity of Pollution Under Control certificates, linking the frequency of mandatory emission testing to the age profile and emission standards of vehicles and allowing validity of up to three years for certain newer BS-VI vehicles.

Under the amendment to sub-rule (7) of Rule 115 of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, owners of newer vehicles will be required to renew their pollution certificates less frequently, while older vehicles will continue to undergo more regular emission testing.


Older vehicles will continue to undergo more regular emission testing. PTI

As per the new rules, which come into effect from November 19, BS-I, BS-II and BS-III vehicles will have a PUC certificate validity of three months, while that for BS-IV vehicles will be six months.

For BS-VI non-transport vehicles, the validity is three years for vehicles up to six years old, one year for vehicles aged more than six years but not exceeding 10 years, and six months for vehicles more than 10 years old.

For BS-VI transport vehicles, the validity is two years for vehicles up to six years old, one year for those aged more than six years but not exceeding 10 years, and six months for vehicles more than 10 years old.

Reducing burden

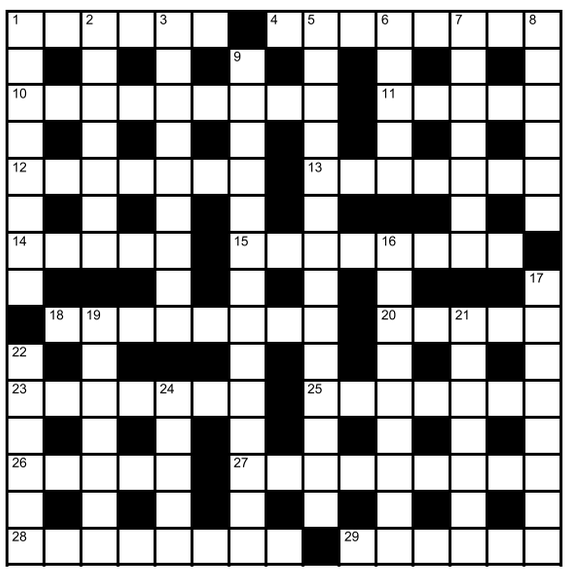
The changes are aimed at aligning the frequency of emission testing with the age profile of vehicles, and reducing the compliance burden on owners of newer and cleaner vehicles. The new rules also state that the revised validity norms will apply to existing certificates only when they come up for their first renewal after November 19.

TH CROSSWORD + 14953

(set by Arden)

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

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Only news in place of verse (6)
4 Scare monger has an inclination to carry a gun (8)
10 Supplier of bats on scoring (9)
11 Sing song between end of February and end of April (5)
12 Tend to involve a politician — it's a bore (7)
13 Herb gets some patronage, robust backing (7)
14 Oddly, aisle in between sides gets some light (5)
15 Set out over hearing a coaching class (8)
18 Just money upfront will get you some wool (8)
20 "Dazzle with talent", they say (5)
23 Team formation — regret over a non-professional (7)
25 Is a king upset with current subject? (7)
26 Royal house party in the grip of a wild goat (5)
27 Temporary jobs protect against male abnormal growth (9)
28 A bit of heredity getting cross shortly leading to death of body tissue (8)
29 Plant with a hardy companion (6)

Down

1 Nauseous scream — a daily formation for those requiring medical attention (4,4)
2 Nothing positive about puzzle (7)
3 Criminal hired gun born in the city (9)
5 Blue for red lights on — not the film trilogy (4,2,3,5)
6 After "Macbeth" by William Shakespeare, ends with some poetry (5)
7 State of one residing in a country (7)
8 Wax eloquent, finally give permission (6)
9 "Assemble at Northern Edge", a movie (5,3,6)
16 Polls on — corrupt free to join political dispensation (9)
17 Epilepsy or stroke — Tamil translation (5,3)
19 Leave a group playing (7)
21 French studio working at leisure, ignoring Americans (7)
22 Indian politico taking time to reach middle age — is not well organized (6)
24 Dread losing leader by mistake (5)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

No.SS7066 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

Solution to previous puzzle

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

M	O	M	R	L	W	S	D	K
I	T	E	R	A	T	E	A	L	T	H	O	R	N
S	R	C	A	T	R	C	I
H	A	L	C	Y	O	N	E	L	A	S	T	I	C
A	I	T	R	T	R	K
P	U	N	C	H	B	O	W	L	H	O	I	S	E
E	O	S	N	R
L	O	R	E	L	E	I	O	P	P	R	E	S	S
A	E	L	N	E
V	A	G	U	E	F	A	I	R	Y	R	I	N	G
A	R	S	O	R	M	A
T	R	O	O	P	E	R	O	M	N	I	B	U	S
O	W	O	M	N	O	I	K
R	E	T	I	N	U	E	I	G	N	O	B	L	E
Y	H	T	R	C	E	E	T

FAITH

Krishna's affection for cows

Why did Lord Krishna, the protector of the universe, take such delight in tending cows? Cow herding may sometimes be dismissed as a humble occupation, yet in Krishna's life it becomes an expression of divine compassion. His affection for cows carries far beyond the simple village life of Gokula, said Tirukkudanthai Dr. Venkatesh.

One explanation begins with Bhudevi, the Earth, who was distressed by the burden of oppressive rulers and sought the Lord's protection in the form of a cow. Krishna's descent to relieve the burden also finds expression in His role as Gopala, the protector of cows. The Sanskrit word 'go' can refer both to a cow and to the Earth, bringing these two aspects of His protection together.

The literary tradition gives the relationship a further dimension. Sri Vadiraja's Rukminisha Vijaya is cited in connection with Bhudevi's appeal, while Swami Vedanta Desikan's Yadavabhyudayam associates Krishna's cows with the Vedas. The gentle sounds of the cattle are poetically compared with the Vedic chant, particularly the Sama Veda. In this image, the Lord praised by the Vedas delights in the company of cows. Nammazhwar's Tiruvaimozhi too celebrates Krishna's joy in tending cows. Their gentleness and the nourishment they offer make them symbols of generosity and quiet service. The Lord does not measure their worth by worldly ideas of rank or importance. His tenderness towards them reveals the dignity of those who appear simple and dependent. Krishna's identity as a cowherd is therefore not incidental to His incarnation. It reveals a Lord who is close to the vulnerable, attentive to those who depend on Him and ever ready to protect Him.

Single-use medical devices: ban on reuse and who decides what is safe

Unsafe reuse can harm patients, and billing for a reused device as if it were new is indefensible; but a ban alone is not a plan to keep treatment affordable; a single-use label is usually decided by the manufacturer, not by an independent regulator who has checked whether it could be safely reused

Magnus Jayaraj Mansard

I still remember the stapler.

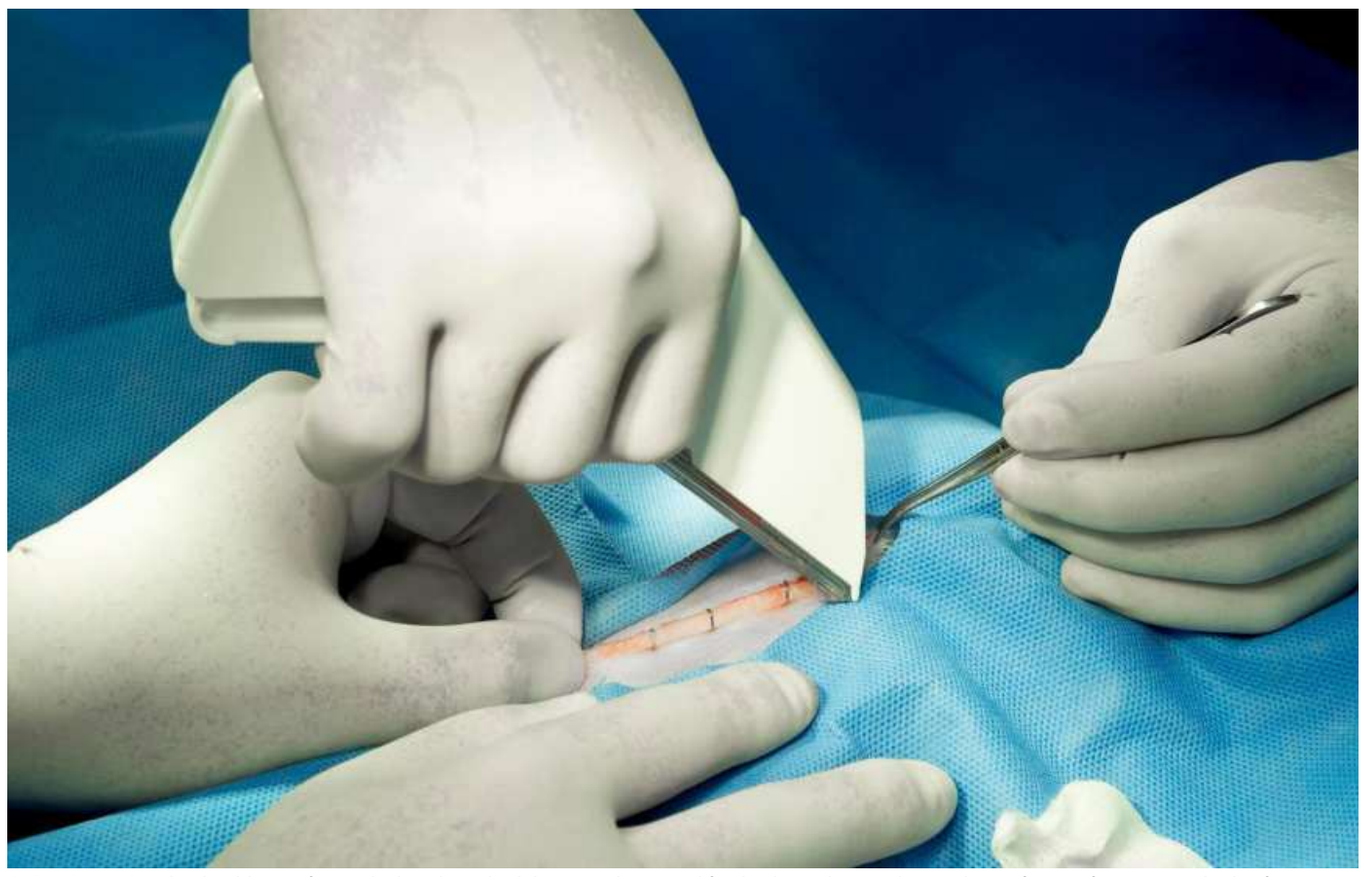
I was at Asan Medical Center in Seoul, watching liver transplants at one of the best programmes in the world, just as my own transplant career was beginning. The surgeon fired an expensive surgical stapler, finished the job and threw the device away. I was astonished.

Back home in India, we often used the same stapler again and again, until we felt it was no longer safe. It was so expensive that our patients could afford it only if the cost was shared among many of them.

That memory came back when the Directorate-General of Health Services (DGHS) issued its October 16 directive that banned the reuse of devices labelled for single use in all public and private healthcare facilities. The concerns it cited included the risk of infection, possible breaches of existing laws, and cases where patients or government schemes were reportedly charged the full price for reused devices.

These are fair concerns. Unsafe reuse can harm patients, and billing for a reused device as if it were new is indefensible. But there is a bigger question: who decides whether a device can be safely reprocessed, and on what evidence?

Think about rockets. For decades, they were thrown away after a single flight. Then Elon Musk's SpaceX built boosters that could land, be checked and fly again, and spaceflight became much cheaper. If rockets can be reused, why not medical devices?



Safety hazard: India should manufacture high tech medical devices at home and fund independent studies on their safety, performance and value for money. Affordable alternatives are needed so that cost does not push anyone towards unsafe practices. GETTY IMAGES

Who decides what is single-use?

In two 2018 *Heart Asia* editorials, Thomas Crawford, Kim Eagle and colleagues pointed out that the single-use label was usually decided by the manufacturer, not by an independent regulator who has checked whether it could be safely reused.

A manufacturer that sold a single-use device earned money from every new purchase. Testing a device for reuse was expensive, and the single-use label avoided that cost. Every device thrown away was also a new sale. That said, manufacturers often have good reasons to limit use. Many devices have narrow tubes, fine hinges and delicate coatings that are hard to clean and check properly.

India's uncomfortable record

The truth about device reuse in India is not flattering. For years, hospitals have reprocessed devices without consistent protocols, proper tracking or any systematic record of outcomes. Our record on pricing is just as troubling. In 2017, Maharashtra's Food and Drug Administration reportedly investigated eight private hospitals over the reuse of 1,306 catheters across more than 1,000 patients. Reports also said patients were charged a large part of the maximum retail price for reused balloon catheters.

What regulated reuse looks like?

Reprocessing is more than sterilising. A device can be sterile and still be weakened, unreliable or contaminated in ways the cleaning method does not reach. Depending on the device and the rules that apply to it, a reprocessor has to show that cleaning and sterilisation work, that the device still performs as it should, and that the whole process meets quality and reporting standards.

In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration treats anyone who reprocesses a single-use device as a manufacturer, with the same regulatory duties. Canada, Japan and the European Union have also set up rules for reprocessing, although the details differ from country to country.

Crawford and Eagle have suggested several ideas that India could use: clear labels on reprocessed devices, tested limits on how many times a device can be reused, tracking of each device, compulsory reporting of failures, independent oversight, and openness about the savings passed on to patients.

In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration treats anyone who reprocesses a single-use device as a manufacturer, with the same regulatory duties. Canada, Japan and the European Union have also set up rules for reprocessing, although the details differ from country to country

The ban answered a real patient-safety concern. But a ban alone is not a plan to keep treatment affordable. Surgeons and other doctors have warned about the cost of a blanket ban, and these worries deserve a serious answer. They should not be used to brush aside safety risks, but the cost to patients should not be ignored either.

A national programme could sort devices into three groups: those that must never be reprocessed; those that could be reprocessed under tested and regulated conditions; and those where we do not yet have enough evidence and need more research. Any reprocessing that is allowed should happen only in approved facilities, with tested methods, a recorded limit on reuse cycles, and a way to trace each device. Failures and complications should be reported, and independent audits should check that the rules are followed. Where reprocessing is allowed, patients should be told clearly whether a device is new or reprocessed.

Finally, India should make more of its expensive medical devices at home and fund independent Indian studies on their safety, performance and value for money. We need affordable alternatives so that cost does not push anyone towards unsafe practices.

I keep coming back to the stapler I saw thrown away in Seoul. At the time, I watched a costly device go into the bin and wondered whether we could ever afford to do the same in India. The rocket in Texas and the stapler in Seoul raise the same question: how do you make something expensive affordable without losing performance? In healthcare, this translates to: how do we make modern health practices both safe and affordable?

Throwing everything away is one answer. Making reuse safe is another. The difference between waste and progress is not whether we are willing to reuse. It is the evidence, the engineering and the accountability that make reuse safe.

(Dr. Magnus Jayaraj Mansard is HPB and transplant surgeon, GEM Hospital, Chennai.
magnusmansard@geminstitute.in)

THE GIST

- A manufacturer that sold a single-use device earned money from every new purchase. Testing a device for reuse was expensive, and the single-use label avoided that cost. Every device thrown away was also a new sale. That said, manufacturers often have good reasons to limit use
- The truth about device reuse in India is not flattering. For years, hospitals have reprocessed devices without consistent protocols, proper tracking or any systematic record of outcomes
- Experts have suggested several ideas that India could use: clear labels on reprocessed devices, tested limits on how many times a device can be reused, tracking of each device, compulsory reporting of failures, independent oversight, and openness about the savings passed on to patients

HUMERUS



Experimental GLP-1 drug demonstrates pain relief in people with osteoarthritis during trials

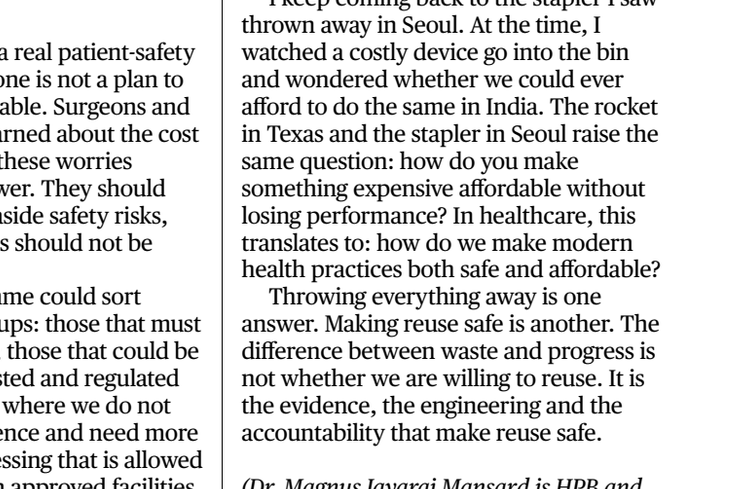
Ramya Kannan

In a study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, researchers in the U.S., Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom, showed that treatment with the drug retatrutide, may be useful for the treatment of painful knee arthritis in people with obesity.

In two phase 3 trials, adults without diabetes who had painful knee osteoarthritis and a body mass index (BMI) of at least 27 were randomly assigned to receive once-weekly subcutaneous retatrutide.

A pooled analysis of the studies found that about two-thirds of participants receiving retatrutide experienced at least a 50% reduction in knee pain, compared with 38% of those receiving a placebo.

"The findings are really saying for people who are overweight and have osteoarthritis, if you lose a significant amount of weight with this treatment, there is a good chance that you're going to get a meaningful reduction in your knee pain," said corresponding author of the study Thomas Schitzer, professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation, anesthesiology and medicine (rheumatology) at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, U.S.



Big relief: A pooled analysis of the studies found that about two-thirds of participants receiving retatrutide experienced at least a 50% reduction in knee pain. GETTY IMAGES

Affects 22% to 39% people

According to statistics, osteoarthritis affects roughly 22% to 39% of the population in India, making it the most common joint disease and the second most common rheumatologic problem in the country.

As per a paper, 'Epidemiology of knee osteoarthritis in India and related factors' published in the *Indian Journal of Orthopaedics*, the overall prevalence of knee osteoarthritis was found to be 28.7%, and the associated factors were female gender, obesity, advancing age, and sedentary work.

Current treatments for osteoarthritis include corticosteroid injections, which only provide short-term benefit, physical therapy, topical treatments, opioids and non-steroidal oral drugs.

Prof. Schnitzer noted that the first step that patients who are overweight and have painful knee osteoarthritis are recommended is diet, exercise and lifestyle modifications.

However, Prof. Schnitzer acknowledged that it could be difficult for these people to lose more than 10% of their weight through diet and exercise, given that it is difficult to exercise with existing knee pain.

Doubts remain

While trials have shown the drug to reduce pain, it is not yet clear whether it stops or slows down the progression of osteoarthritis.

Prof. Schnitzer said, "The other area of this research that needs further investigation is whether the drug can reduce painful knee osteoarthritis in people who are not overweight, as they were not included in the study. While these drugs are believed to have significant anti-inflammatory activity, the actual mechanism is not entirely known."

(Retatrutide has not yet been approved by the U.S. FDA.)
(ramya.kannan@thehindu.co.in)

Incomplete remedies

The ECI offers relief to a section of deleted electors but SIR's flaws remain

Following the Special Summary Revision (SSR) by the Election Commission of India (ECI) in some States that had undergone the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), mostly in Phase 1 and 2, some 74 lakh names were added onto the electoral rolls. This meant that the electorate in those 13 States, that had shrunk from 49.61 crore to 45.22 crore after the SIR, has now gone up to 45.96 crore. The ECI has extended the SSR to States and UTs in Phase 3. As before, it requires no proof of citizenship or mapping to older rolls, and insists on personal notice before any deletion other than of the dead. It also directs Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) to cross-verify deletions personally wherever they exceed 2% of a polling station's electors. Draft deletions in Phase 3 of the SIR averaged 17%, and reached 32.8% in Delhi. The ECI also offered another opportunity to electors deleted by the SIR in the seven States and UTs where it is still under way, such as Delhi and Maharashtra, to return to the rolls. Electors who did not return their forms can do so now, explaining the delay and those who moved within the State can return through the enumeration form with proof of their new address. EROs will process these forms under Rule 21(1) of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, and restore the elector's old EPIC number.

These "corrective" measures follow the Supreme Court's observation on October 28 that forcing deleted electors to re-enrol through Form 6, meant for new voters, was an "error". The ECI's use of remedies that existed in the registration rules is a tacit admission that it went wrong during the SIR. But the measures are limited. They reach roughly 4.5 crore of the 13.37 crore struck off the draft rolls and do not cover electors who moved out of their States. Electors in States where the SIR has concluded, including Bihar and West Bengal, which have already voted on the SIR rolls, can return only through the SSR, by filing Form 6 as new voters, with fresh EPIC numbers and no record that they were ever on the roll. In essence, the structure of the SIR remains intact. Electors must still provide details from "the last SIR", and those whose details are unavailable or do not match will be asked for documents in a manner that amounts to a citizenship test. The legality of the ludicrous "logical discrepancy" checks remains unaddressed. The 2002-03 special revision offered a better way. Those who had shifted homes were enumerated door to door at their new addresses. The Supreme Court must direct the ECI to return to that model.

Talks without peace

Europe must be part of any settlement on the Ukraine war

The trilateral negotiations in Abu Dhabi between Russia, Ukraine and the U.S. earlier this month failed to produce a major breakthrough or bridge the wide gap between Kyiv and Moscow. Yet, they were a good beginning towards finding a political settlement to Europe's longest war since the Second World War. In the two-day talks, hosted by the U.S., the warring sides agreed on some humanitarian measures, including prisoner exchange. U.S. representatives Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow after the talks to discuss the proposal. In the next stage, U.S., Ukrainian and European officials will meet in Berlin to discuss a coordinated European and Ukrainian position towards the peace process. As of now, Russian and Ukrainian positions remain far apart. Russia demands Ukraine withdraw from the territories of Donbas it still controls to stop attacks. Russia also wants to introduce limits to Ukrainian military capabilities and Kyiv to declare neutrality (give up its NATO ambitions). Ukraine, on the other hand, has rejected making any territorial concessions for a settlement and asked for security guarantees from the West so that Russia would not attack the country again.

That Ukraine survived Russia's invasion and continued to resist Russian forces for almost five years is no small feat. But it has also paid a huge price for its resistance. The country has lost more than 20% of its territory. Millions have fled, while men of fighting age are being drafted into the military. Ukraine's economy is kept afloat by European support, while its military continues to rely on NATO for weapons and other supplies. Until recently, the West stood united in its support for Ukraine against Russia, but that unity has since begun to fray. U.S. President Donald Trump, who has lifted sanctions on Russian diesel, is seeking to reset Washington's ties with Moscow. European leaders, who initially sought to isolate Russia, have also started reestablishing contacts with the Kremlin. In October, Finnish and Norwegian leaders held direct talks with Mr. Putin. To be sure, Ukraine's long-range strikes can hurt Russia as the recent attack on the Kerch Bridge demonstrated. But such strikes are unlikely to change the Kremlin's thinking about the war. As the conflict drags on, Ukraine's position is weakening and its allies are growing increasingly divided. After almost five years, Russia has failed to take a decisive victory. Ukraine does not have a credible path towards victory either. A diplomatic settlement, therefore, is the only way forward. The Abu Dhabi talks recognised this reality. But for the process to be meaningful, Europe must also be brought to the negotiating table.

The changing dynamic of nationalism in India



D. V. Kumar

Former Professor, Department of Sociology, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong

Many social science scholars had argued that nationalist and ethnic feelings would become weaker in the context of developed capitalism and modernity. However, we now know that nationalism continues to remain an implacable force. There is no dearth of literature about what nationalism means and how one makes sense of it. Here, we will look at two forms of nationalism and contextualise it by looking at the changing dynamic of nationalism in India.

Two forms of nationalism

Broadly speaking, one can refer to two kinds of nationalisms – civic and ethnic nationalism. The former is based on shared respect for values of liberty, equality, justice and fraternity and an unshakeable faith in the constitutional framework. It is inclusive, progressive, liberating and democratic. It seeks to bring together people who are otherwise extremely diverse in terms of their religions, social practices, languages, food habits, cultures etc. It takes special care to ensure that the marginalised and historically oppressed groups are accommodated within the nationalist framework. It also gives space to every identity to nurture itself unhindered.

On the contrary, ethnic nationalism focuses on essentialising and privileging one single identity via religion, language, or ethnicity and is therefore exclusionary, regressive, destructive and undemocratic. It poses physical and epistemic danger to those identities which do not fall within the dominant understanding of what nationalism is. Hitler clearly espoused ethnic nationalism (superiority of Germanic Aryan race) which led to unspeakable atrocities being committed against Jews in Nazi-era Germany.

The nationalism that grew in India during the freedom struggle was largely civic in nature. It was an inclusive, liberating, and democratic project. There was a strong conviction that what was being sought was worth fighting for and morally and ethically justified. There was almost a touch of romance; one could not but fall in love with the ideals of justice, equality, freedom and secularism which were the guiding principles of the nationalism that was experienced during the freedom struggle. It was an open invitation to explore. In this endeavour, science was to be a partner.

When the Constitution, which was a product of reasoned debates and contestations, came into existence, it unleashed enormous democratising possibilities. Its incorporation of fundamental rights and freedoms was a paradigmatic shift in a society which had and still has some of the most oppressive structures in the world such as the caste system. A democratic Constitution could have emerged only in the context of democratic nationalism.

> One of the most distinctive features of the present day dominant ethnic nationalism is that it is based on exclusions – religious minorities, Dalits, tribals and women are systematically relegated to the background

Exclusionary nature of present nationalism

The nationalism that is being privileged now in India in the last decade or so is the antithesis of what nationalism stood for during the freedom struggle and in its aftermath. What one is witnessing today is the assertion of an exclusionary, masculine, undemocratic ethnic nationalism (*Hindurashtra*). Systematic and organised efforts are being made to convert civic nationalism into an ethnic and exclusionary nationalism. One of the most distinctive features of the present day dominant ethnic nationalism is that it is based on exclusions – religious minorities, Dalits, tribals and women are systematically relegated to the background. The fact that they can come under attack for storing beef or for skinning dead animals clearly shows that they have no space in the dominant imagination of the nation.

Women too are constantly lectured on what they should do and what to wear, with less say over bodily autonomy. If women are vocal in raising their voice against unjust and unfair happenings in the country (for example, the SIR protests over '*vote chori*'), it supposedly leads to "cultural shocks" among some wide-chested males. This shows the symbiosis between patriarchy and nationalism. What we are seeing today is an aggressive and masculinised version of nationalism.

As noted by political scientist Benedict Anderson, a nation is an "imagined political community". He, however, did not look at the possibility of multiple imaginations, and the possibility that at certain historical junctures certain imaginations (right-wing nationalism at present, for example) hold sway over others. In the current dominant imagination, there is clearly no space for marginalised and oppressed sections of society. They have only two options: either fall in line or be ready to be subjected to a 'cognitive blackout'. Therefore, the nationalism that is presently on the ascendant has lost its progressive and emancipatory potential. It is intolerant of any kind of questioning and deeply oppressive of dissent. It uses all possible state machinery to suppress oppositional voices. Anti-nationals, urban naxals, *dimagi naxals* etc. are some of the terms used to describe those who dare to imagine the nation in a creative, democratic and inclusive manner.

Further, one hears of 'peace bonds' these days when anybody tries to hold peaceful protests against what they perceive as anti-people and anti-democratic measures of the government. Weaponising 'peace bonds' has become a way of silencing dissent. It is in the very nature of ethnic nationalism that alternative imaginations and different ways of looking at what the nation should be are delegitimised. The right-wing nationalists of today are clearly inspired by the European (Germany, in particular) experience and are trying to follow its model of nationalism which is based on essentialising a single identity.

It needs to be recognised that ethnic nationalism when pushed to its extreme logic assumes the form of fascism as it happened in Europe. American philosopher Jason Stanley enumerates 10 important features of fascism (glorification of a mythical past, anti-intellectualism, victimhood, propaganda etc.), some of which are observed in India today. In this context, one also needs to remember, as economist Prabhat Patnaik argued, the deeply imperialist nature of European nationalism, bent upon capturing distant lands, and the history of Indian nationalism and its anti-imperialist thrust.

The role of corporate capitalism

The other important feature of present-day ethnic nationalism is the cosy relationship that it has developed with corporate capitalism. Whenever capitalism is in crisis, as it is now, with high levels of unemployment and a falling rate of profit, it looks for those phenomena which can distract the attention of people. It has found in Hindutva one such phenomenon. In such times, capital needs a reactionary ideology to de-radicalise class consciousness and prevent the possibility of marginalised sections of society coming together in the fight for justice and equality. The ideology of right-wing nationalism is precisely that. Further, equality is an idea with which both capitalism and right-wing nationalism share an uncomfortable relationship.

Clearly, there is a strong need to recover the inclusive, empowering and anti-imperialist nationalism of the freedom struggle that once united us on the basis of equality, justice, secularism and respect for differences.

India's minerals policy needs to move to material security



Rohan Gupta

Co-founder and COO, Attero

One can auction a lithium block in a day. Turning what lies beneath it into a resource that Indian battery manufacturers can use is an entirely different story. Bridging that gap between a resource and a usable supply will shape the next phase of India's critical minerals policy.

In the last two years, the government moved the sector up on their policy agenda. The National Critical Mineral Mission was allocated ₹34,300 crore for a seven-year program covering exploration, mining and processing of critical minerals and materials. The amended mining law enables the government to auction blocks of 24 critical minerals; more blocks are expected to be auctioned before 2031.

The government's intent is justified. There is a growing global reliance on minerals such as lithium, cobalt, nickel and rare earth elements for Electric Vehicles (EVs), batteries, electronic devices, renewable energy and strategic industries. Without the secure supply of these critical minerals, India cannot implement its ambitious manufacturing plans. However, the real question is, will having mines ensure the supply of materials?

Beyond the auctions

Mining a block is just the beginning. The minerals have to be extracted and processed for industry use. Often, that requires high end beneficiation (treatment of raw ore or material to remove impurities) and refining. Having mines does not mean having the materials. India is particularly vulnerable because it still imports most of its critical and processed materials.

China's case clarifies this point. It has gained control over critical mineral supply chains because of its ability to process and refine minerals at scale, not just because of its dominance in mining.

> It is one thing to successfully auction mineral blocks and meet exploration targets; it is another to refine the materials and provide a steady supply of industrial material

India could have vast untapped mineral resources, and still be heavily reliant on imports for critical minerals. This happens when a country does not develop the required capacities for mineral processing in conjunction with mining. This is why some aspects of the National Critical Mineral Mission, that are relatively less known, may ultimately be more important than the schedule for mineral auctions.

It takes time to set up new mines. Several challenges such as environmental concerns, land acquisitions, and limited mining and processing infrastructure can delay the opening of new mines and processing facilities. One cannot choose between mining and processing. Both need to happen simultaneously.

Tapping the recycling industry

The same is true for recycling. One of the schemes under the Critical Minerals Mission has a target of recycling 400 kilotonnes of critical minerals from tailings, fly ash and red mud, as well as from end-of-life products by 2031 with a monetary allocation of ₹1,500 crore. This is only a small fraction of India's requirement of critical minerals but that is not the point. Recycling critical minerals can be a quicker option than new mines.

There are several factors that have the potential to impact the nation's minerals security. For example, e-waste production in India is already large, and is only expected to increase. According to Redseer, India produced 3.8 million metric tonnes of e-waste in 2024, and the situation will only become more acute. The growth in the battery storage and EV sectors will also increase the supply of materials for recycling.

Collection and traceability will be the larger challenges. Currently, the scrap economy is largely fragmented. For recovered minerals to be reliable inputs to industry, recyclers must have predictable access to waste, and manufacturers must have confidence in the quality and consistency of the material they purchase.

Stockpiling not a long-term plan

The proposal for a national stockpile of selected critical minerals is another important part of the emerging strategy. Recent restrictions on the export of minerals have illustrated the rapid and unanticipated changes in supply. While a strategic reserve of minerals can lessen the impact of short-term disruptions, simply stockpiling minerals is not a strategy.

There will need to be decisions on what to stock, and what the target inventory levels will be. These challenges will become more pertinent as changes in technology impact the minerals that will be most strategically important.

There is little doubt India has made a considerable effort in a short amount of time. A few years ago, there was very little policy focus on critical minerals. Today, there is increased focus and support for policy and financial and institutional frameworks for critical minerals recycling, processing and imports.

The challenging part, now, will be implementing these policies.

It is one thing to successfully auction mineral blocks and meet exploration targets; it is another to refine the materials and provide a steady supply of industrial material through recycling. India's mineral strategy in the coming decade will likely revolve around the response to these challenges rather than the number of mineral blocks sold at auctions.

India has initiated steps to ensure access to a robust mineral resource base. Now, the next big step will be to transform those mineral resources into materials that the Indian industry needs. The big challenge that India is still facing is to evolve from mineral block auctions to material security.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Poisonous air

The poison we inhale every day rarely creates the urgency it deserves. Perhaps we have become too accustomed to grey skies and the annual advice to stay indoors. People need to understand both the immediate harm of polluted air and the damage that builds over years. A little fear, grounded in facts, is necessary to disturb this complacency. But warnings must come with practical protection and visible action. What does "stay indoors" mean to a street vendor, a construction worker or a child living beside a busy road? Clean air cannot depend on the ability to buy an air purifier.

Yash Javeri
Lucknow

Beyond symbolism

The first-ever trilateral meeting of the U.S., China and Russia is a welcome development (Page 1, November 19). But dialogue alone will not secure peace. The summit must move beyond symbolism and produce verifiable commitments: renewed arms-control, protection of civilian lives and respect for the interests of smaller nations. The Shenzhen summit may reduce power tensions, but New Delhi must ensure that decisions on nuclear security, Ukraine, energy, trade and Indo-Pacific security do not marginalise India or its neighbours.

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao
Hyderabad

Need space for dissent

Rahul Gandhi's criticism of the Indian economy on foreign soil must be viewed in the context of the space given to the Opposition at home. When the government and sections of the media fail to adequately cover opposing viewpoints, Opposition leaders naturally seek other platforms to present their concerns. The Opposition represents a substantial section of India's electorate, certainly more than one-third, and deserves adequate time in Parliament. When voices are not heard at home, they find an audience abroad.

T. Kailash Ditya
Hyderabad

Climate needs

Despite international agreements in COP29, major hurdles continue to stall climate progress. Developing nations lack adequate climate finance, while India faces surging electricity demand, limited energy storage, and continued fossil fuel reliance. All while navigating the economic fallout for displaced coal workers (Editorial page, "Climate Promises need to become praxis", November 19). To build a sustainable future, governments must mobilise climate funding, expand renewable infrastructure, and create alternative livelihoods for affected communities. India must also diversify its energy mix through hydropower, geothermal, biomass, and tidal power, backed by genuine international cooperation, transparency, and accountability.

Vidya V. R.
Kollam

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Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

What protections do workers in India have in case of layoffs?



K. R. Shyam Sundar

Former Professor, Human Resource Management area at Xavier School of Management in Jamshedpur



Rahul Charkha

Partner at Economic Laws Practice

PARLEY

Layoffs have become an increasingly prominent feature of the employment landscape. The growing adoption of artificial intelligence and the significant investments companies are making in AI infrastructure have added to concerns about job security and the future of employment. Against this backdrop, as India marks the first anniversary of the implementation of its four Labour Codes on November 21, we examine the question of severance pay and the wider social security framework for workers who lose their jobs.

What protections do workers in India have in case of layoffs? K.R. Shyam Sundar and Rahul Charkha discuss the question in a conversation moderated by **Nivedita Varadarajan**. Edited excerpts:

What happens when somebody gets laid off? Does it change across sectors?

Shyam Sundar: Layoff is a term that is Americanised; in India, we use the term retrenchment. Layoffs impact workers or employees across the board, irrespective of the economic activity that the worker is performing, be it in coal mines or tech companies or even those retrenched in government services, and all carry the trauma.

In the West, an individual layoff is simple: you get the pink slip, settle your dues, and leave. In India, when a worker is retrenched, the worker undergoes a tremendously different experience. He wonders whether to tell his family, looks for jobs secretly, and is barred from the premises where he served for several years.

Getting retrenched or laid off is a huge question mark on the existential aspects of workers.

How is retrenchment different between blue- and white-collar workers?

SS: White-collar workers are generally believed to fend for themselves with their human capital. A white-collar worker's skills could be specific to his role at one company. Those with low-skilled or semi-skilled jobs can migrate to different companies till they are able to achieve the reservation wage [the wage below which no worker would be willing to sell his or her labour power].

In a "hire and fire" system, security is not guaranteed. This is prevalent in North American countries such as the U.S. and Canada. In India, the type of contract under which the worker is employed by a firm, be it a trainee, contract worker, or tenured, is important.



GETTY IMAGES

What has changed in the new Labour Codes?

SS: Much of what has been done in the name of labour law reforms is hogwash. It had three aims: ease of doing business, attracting foreign capital and technology into the country, and dealing with workers' questions.

There used to be a multiplicity of adjudicating authorities. The new Labour Codes bundle them. In the name of rationalising the judicial infrastructure, the Industrial Relations Code simply makes a mess of it. The Code removed labour courts and replaced them with Industrial Tribunals. The government argues that this will increase efficiency. But are vacancies filled on time? Do we have efficient presiding officers? These need to be assessed. But still, unlike in Europe, even if a single worker is laid off, the entire machinery can come into work.

Why is severance pay taxed?

Rahul Charkha: Legally in India, severance pay is mandated for certain sectors, but it is a customary practice for the employer. For workers, being laid off is a rude shock, not only because they are losing their regular income, but also employee benefits like health insurance for their families. The real fundamental question is whether the government should really be taking away one-third of the severance pay that the employer pays workers to compensate for all these livelihood issues. The government can tax what it believes is taxable. To the government, this is really nothing but a salary that you receive in advance. So, it can be taxed.

The government treats severance pay as 'profit in lieu of salary', which is nothing but salary. Both are taxed similarly.

There are several components in an employment termination letter.

For a long time, taxes were paid on what was the salary component, which is a smaller part of the whole package.

> Why India does not have an unemployment relief system in place is itself a question that needs deliberation
> **SHYAM SUNDAR**

The government brought in a specific provision to say that even this non-taxable part of the severance agreement would also be liable to tax under a separate head, which is income from other sources. Legally, the government can tax what it believes is taxable. Is it fair for the government to tax it?

Is a one-time severance pay enough?

SS: Critics argue that severance pay is very high in India. I disagree. Several countries, including Sri Lanka and many in Europe, have stricter rules. A progressive employer will provide counselling before the layoff, legal counsel, retraining, testimonials, and help registering with employment exchanges. These might look like small costs, but it is very important for the employer to bear them. Most employers prefer the Indian model: pay the compensation in one stroke, and the file is closed.

But these rules are applicable only to three industries – coal mining, plantations and the manufacturing sector. This leaves out service workers and IT workers. In the last five years, the sector has witnessed some of the worst layoffs, and the proper legal procedure was not followed. It also leaves out informal workers.

Several countries have several ways of providing security for their workers. Which are the ones that India should look at? Which is most feasible for India?

RC: Different countries have had different philosophies, and they have tailored their social security to suit their culture. For instance, Germany has an earnings-linked unemployment insurance, where unemployment payouts are calculated as a percentage of the worker's prior earnings rather than a flat rate.

The U.S. funds its unemployment insurance payout through a payroll tax. This is determined through an experience rating, which is based on the history of unemployment claims and the payroll changes of an employer as such. It is funded by a federal-state combination and that has its own administrative challenges.

The U.K. and Singapore also have different schemes. I think we can certainly look at these schemes and tailor a scheme to suit Indian customs. Maybe we should also look at insurance to tackle this. We have a set of solutions to tackle rural unemployment, but we need to keep in mind that the parameters for urban employment schemes would be different.

SS: Why India does not have an unemployment relief system in place is itself a question that needs deliberation.

Traditionally, the joint family system was a cushion. One can always fall back on it. The government can give unemployment benefits using tax money to provide unemployment assistance to vulnerable workers.

The government's Employees' State Insurance (ESI) scheme offers insurance for workers and their families, but the spread of ESI hospitals is disproportionately less compared to the number of beneficiaries. This is a serious loss of bureaucracy, governance and lack of vision.

How do we get social security for gig workers, platform workers and informal workers?

RC: We are moving away from a very formal employer-employee relationship, and the government has recognised this. Gig/platform and informal workers are mentioned in the new labour codes. State governments are also forming laws to protect them.

It is very important to have a database and e-Shram is collecting that data.

How do you compensate gig workers for a loss of earning potential or a consistent earning potential? There is no easy answer for this. I think the simplest way would be to extend existing insurance to them. But we need some out-of-the-box kind of solution. Maybe gig workers can opt in to pay a small premium against any potential loss of revenue. Maybe the fund for the premium could be matched by the aggregator and the customer.

SS: There needs to be a two-pronged attack strategy: the government should bring workers inside the traditional social security net and there must be synergy between citizens and government agencies.

The future of labour market governance will be primarily in the Skills Ministry rather than the Labour Ministry or the Commerce Ministry. We have a very admirable infrastructure, but we are a huge failure when it comes to implementing it.

To listen to the full interview
Scan the code or go to the link
www.thehindu.com

NOTEBOOK

M.S. Dhoni: a diplomat, a wit, and a man of few words

Dhoni charmed the media with humour, one-liners, and diplomatic interventions; his silences and quiet exits often left reporters guessing

K.C. Vijaya Kumar

A splendid cricketing journey recently wound to a close as M.S. Dhoni moved into the realm of mentorship. Just as tributes about this magnificent player and leader pour in, it is also time to recall the communication traits of Dhoni, the enigmatic personality.

A packed sporting calendar often means that the intersection between celebrity athletes and the media stays restricted to press conferences steeped in platitudes. The one-to-one interview is now a rarity and glimpses into how a player thinks are gleaned from general media interactions.

Even in this common setting, a few were exceptions. Inzamam-ul-Haq, Virender Sehwag, Dhoni, and Rohit Sharma could light up press-conference halls with their candour and humour.

Once Dhoni seemed to have a slight limp while attempting a second run. In the post-match interaction, a correspondent asked: "Skipper, you seemed to be in some discomfort, all good?" The captain was ready: "The vehicle is well serviced, oiled and ready to go!"

There was laughter all around and it also reiterated the active biker residing within Dhoni's soul. He would often lapse into automobile metaphors and it would take a few seconds before realisation dawned about how a tricky question was answered.

At Karachi during the 2008 Asia Cup, the last time India toured Pakistan, Dhoni was charm-personified. Through Hindi one-liners, he would keep the Pakistani scribes entertained, and the same reporters would find the home team captain Shoaib Malik, a touch drab. "But your captain is *bilkul mast yaar*," the host reporters would tell their Indian counterparts.

Often known as Captain Cool, Dhoni could be a diplomat when the occasion demanded. Once in Bangladesh, Sehwag left the local scribes in a tizzy. He merely said that their team is not a match for India. As hyper-nationalism reared its head and Sehwag was being accused of being haughty, Dhoni stepped in for the next press conference and doused the flames.

"We take every opposition seriously, it is the same with Bangladesh," he said. Later in a rare casual talk with the travelling Indian reporters, he quietly said: "Sometimes it is better not to say everything you honestly feel as it can be misunderstood."

Perhaps it was a specific appraisal about what Sehwag had said, or it was a general comment about the ideal communication protocol in a neighbouring country. With Dhoni, it was always difficult to say what he had in mind, as he would lapse into a grin and vanish into the dressing room.

He could equally test the patience of harried writers chasing impossible deadlines. Once in South Africa, after a day-and-night game, he and his mates played a spot of football, while reporters, especially Indian scribes, seemingly waited for eternity for the post-match press-conference. Frantic calls were made to the respective sports desks about a probable delay in filing a copy for the late-city edition.

Having decided that he would talk to the media only in a formal press conference environment, he once used this medium to snuff out speculation about a rift within the team. During the 2009 ICC World T20 in England, he turned up with the entire squad, just to emphasise that all was well with his unit.

If this was optics at its best, his silences could also be baffling. And nothing can beat his interaction with the press at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on December 30, 2014. After India drew the Test, Dhoni spoke at length about the contest. But once he left, a BCCI press-release popped up in the inbox of all cricket writers: "M.S. Dhoni has retired from Test cricket."

There was a scramble towards the team hotel but by then Dhoni was in his room. His cricketing departures were always like this, a quiet note through a press-release or Instagram, just like his latest exit as a player from Chennai Super Kings.

vijayakumar.kc@thehindu.co.in

PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Piety in peril



People perform rituals amid toxic foam floating on the polluted Yamuna at Kalindi Kunj during Chhath Puja in New Delhi on November 15. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO NOVEMBER 20, 1976

Jamaican wins Miss World title

London, Nov. 19: A green-eyed Jamaican beauty Cindy Breakspeare last night won the 1976 Miss World title as more clouds gathered over the stormy glamour show.

While the glittering crown was placed on the head of the winner, the contest organiser, Mrs. Julia Morley, said a writ petition had been issued against her. She refused to give details.

But a spokesman for the anti-apartheid SANROC group, which had called on third world nations to boycott the contest in protest against separate black and white entries from South Africa, said that Mrs. Morley was being sued for alleged libel by its secretary Chris de Broglio over statements she had made about the boycott campaign. Nine countries ordered their girls to withdraw from the contest. SANROC has said it would launch another boycott if South Africa was represented by two entries next year. Mrs. Morley, mother of five, has already said she has been assured that South Africa's contestants in 1977 would be chosen in a multi-racial contest.

A spokesman for the organisers said the girls who withdrew from the contest might have to find the money for their own hotel bills and living costs in London.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO NOVEMBER 20, 1926

Letter to Swedish academy

London, Nov. 19: Mr. Bernard Shaw tenders his best thanks for the award (Nobel Prize) but says that his readers and audiences provide more than sufficient money for his needs and that his renown is greater than is good for his spiritual health. He proceeds to point out some very advantageous sites in London which are being rapidly filled by agencies in which not only the Dominions but also the European powers exhibit very choice products to advertise travel attractions and all sorts of things to tempt the importer but a book is rarely exhibited.

He suggests that the money accompanying the award should be funded and the proceeds used to encourage understanding in literature and art between Sweden and British Isles.

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of electric buses to be launched by Delhi government

100 Delhi government will launch 100 new zero-emission electric buses on Friday, taking the total strength to over 7,000 buses under the Delhi Transport Corporation, officials said on Thursday. It will be launched by the Chief Minister from ISBT Kashmere Gate. PTI

Persons displaced by continuing clashes in southern Ethiopia

7 lakhs. Nearly 7,00,000 people have been displaced by clashes between armed forces in southern Ethiopia, British NGO Islamic Relief said Thursday. "Almost 7,00,000 people have been displaced amid an escalation of conflict in southern Ethiopia as aid agencies prepare to respond," the NGO said. AFP

Record investment announced by Indian companies in America

20.5 $ billion. Indian firms announced a record $20.5 billion in investments in the U.S. this year, the highest from any country, an American diplomat said on Thursday. Under 'Mission 500', the nations aim to more than double bilateral trade to $500 billion by 2030. PTI

Food business licences suspended by FDA across Maharashtra

23 The Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration has suspended the licences of 23 establishments for violating food safety and hygiene norms, an official said on Thursday. It seized food products worth ₹2.23 crore and ordered eight unregistered vendors to shut their businesses. PTI

Child marriages prevented in last three years in Uttarakhand

78 Uttarakhand Women and Child Development Minister Rekha Arya on Friday expressed concern over the prevalence of child marriage in the State, revealing 78 such instances coming to light in the "last two-three years" alone. PTI

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Xi's new rulebook for local leaders

The Communist Party has published rules that centralise control over every provincial, city and county committee with four shifts from the 2015 version: a sharper focus on Xi Jinping Thought, a wider remit for local committees, tighter control over personnel and a new emphasis on discipline

WORLD INSIGHT

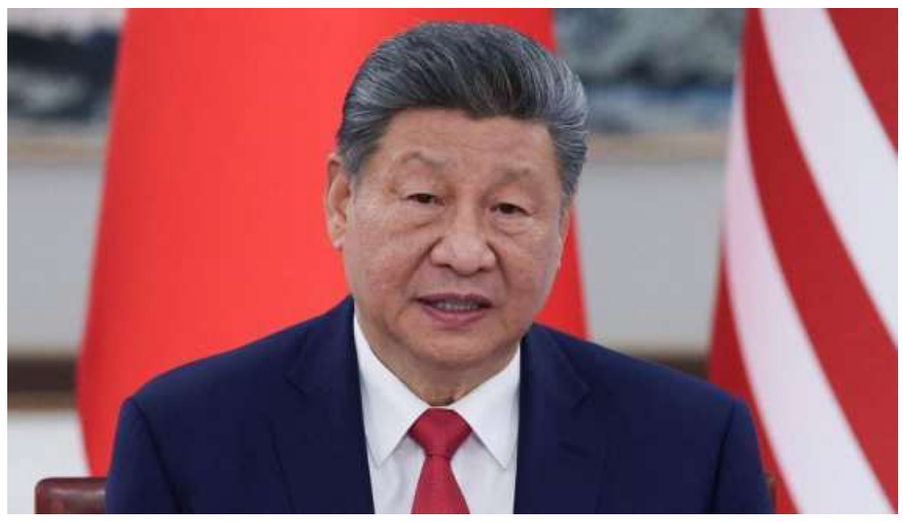
Manoj Kewalramani

All eyes this week are on Shenzhen, where leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) grouping are meeting for their annual summit. The summit, however, is being overshadowed by the first-ever sit-down between U.S. President Donald Trump, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin. As significant as that is, it is arguably not the most important political development in China this week. On Monday, the Communist Party published a revised set of regulations detailing how the country will be governed in the years ahead.

The Regulations on the Work of Local Committees of the Communist Party of China govern every local Party committee and its standing committee at the provincial, city and county levels. These committees, rather than the governments they oversee, are the real seat of power in China. They set the direction, decide major issues, manage cadres and supervise the legislatures, governments, courts and procuratorates in their jurisdictions. The rules that bind them are, in effect, the operating manual for governing China below Beijing.

The previous version of this regulations was issued in 2015, three years into Mr. Xi's tenure. Read side by side, the two texts reveal four significant shifts.

The first change is ideological. The 2015 regulations asked local committees to arm themselves with Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Mr. Xi featured only as the author of a "series of important speeches" whose spirit cadres were asked to implement. In the 2026 text, the references to Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought have been removed. Article 3 instead reads like a summary of Xi's political programme. It calls on everyone to use Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era as the guide, emphasises the centrality of his leadership and position, and stresses his vision of China's modernisation. Article 4 makes upholding the authority of "the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core" the precondition for all else. Article 9 translates this into routine practice through the "first item on the agenda" system, under which committee meetings must open by studying Mr. Xi's relevant instructions, and demands that committees "resolutely follow the command of the Party Central Committee."



In 2015 regulations, Xi Jinping was merely the author of a 'series of important speeches' whose spirit cadres were to implement, ranked behind Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. REUTERS

Blurred lines

The second shift concerns the remit of local Party committees. The 2015 text empowered them to exercise "overall leadership", but their remit was limited to "political, ideological and organisational" domains. That qualifier has now been deleted. The revised Article 5 directs committees to strengthen overall leadership over economic, political, cultural, social and ecological work, and to make decisions on major issues in their regions. In essence, the fine line between the local Party committee and local government has been further eroded.

Third, on the issue of personnel and the qualities required of them, Article 7 now opens by requiring that political standards come first in staffing local committees, with political integrity as a qualification placed ahead of capability and competence. Political integrity, in this context, implies alignment with the central agenda. In addition, each committee's membership must be filled with the committee one level up, the grounds for automatically ending a member's tenure have been widened, and the higher committee's power to appoint and remove members of lower committees is spelled out more clearly. In short, higher-level committees now enjoy far greater powers of oversight and control over individuals at lower levels.

Fourth, the 2015 regulations were largely about streamlining procedures and, to an extent, empowering local committees to lead. The 2026 document, on the other hand, is focused on building guardrails around what committees and individuals in leadership positions can and cannot do. The emphasis is on discipline and intensifying control by higher-level committees. For example, an entirely new Article 27 lists 10 kinds of prohibited conduct. These range from ensuring that officials implement central decisions to the letter to barring vanity projects, new local government debt and local-level protectionism that hinders the goal of building a unified national market.

Article 18 further reins in the local "top leaders", essentially preventing them from cultivating their own fiefdoms. New procedures also require recusal, oblige the secretary to speak last in meetings and postpone votes when there is serious disagreement. Article 30 introduces lifelong accountability for secretaries and standing committee members for major decision-making errors.

What does all this add up to? Beijing has long wrestled with a dilemma. Local officials control the engines of growth and policy experimentation, but they are also behind debt binges, statistical fudging, protectionism and corruption.

The 2026 regulations resolve this tension decisively in favour of central control. Local committees gain broader authority over everything in their jurisdictions, but they must exercise it within tighter ideological bounds, under closer supervision from above, and with personal liability that never goes away. This structurally tightens Mr. Xi's control over the Party. It is, however, unlikely to produce greater initiative and policy innovation.

(Manoj Kewalramani is the Chairperson of the Geostrategy Programme at the Takshashila Institution)

THE GIST

- In the 2026 text, the references to Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought have been removed
- The revised Article 5 directs committees to strengthen overall leadership over economic, political, cultural, social and ecological work, and to make decisions on major issues in their regions
- Article 30 introduces lifelong accountability for secretaries and standing committee members for major decision-making errors

What does the WHO report say about India's TB target?

What was India's target for eliminating TB by 2025 and why has the country missed its target?

Athira Elssa Johnson

The story so far:

India continues to account for nearly a quarter of the world's tuberculosis (TB) burden despite expanded diagnosis and treatment services, falling short of the national target of eliminating TB by 2025. According to the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Tuberculosis Report, released on November 12, 2026, an estimated 10.6 million people developed TB worldwide in 2025.

While India's estimated TB mortality rate fell by 38%, from 28 deaths per lakh population in 2015 to 18 per lakh in 2025, the country diagnosed and notified 25.3 lakh cases during the year. However, the WHO has not published India's estimated incidence for that year, as the figures are under review.

India set a national target of eliminating TB by 2025, five years ahead of the global Sustainable Development Goal deadline of 2030, incorporated into the National Strategic Plan for TB Elimination 2017-2025.

The plan aimed to reduce estimated incidence from 217 cases per lakh population in 2015 to 43 per lakh by 2025, an 80% reduction. It also sought to reduce TB mortality by 90%, from 32 deaths per lakh to three, and ensure that no family affected by TB faced catastrophic costs due to the disease. The WHO's End TB Strategy had set global targets of reducing incidence by 50% and mortality by 75% by 2025, compared with 2015 levels.

How far has India progressed?

India's TB mortality rate fell by 38% between 2015 and 2025, reaching 18 deaths per lakh population. This exceeded the WHO's 2020 milestone of a 35% reduction, but five years late. The 2025 target was a 75% reduction in mortality. The rate of 18 deaths per lakh remains well above India's national target of three.

The WHO's 2025 report estimated that India's TB incidence had declined from 237 cases per lakh population in 2015 to 187 per lakh in 2024, a reduction of about 21%. This was well short of the reduction envisaged under the national plan.

The National Strategic Plan used an original 2015 incidence baseline of 217 per lakh, while the WHO's revised estimate was 237 per lakh. These figures belong to different estimation contexts and should not be treated as one continuous series. The absence of a 2025 incidence estimate means the latest change in India's disease burden cannot be assessed yet.

Why has India missed its target?

TB elimination requires more than diagnosing and treating people who reach health facilities. Transmission continues when people remain undiagnosed, receive a delayed diagnosis or are not linked to appropriate treatment. Access to testing and follow-up remains uneven, particularly for people in remote areas and vulnerable communities. A substantial number of patients also seek care in the private sector, making complete notification and continuity of treatment important challenges.

India has expanded active case-finding and the use of rapid molecular tests, including through the TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan. The WHO report records that 46 % of India's diagnosed cases in 2025 were initially tested using rapid diagnostic tests, up from 38 % in 2024. However, screening must lead to confirmatory diagnosis and appropriate treatment.

The disease is also closely linked to social and economic conditions. Undernutrition increases the risk of developing active TB, while crowded housing and poor ventilation can contribute to transmission. Patients may face costs related to travel, investigations, nutrition and lost wages, even when medicines are provided free through the public health system. These expenses can affect households and make it harder for patients to continue treatment.

Drug-resistant TB adds to the challenge. Resistance to one or more TB medicines makes treatment more complex. Shorter all-oral regimens, including the six-month BPaLM combination for eligible patients with multidrug- or rifampicin-resistant TB, have reduced the treatment burden for some. However, identifying people with resistant disease and linking them to appropriate care remain important.

Why are the incidence figures missing from the WHO report?

Incidence refers to the number of new cases occurring in a population over a specified period. Prevalence measures the number of people who have the disease at a particular point or during a defined period. Notifications refer to cases diagnosed and reported to the health system. Notifications do not represent everyone who developed TB during the year, since some people may not have been diagnosed or reported. The difference between estimated incidence and notifications helps assess gaps in diagnosis and reporting, but is not an exact count of undiagnosed people.

The WHO has withheld India's 2025 incidence estimate while it assesses data from a new district-level sentinel surveillance exercise. The updated estimate is expected in early 2027. The exercise involves population-level surveillance in 50 representative districts. The first round of data collection was completed in 2025. The findings are being examined alongside the results of the 2020-21 national TB prevalence survey. The data need to be assessed for comparability before they can be used to revise national estimates. The absence of an incidence estimate does not mean India had no TB data for 2025.

When will the updated figures be available?

The WHO expects to update India's incidence estimates in early 2027, after the district-level surveillance data have been assessed. The revised figures should provide a clearer picture of the country's TB burden and trends. The latest report records progress in reducing mortality and expanding diagnosis, but India has not met the targets it set for 2025. The updated incidence estimate will help assess the scale of the shortfall. Addressing delays in diagnosis, unequal access to care and the social and economic conditions that sustain transmission will remain central to India's TB response.

KEYWORD



Investment in AI-related equipment has grown about 3.5 times since 2021, far faster than GDP. GETTY IMAGES

If AI lifts productivity, will demand sustain growth?

Tugan-Baranovsky argued that machines can produce machines which can produce more machines, while Luxemburg contended that machines are not an end in themselves; only time will tell who is right

Rohit Azad
Indranil Chowdhary

Building on our previous piece yesterday, we now look at the macroeconomic implications of rising labour productivity on the global economy. We make the global economy our canvas to avoid between-country gain/loss that AI may result in since that is not the purpose of this piece. Our basic question is what may happen to the global pie of output and jobs. When looked at globally, demand consists of consumption, investment, and government expenditure because the trade component cancels out (see **Box 1A**).

Since government intervention is outside the sphere of "pure" market economy, we focus on consumption and investment. The question we pose in this piece is how a rise in productivity would affect this demand? By its very nature, this piece is speculative, so we present two opposite cases for the readers to mull over.

A rise in labour productivity, without a commensurate increase in real wages, means a fall in the share of wages (denominator of the last term rises but the numerator does not rise in tandem in **Box 1B**). The implication of this is significant for consumption growth.

Let us say the total output of 100 is divided equally between workers and capitalists and, for the sake of the argument, workers consume all their wages and capitalists consume half of it. The total consumption demand would be 75; 50 by the workers and 25 (half of 50) by the capitalists. Suppose AI is introduced in this economy which increases workers' productivity dramatically but the wages rise by less than that, so the wage share falls to, say 30%. The consumption demand of the workers fall to 30, whereas for the capitalists it rises to 35 (half of 70), totalling to 65. Demand for consumption falls from 75 to 65, so demand worth 10 just disappears into thin air.

The Luxemburg-Baranovsky debate

More than a century ago, a theoretical debate took place between Rosa Luxemburg, a German Marxist, and Mikhail Tugan-Baranovsky, a Russian economist on the issue of falling share of consumption in total demand and growth in a capitalist economy. It would be apt to revisit that debate in the context of AI and rising labour productivity.

Tugan-Baranovsky argued that even if the share of consumption falls, investment can replace the lost demand. The 10 units of consumption goods that vanished into thin air above could simply get replaced by investment demand. He went to the extreme to argue that machines can produce machines which can produce more machines even if the demand for the final consumption goods they produce shrinks over time. The case of AI, imagined as machines producing more machines, comes very close to what he had in mind.

Luxemburg argued, on the other hand, that machines are not an end in themselves. If the demand for the final consumption goods they produce is decreasing over time, there will be a surplus of such goods piling in the warehouses. The 10 units of consumption not sold will not be produced next time. And if they are not produced, then the machines which could produce them will lie idle. This would dissuade the capitalists from making more machines. Let alone machines producing more machines for the sake of it, there will be a contraction of investment in machines.

The implication of her argument is clear. Of the two sources of demand, investment is unique. It creates both the capacity to produce output (say a factory which produces motorcycles) and the demand for output (construction of the motorcycle factory gives rise to demand for goods like cement, steel etc. which goes into building the factory). Looking at the level of the economy, if the capacity to produce output expands faster than the demand for it, there will be a contraction of investment eventually.

Some counter-tendencies

To be sure, there are other possibilities. None of this may happen if one of the following conditions holds. One, while productivity rises in the sector affected by AI, it may give rise to demand in sectors where labour productivity is quite low. Seen at the macro level, total labour productivity, which is the average of high labour productivity in AI sectors and lower productivity in the rest of the economy, may remain the same as it was in the pre-AI age. Two, even if overall labour productivity rises, wages rise in proportion, in which case the very source of a fall in the wage share disappears. This seems unlikely under capitalism though. Three, even if the wage share falls, investment demand could replace the lost consumption demand because AI requires more intensive capital investment to cater to the final demand.

Even though it is difficult to isolate specifically which component of investment is exclusively associated with AI, there is a broad consensus in the literature that the bulk of it would show up under the category computers and peripherals. **Chart 1** shows that investment in AI seems to be off the charts compared to any other component of investment. For comparison with other components of investment and GDP, we have created an index which starts at 100 in 2021 for all the variables under consideration. While nominal GDP has risen 1.5 times, investment in AI has risen 3.5 times within a short span of less than two years.

A few caveats

There are issues we have not touched upon in this piece. One, the ecological crisis that AI may lead to, in terms of electricity generation and water usage, is being considered to be devastating. Two, precisely for reasons of the ecological crisis, the global North may push the crisis to the South by setting up data centres there instead of their own countries, thereby replicating a colonial pattern of trade. Three, even though there may be a global slowdown induced by AI, some countries may gain at the expense of others. Four, this slowdown can be arrested through aggressive government expenditure, for example in the form of universal basic income or military spending, particularly in the global North (see **Box 1A**). Last but not least, this entire AI phenomenon may be a stock market bubble building to burst, much like the dotcom or subprime bubble in the US financial markets earlier.

The last one in particular may be worth commenting on in the context of the unfolding saga of Nvidia. Most of these heavy investments have been made with the expectation of higher profits in AI in the future. And this has been financed in the US primarily through debt currently. There is, however, many a slip between the cup and the lip. One, the further the profit-making phase of AI in the future is, the more debt will pile up with a part of the debt every year being taken to simply roll over past debt. Two, if after all this, the profits of AI, as and when they do arrive, do not match the heightened expectations based on which such binge-borrowing was done, these debts will not be honoured. Actual cash flow may not match the already committed debt repayment path. It may set a domino effect in the financial markets, much like the subprime crisis. Three, if interest rates rise in an effort to target rising inflation induced by the self-inflicted crisis in the Strait of Hormuz, the debt burdens may rise even more.

A highly leveraged sector, in the event of either a rising interest rate or failing expectations, or both, may result in what Hyman Minsky, an American economist, called Ponzi finance. Let alone gradually paying off the principal amount of the debt accrued, the firms are unable to even honour interest commitments. They take more loans to pay past loans but this cannot go on indefinitely, so, a spate of bankruptcies takes over. Recall the collapse of Lehman Brothers which triggered the 2008 global financial crisis.

Even if we discount these caveats, as far as growth and jobs are concerned, it all depends on whether AI leads to a dramatic rise in labour productivity. Only time can tell who between Luxemburg and Tugan-Baranovsky would come out on top in this AI battle.

(The authors are a part of the DevMac [Development Macroeconomics] network, which seeks pluralism in Economics. This article is the second in a two-part series.)

AI and the demand problem

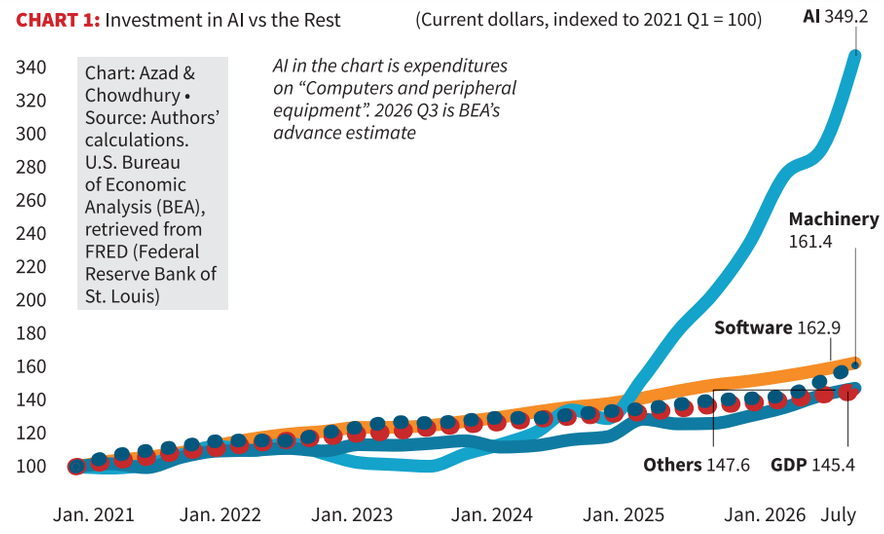
The impact of AI on consumption demand depends on whether real wages rise as fast as productivity

BOX 1:

A Global demand = Workers' consumption + Capitalists' consumption + Investment + Government expenditure

B $$\text{Wage share} = \frac{\text{Wages} \cdot \text{Workers employed}}{\text{Prices} \cdot \text{Output}} = \frac{\text{Wages/Prices}}{\text{Output/Workers employed}} = \frac{\text{Real wages}}{\text{Labour productivity}}$$

CHART 1: Investment in AI vs the Rest (Current dollars, indexed to 2021 Q1 = 100)





FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

What is the origin of "salad days"? (M. Angappan, Cuddalore)

Shakespeare is believed to have coined this expression. He first used it in *Antony and Cleopatra*. In the play Cleopatra says, "My salad days, when I was green in judgment, cold in blood..." The expression "salad days" refers to the days when we were young and relatively inexperienced. Those growing up days when we repeatedly kept making mistakes because of our lack of experience. So even those who have never eaten salad have had salad days! Here are a few examples.

John was in his salad days then and fell in love easily.

The town did not seem to have changed much since his salad days.

It's been pointed out several times in this column that one of the meanings of "green" is inexperienced. For example when you say, "Mohan is too green for the job" what you are implying is that he is too inexperienced for the job. The expression "salad days" too means inexperienced. What is the connection between "salad" and "green"? Well, a salad is usually made of raw vegetables.

What is the difference between "plump" and "fat"? (K. Shyam, Chennai)

When an individual is plump or fat, he is overweight. The word "fat" has a negative connotation associated with it. When you say that someone is "fat", you are implying that he is overweight and doesn't present a pleasant sight. It is impolite to call someone fat to his face. The word "plump", on the other hand, is normally used to indicate approval. When you say that someone is plump, what you are implying is that the individual is overweight in a pleasant sort of way.

What is the meaning of "cul de sac"? (Ranjeet Gupta, Patna)

It is a street that is open at one end only; in other words, the street has an entrance but no exit. You enter and exit the street the same way. Americans call it a "dead end". Some refer to it as a "blind alley".

The "u" in "cul" is like the "u" in "but" and "shut". The "e" in "de" is like the "i" in "bit" and "sit", while the "a" in "sac" is pronounced like the "a" in "sat" and "bat". The main stress is on "cul". The Americans tend to put the main stress on "sac". Here are a few examples.

They live in a huge house in a quiet cul de sac.

By the time the thief realised he had entered a cul de sac, it was too late.

Which of the following sentences is correct? "I am waiting for your reply" or "I am awaiting for your reply"? (Jayashree Mishra, Bhubaneshwar)

The second sentence is wrong. One does not "await for" something or someone; one merely "awaits" something or someone. Here is an example.

We are awaiting instructions from the Chairman.

(Published in The Hindu on August 13, 2002)

THE DAILY QUIZ

Test yourself on Voyager 1 which on November 18 became the first human-made object to travel 'one light day'

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

V.V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1
Which launch vehicle carried Voyager 1 into space on September 5, 1977?

QUESTION 2
What was the original mission period for the Voyager spacecrafts and for what purpose?

QUESTION 3
In February 1998, Voyager 1 overtook which famous space probe to become the most distant human-made object, a record it still holds?

QUESTION 4
Voyager 1 is powered by the decay of which radioactive element?

QUESTION 5
NASA listens to Voyager 1 through the Deep Space Network which has antennas in which three countries?

QUESTION 6
What is the name given to the iconic photo of Earth that Voyager 1 took on Valentine's Day in 1990 from about 6 billion kilometres from the Sun?

QUESTION 7
What type of astronomical object is used in the location map on the Golden Record's cover?



Visual question: Name this singer whose voice is on the Golden Record attached to Voyager 1. FILE PHOTO

Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:

1. Name the actor who is featured in most of Kurosawa's films? **Ans: Takashi Shimura**
2. The answer to Q1 was the protagonist in a Kurosawa film that was partially inspired by Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*. The film inspired several movies, including the *Anand*. Name the film. **Ans: Ikiru**
3. What role does the famous director Martin Scorsese play in Kurosawa's magical realist film, *Dreams*? **Ans: Vincent Van Gogh**
4. In Kurosawa's Yojimbo, Mifune plays a ronin named Sanjuro Kuwabatake. What do the terms jidaigeki and ronin mean, and why does his character call himself that? **Ans: Sanjuro - Thirty years old. Kuwabatake - 'Mulberry field'. He saw a mulberry field when he was asked his name.**
5. Sanjuro is the name of another film where Mifune plays a ronin. It is remembered for a scene that changed the visual grammar of action sequences in cinema the world over. What happened in the scene? **Ans: In the climax of the film, Sanjuro cuts down Hanbei Muroto (played by Tatsuya Nakadai) in a sword fight. The shot resulted in excessive blood spraying through a hose for dramatic effect.**
6. Visual: Connect the book and one of Kurosawa's most famous films made in 1950. **Ans: Graham T Allison in his book tries to understand the Cuban Missile Crisis through different reasons and vantage points, similar to how a violent act is reconstructed in Rashomon through testimony.**

Early Birds
Tito Shiladitya | M. Suresh Kumar | Pulkit Sathe | Prem Raj P. | Varghese Joseph

Word of the day

Votary:
a devoted adherent of a cause or person or activity; one bound by vows to a religion or life of worship or service

Synonyms: admirer, adherent

Usage: *Mary has long been a vocal votary of renewable energy and climate action.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/votarypro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈvəʊtərɪ/

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

OPEC share in India's crude imports dropped in April-Oct.

The decline potentially reflects a shift in India's crude procurement strategy as the country navigates shipping disruptions and geopolitical uncertainties due to the West Asia conflict

Saptaparno Ghosh
NEW DELHI

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC) share in India's crude oil import basket declined sharply to 27.4% during April-October of the current fiscal, against 38.5% in the corresponding period last year, according to the latest provisional data released by the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC).

The decline potentially reflects a shift in India's crude procurement strategy as the country navigates shipping disruptions and geopolitical uncertainties arising from the continuing conflict in West Asia.

During the seven-month period, India's crude oil imports increased 2.7% on a YoY basis to 146.6 million metric tonnes (MMT). Without identifying individual countries, PPAC data showed that supplies from the Eurasian region accounted for 43.8% of India's crude oil import basket, while West Asia contributed 36%.

South America accounted for 10.6% of imports, followed by Africa at 6.6% and North America at 3%.

The changing sourcing pattern indicates a growing diversification of India's crude oil procurement, with supplies from outside the traditional West Asia market gaining a larger share. On the petroleum products trade front, diesel accounted for the largest share of India's exports at 43.4% during the reported period. Petrol and aviation turbine fuel (ATF) followed with shares of 22.4% and 10%, respectively.

On the import side, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) constituted the largest component, accounting for 50.5% of total petroleum product imports, followed by petroleum coke (petcoke) at 18.3%.

Petroleum product exports remain an important component of India's external energy trade to contain the impact on its net oil and gas import bill.

PPAC data released earlier showed that petroleum product export value increased approximately 47%.

Fuel gauge

Supplies from outside the traditional West Asia market have gained a larger share

During the 7-month period, India's crude oil imports increased **2.7% to 146.6 MMT**
Supplies from Eurasian region accounted for **43.8%** of India's crude oil import basket



West Asia contributed 36%; South America 10.6%, Africa 6.6%, North America 3%,

Anthropic raises $81 billion in IPO amid AI market volatility

Balasubramanyam C.P.
CHENNAI

Anthropic said it will not receive any proceeds from the sale of shares by the selling shareholders

Anthropic, the maker of artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot Claude, has priced its initial public offering (IPO) at $83 a share, valuing the offering at approximately $81.34 billion, according to an announcement by the company on November 18.

The company said its shares were expected to begin trading on the Nasdaq Global Select Market on November 19 under the ticker symbol ANT. The offering is expected to close on November 20, subject to customary closing conditions. According to Anthropic's announcement, the offering comprises 980 million shares of Class A common stock. Of these, 956.35 million shares are being sold by the company and 23.65 million by existing shareholders. Anthropic said it would not receive any proceeds from the sale of shares by the selling shareholders.

At the IPO price of $83 a share, the company's portion of the offering is valued at approximately $79.38 billion, while the shares sold by existing shareholders are valued at approximately $1.96 billion. These figures are before underwriting discounts and expenses.

At $83 a share, Anthropic's overall equity value works out to approximately $1.03 trillion, based on the total number of shares outstanding after the IPO.

INBRIEF



Three bank unions call for strike on December 3

Three prominent unions of bank employees and officers, AIBEA, AIBOA and BEFI, have jointly given a call for a solidarity strike on December 3 in support of IDBI Bank employees and officers opposing the government move to sell stake in the bank. The United Forum of IDBI Officers and Employees have called for a strike on December 3, following a two-day strike earlier this month, with the government moving ahead with the stake sale to Fairfax Financial Holdings, leaders of the unions said in a statement on Thursday. IDBI Bank is a profit-making bank and has total deposits of about ₹3.50 lakh crore and advances of ₹2.50 lakh crore, translating into a total business of ₹6 lakh crore. If it is sold to Fairfax, "this swadeshi bank will become a videshi bank," the union leaders said.

Indian payments stocks fall as UPI fee roll-out faces delay

Shares of Indian digital payments firms fell on Thursday over a delay in introducing transaction fees on the country's popular instant payments network, called the Unified Payments Interface. One 97 Communications, Paytm's parent, was down 6.3% to ₹1,769.20, while shares of Pine Labs dropped 3.7%to ₹163 and One Mobikwik Systems slid 7.3% to ₹210. In September, the National Payments Corporation of India(NPCI) announced a 0.4% fee on merchant payments above ₹2,000 ($20.84) from October 15, ending six years of free transactions. The roll-out was postponed until after Diwali earlier this month, following retailer opposition, with no new date announced. A delay in implementation cannot be ruled out, sources said. REUTERS

PIDG commits ₹110 crore for waste-processing capacity

Singapore-based Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG), through its project development arm InfraCo, has committed ₹110 crore ($11.7 million) in equity to NEPRA - Let's Recycle, one of India's largest waste-management companies, to expand its waste-processing and recycling infrastructure. With this investment, PIDG joins NEPRA's existing investors to support the company's next phase of growth. The funding will be deployed to develop new material recovery facilities, expand plastics-recycling capacity, strengthen existing operations and meet working-capital requirements, company executives said. The proposed expansion is expected to more than double NEPRA's waste-processing capacity from around 900 tonnes per day to 1,880 tonnes per day.

Bajaj Group-backed BIHS to invest ₹2,500 cr. in healthcare venture

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Nivara will be rolled out across 3 formats – Medical Centres, Ambulatory Centres and Hospitals

Bajaj Integrated Health System (BIHS), a healthcare venture backed by the Bajaj Group, will invest around ₹2,500 crore initially to establish its integrated healthcare network, Nivara, beginning in Pune, with plans to expand into more than 10 cities over the next 15 years.

Nivara will be rolled out across three formats – medical centres, ambulatory centres and hospitals – over the next few years.

The network will integrate consultations, diagnostics, pharmacy, physiotherapy and home care services, with hospital-based care to be added subsequently.

The venture aims to move healthcare beyond episodic treatment towards continuous health management, covering prevention, early diagnosis, treatment, recovery and long-term care.

"For over a century, the Bajaj Group has built institutions founded on trust, responsibility and a long-term commitment to India's progress. With Nivara, we are bringing that same approach to healthcare," said Nirav Bajaj, MD and CEO, Bajaj Integrated Health System.

"Healthcare journeys are often fragmented, with patients navigating multiple providers, facilities and care settings with limited coordination between them," said Devina Kartha, Chief Enterprise & Governance Officer, BIHS.

Shree Anandhaas raises ₹110 cr. in fresh round

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE

Shree Anandhaas, the Coimbatore-based chain of sweets, savouries and vegetarian restaurants, has raised ₹110 crore in a fresh round of funding led by Ayra Ventures

Shree Anandhaas, which has 61 outlets, will use the fresh capital to expand its network of outlets, invest in production capacity and supply chain infrastructure, and strengthen working capital to support its growth.

Waterfield Advisors, A91 Partners, Ithought Financial Consulting LLP, and cricketer Ravichandran Ashwin have participated in the current funding, it said in a statement. Shree Anandhaas raised ₹175 crore in Series A round last August, led by A91 Partners with participation from Spring Marketing Capital.

Markets surge over 1% as banking and auto stocks drive rally

Gowri Lakshmi R.
MUMBAI

The Indian equity market ended on a strong note on Thursday after three consecutive days of settling relatively flat. On Thursday, benchmark indices Nifty 50 and Sensex gained 929.05 points and 286.35 points, respectively, settling over 1%.

The strong momentum was driven by the auto and banking sectors, coupled with sustained inflows from foreign portfolio investors (FPIs). "Sustained FII inflows and easing commodity prices, particularly copper and crude oil, supported investor sentiment. Strong buying interest in the banking space further lifted Bank Nifty to a fresh all-time high, highlighting the strength in financial stocks," Pabitro Mukherjee, deputy vice-president (Research) at Bajaj Broking, said in a note.



The Sensex gained 929.05 points, while the Nifty 50 advanced 286.35 points

The upswing was despite weak Asian cues and rising concerns over a hawkish stance by the U.S. Federal Reserve. The Nifty Bank index gained 1,024 points and hit a record of 63,063, with all constituents settling in the green. Punjab National Bank (PNB) was the biggest gainer, settling more than 3.5% on the NSE, while State Bank of India (SBI) ended 1.9% higher and HDFC Bank Limited settled 1.7%.

Petrol pump dealers seek margin hike in meet with Puri

Saptaparno Ghosh
NEW DELHI

Hiking dealer margins and expanding non-fuel revenue streams were among the key issues discussed at a meeting between Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and petrol pump dealers' associations on Thursday evening, attendees said.

Earlier in the day, responding to a query from *The Hindu* on whether a revision in dealer margins was on the agenda, Mr. Puri said, "It is a very comprehensive discussion, [and] commissions are only one part of it." Dealer margins were last revised in October 2024. However, petrol pump dealers have maintained that the revision did not adequately account for then prevailing inflation and the financial losses incurred during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

Cyient chip unit secures $10 million investment

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Cyient Semiconductors has secured a $10 million strategic equity investment from GlobalFoundries (GF), a leading essential semiconductors maker.

The transaction will be executed at the same pre-money equity valuation of $490 million as the Cyient Semiconductors' recent financing round led by Edelweiss, resulting in a combined post-money equity valuation of $510 million, the Cyient subsidiary said.

Through this investment, the Hyderabad-based Cyient Semiconductors aims at expanding its turnkey custom ASIC capabilities and accelerate custom silicon development and boost long-term wafer supply assurance and supply chain resilience.

The investment reflects growing confidence in the company's strategy, execution and long-term market opportunity, the firm said.

With design centres in India, Belgium and U.S., it caters to auto, industrial, AI, communications and data-centre markets.

Tata Electronics flags supply chain, talent gaps in chip push

Balasubramanyam C.P.
BENGALURU

Tata Electronics, which is investing up to ₹1.18 lakh crore in semiconductor manufacturing facilities in Gujarat and Assam, is grappling with challenges ranging from developing a local supplier ecosystem and transporting specialised equipment to bridging the gap between available talent and industry readiness.

Srinivas Satya, president of components business and supply chain at Tata Electronics, said building semiconductor manufacturing capabilities in India required addressing many supply-side constraints even as the firm scaled up operations.

The firm is setting up a semiconductor fabrication facility at Dholera, Gujarat, at a cost of up to ₹91,000 crore and a ₹27,000-crore outsourced semiconductor assembly and test facility at Jagiroad in Assam.

Speaking at the Bengaluru Tech Summit, he said logistics were a challenge. With specialised gear and materials sourced from the U.S. to the Far East, cross-border movement was critical. To boost local capabilities, the firm signed memoranda of understanding with global chip and packaging firms covering capability development to training staff. On manpower, he acknowledged 'quite a chasm' between India's 'phenomenal talent pool' and the skills needed by semiconductor industry.

Tata Electronics has assembled talent from 14-15 countries and is sending young engineers to a partner fabrication facility in Taiwan for on-the-job training. It also partnered IIT Bombay, IIT Gandhinagar and IIT Guwahati.



Building chip capabilities required addressing supply-side constraints.

'Young founders hold key for India to shift to software products from IT services'

Balasubramanyam C.P.
BENGALURU

Why is India still an IT services powerhouse not a product powerhouse? The question turned a fixture at technology conferences, industry summits and policy discussions. Despite building a formidable global outsourcing industry, India has yet to produce product companies with comparable global scale.

For more than a decade, the country has tried to move beyond outsourcing and build homegrown technology firms with global reach. Policy efforts have not yet translated into a significant number of globally-competitive technology products.

At the Bengaluru Tech Summit, industry leaders returned to the question of what it will take to bridge this gap. A common thread across three separate discussions was the need for younger entrepreneurs to lead product development, backed by patient capital and the industry expertise of established technology companies.



Product firms need to invest for years before returns flow.

Clearwater Analytics CEO Sandeep Sahai, who said he had moved from running a services firm to software product business about 12 years ago, said the two business models needed fundamentally different approaches.

Services firms typically invest after securing contracts and generate cash flows relatively quickly. Product firms, in contrast, need to invest for years before returns flow.

This difference in investment horizons makes it difficult for services firms to turn themselves into product businesses, he said. Mr. Sahai called for a stronger venture capital and private equity ecosystem, noting 44 of the top 50 product firms in his analysis required external funding.

He also said younger entrepreneurs must lead the next wave of product development.

"We need to fund them, not fund ourselves," he said, calling for more investment in young founders rather than established industry leaders.

Investor Mohandas Pai offered a different perspective on the role of established IT firms. Speaking at a separate session, Mr. Pai argued India's services giants must not be expected to transform themselves into product businesses.

"They're not going to make products. Don't beat them up. They can't make products," he said.

Instead, he argued, services firms must focus on helping enterprises adopt and implement AI. Their relationships with global clients and understanding of enterprise needs give them an advantage in this area, he said. Products, meanwhile, would be built by younger entrepreneurs.

Amid losses, AI, Tata Sons mull cost cuts

BL Bureau
NEW DELHI

Tata Sons board members were briefed on Air India's (AI) financial position, cash burn and opportunities for closer integration with Air India Express, a day before a crucial meeting in which further capital infusion is expected to be sought.

Sources said the presentation covered AI's financial situation, including that for the quarter ended September 30, alongside current cash burn rate and further cost-saving steps.

The discussions come as the Tata Group-promoted airline seeks more financial support for operations and advance turnaround.

AI Express synergies

Discussions also covered cost-saving initiatives and opportunities for greater synergies between Air India and Air India Express.

The meeting comes as the airline group works to improve financial performance amid pressure from fuel cost, forex fluctuations and airspace curbs. The pressures widened AI Group's net loss to over ₹6,000 crore in Q1FY27 from over ₹3,000 crore a year earlier. FY26 consolidated net loss was ₹22,238 crore on a total income of about ₹71,870 crore against ₹10,859 crore loss in FY25.



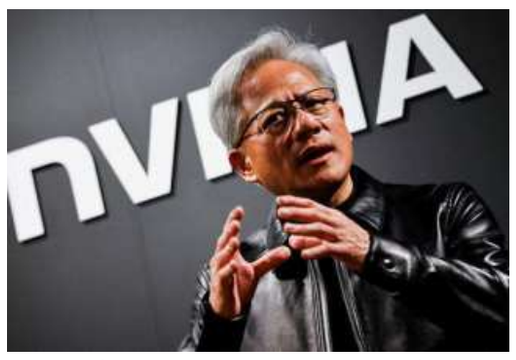
FY26 consolidated net loss was ₹22,238 crore on a total income of about ₹71,870 crore.

WFH policy

Cost-savings cover corporate expenditure, staff-on-duty travel and departmental coordination with a cross-functional team reviewing expenditure.

AI was also mulling returning two Gurugram office towers and developing work-from-home policy for affected staff. Under the functional consolidation plan, departments were to be brought under common leadership with airlines retaining distinct identities and offerings. AI will continue as full-service airline while AI Express will retain low-cost business model.

Nvidia's deeper risks predate Jensen Huang's scandal



The bulk of Nvidia's share price decline came before Huang admitted to the affair. REUTERS

Reuters
ORLANDO, FLORIDA

As investors digest the latest twists in scandal-hit Nvidia's evolving drama, it's worth remembering that they had already started to sour on the world's erstwhile AI darling well before former CEO Jensen Huang resigned. That may be far more worrying for the AI trade.

Nvidia offered investors some relief on Tuesday, delivering bumper third-quarter revenue and earnings, as well as sales projections that exceeded Wall Street estimates. Nvidia's shares rose as much as 5% in extended trading.

This comes after Nvidia's share price tanked nearly 40% from its record high on October 6, wiping some $2 trillion off its market capitalisation and knocking the firm off its pedestal as the world's most valuable company.

Importantly, the bulk of Nvidia's share price decline came before Huang admitted on November 8 to having an affair with Alice Huang, an executive at Singapore-based Megaspeed and alleged Chinese spy. His resignation came four days later following allegations of improper relationships with Nvidia employees.

There is suddenly a plethora of reasons why investors may think twice about buying Nvidia shares, such as trust and accountability, the board's leadership, and U.S. national security concerns amid external investigations, including a reported probe by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

But just as worrying may be the gnawing unease investors have about Nvidia's customer financing, long-term demand for its chips, and the AI business model - all of which predate the scandal.

'Disciplined' approach

Nvidia's fall from favour has been rapid. This should probably come as no surprise, given how meteoric its ascent was.

It is one of only 10 firms since 1960 to hold the title of the largest company in the S&P 500, according to JP Morgan Private Bank's Michael Cembalest. That's a remarkably small number and would be even smaller were it not for Cisco's three days at the top in 2000.

Nvidia's epic rise was the fastest of them all. Its share of the S&P 500 in December 2022 was 1%. By May this year, it was 8.5%. Revenue and profit growth have exploded, thanks to soaring demand for its chips from hyperscalers and so-called "neocloud"AI partners that Nvidia has often helped finance.

It's unclear how committed interim CEO and former chief financial officer Colette Kress is to this model. On the earnings call on Tuesday, she said Nvidia will be "disciplined" and selective in its capital commitments, investments, and guarantees, although she said there are no plans to change its backstops for "neocloud" companies.

Should that position change, however, companies like CoreWeave, Nebius, IREN and AppliedDigital, whose shares have already tumbled steeply in recent months, could fall further.

BIS warning

This shines a spotlight on the AI vendor financing trend. Bank for International Settlements published a special report on the subject last month, which found that between 2021and 2025, nearly 30% of all AI firms' investment deals by value involved an AI firm on the other side. Meanwhile, 55% of incoming investments in AI firms came from other AI firms.

The authors warned that such circular relationships can artificially inflate demand, which can become a problem if revenue growth and real end-user demand slow. The AI flywheel could then go into reverse, potentially leading to "significant financial market volatility," the BIS warned.

This risk is exacerbated by the fact that many of these deals are opaque, complex, and private, making them difficult to monitor and supervise.

"These risks may be magnified by the growing use of private credit and special purpose vehicles to finance AI infrastructure, which can create hidden leverage and interconnected exposures that amplify financial stress during downturns," the BIS authors wrote.

The AI sector is clearly in a downturn on Wall Street right now, with the Philadelphia Semiconductor Index dropping nearly 30% in the last six weeks. AI's crown jewel may have just released sparkling results, but they are not bright enough to obscure the deep-rooted, mounting concerns about the AI ecosystem.

How AI rivals are becoming investors, suppliers and customers to each other

In an amendment to its proposed initial public offering (IPO) registration statement filed on November 10, Anthropic identifies Amazon, Google and Microsoft as companies that simultaneously serve as its investors, customers, distribution partners and competitors

NEWS ANALYSIS

Balasubramanyam C.P.
CHENNAI



Sales via cloud service provider marketplaces have become an important channel for Anthropic. REUTERS

Imagine an Artificial Intelligence (AI) company developing its own models. Amazon invests in the company, provides the computing infrastructure needed to train and run those models, and sells them to its own cloud customers. At the same time, Amazon develops its own AI models, competing with the very company it has invested in.

That is not hypothetical. It is how Anthropic, the maker of the Claude family of AI models, describes its business in its latest filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

In an amendment to its proposed initial public offering (IPO) registration statement filed on November 10, Anthropic identifies Amazon, Google and Microsoft as companies that simultaneously serve as its investors, customers, distribution partners and competitors. It warns that these overlapping relationships could create conflicts of interest and affect its access to computing infrastructure.

The filing offers a glimpse into an emerging feature of the AI industry - companies racing to build advanced models are also depending on one another for capital, chips, computing infrastructure and customers.

Extraordinary expense

Developing and operating advanced AI models is extraordinarily expensive.

It requires specialised processors, large data centres and substantial supplies of electricity. Few companies can build all the required infrastructure on their own.

The arrangements benefit both sides. An AI developer gets capital, computing power and access to customers. A cloud provider or chipmaker gets a large customer for its infrastructure and a financial stake in a growing business.

The same companies can therefore become investors and investees, suppliers and customers, and sellers and distribution partners.

But this also creates dependence. Once an AI company has built its software and operations around a provider's systems, moving to another platform can be expensive, time-consuming and technically difficult. The provider, meanwhile, may be developing competing AI products of its own.

Anthropic's case

Anthropic makes Claude available through the cloud platforms of Amazon, Google and Microsoft – Amazon Bedrock, Google Cloud's Vertex AI and Microsoft Foundry. Under joint go-to-market arrangements, the three companies also help Anthropic market and sell its products to customers through AWS, Google Cloud and Microsoft Azure.

> Under the expanded partnership, Anthropic committed to spending more than $100 billion on AWS technologies over the next ten years

Sales through cloud service providers' marketplaces have become an important channel for Anthropic. According to its filing, sales to customers through cloud service provider (CSP) marketplaces accounted for 11% of its total revenue in 2023, 32% in 2024 and 47% in 2025. The share stood at 44% in the first nine months of 2026.

In other words, the cloud providers do not just supply the computing power behind Claude. They are also important channels through which Anthropic reaches customers.

Anthropic, however, flags potential conflicts of interest arising from these relationships. In its filing, the company says Amazon, Google and Microsoft offer competing AI models and services through their cloud platforms, while also having visibility into Anthropic's pricing and commercial terms.

It warns that these relationships could influence decisions on pricing, allocation of computing capacity, service quality and the promotion of competing products.

The providers could also prioritise their own computing requirements or those of other customers, including companies competing with Anthropic, the filing says.

These are risks Anthropic has disclosed to potential investors, not allegations that the companies have acted against it.

The financial and infrastructure commitments show the scale of the relationship. In April, Amazon announced that it would invest an additional $5 billion in Anthropic, with the possibility of investing another $20 billion subject to certain commercial milestones. This was in addition to the $8 billion Amazon had previously invested in the AI company.

Under the expanded partnership, Anthropic committed to spending more than $100 billion on AWS technologies over the next ten years. Amazon and Anthropic said the agreement would give the AI company access to up to five gigawatts of computing capacity to train and run Claude.

Amazon is not the only technology company deepening its infrastructure ties with Anthropic. Google and chipmaker Broadcom have also entered into an agreement to expand the AI company's access to computing capacity.

Anthropic said in an April 6 announcement that it had signed an expanded agreement with Google and chipmaker Broadcom for access to multiple gigawatts of next-generation Google TPU computing capacity, expected to come online from 2027. In a separate regulatory filing the same day, Broadcom said Anthropic would access approximately 3.5 gigawatts of this capacity through Broadcom.

The November IPO filing reveals another dimension of these relationships. Seven technology companies (Google, Nvidia, AMD, Broadcom, Micron, Microsoft and TSMC) have agreed to purchase a total of $26 billion worth of the company's non-voting shares through a private placement, subject to the completion of the IPO and other conditions.

At the assumed IPO price of $74 a share, Google and Nvidia would each purchase approximately $10 billion worth of shares.

The proposed deal would give companies that supply AI chips, computing infrastructure and cloud services, including some that compete with Anthropic, a financial stake in the company behind Claude.

The relationship between Microsoft and OpenAI offers another example. Microsoft has invested billions of dollars in OpenAI, provides the company with computing infrastructure through its Azure cloud platform and uses its AI models in products such as Copilot. At the same time, Microsoft is developing its own AI models and products, making the two companies both partners and competitors.

Under changes to their agreement announced on April 27, 2026, Microsoft said Azure would remain OpenAI's primary cloud partner, but OpenAI would be free to offer its products through other cloud providers.

Microsoft would retain the right to use OpenAI's technology, including its models, until 2032, but would no longer have exclusive access to it.

A similar overlap between customers and investors is emerging in the semiconductor industry. In its September-quarter regulatory filing, chipmaker AMD disclosed that it had given two of its customers, OpenAI and Meta, the right to buy up to 160 million AMD shares each at one cent a share, subject to certain conditions.

These conditions include the companies purchasing specified quantities of AMD's Instinct AI chips and AMD meeting certain share-price targets. AMD said that, as of September 26, 2026, neither company had acquired any shares under the arrangement.

In effect, the arrangement gives two major customers the opportunity to become shareholders in the company supplying their AI chips.

The 'AI dollar' has arrived, but no clear direction

Reuters
LONDON



Extent to which dollar's value is AI-linked is more nuanced. REUTERS

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly shaping the fortunes of the U.S. dollar, or at least the investment race surrounding it. The only problem is currency experts can't agree whether that's for better or worse.

Few doubt that seemingly Teflon U.S. economic growth over the past two years has been enormously flattered by the impact of the burgeoning AI boom.

That reflects the trillion-dollar explosion in investment in AI data centers, chips and computing equipment, as well as the more nebulous "wealth effects" from accompanying stock price gains.

Estimates vary, but many analysts say AI is directly or indirectly responsible for at least a third of U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) expansion this year.

That alone seems straightforward, but the extent to which the dollar's value is AI-linked is more nuanced.

Some focus on the U.S. AI lead over other economies as a dollar driver, but others view an "AI dollar" through a balance-of-payments lens and the prism of cross-border capital flows.

No one doubts AI's importance to currency markets. How it plays out is another matter.

AI and the Fed

At its most basic, the lift to U.S. growth, inflation and interest rate expectations from the AI boom is clearly dollar positive – as long as the U.S. retains its edge and the lion's share of the investment being ploughed into it.

While that may change as the early U.S. investment surge slows, we're not there yet in most people's eyes.

The dollar is clearly reflecting expectations that the Federal Reserve may hike rates aggressively to cool an AI-fuelled boom and rein in inflation, with investors convinced the economy can take it while other central banks hesitate.

Since the Iran war began at the end of February, the U.S. economy has brushed aside the related fuel-price shock with ease, and the AI story seems largely responsible.

As a measure of how those downbeat expectations proved wide of the mark, U.S. economic surprise indexes compiled by Citi have hit their most positive level in three years this month, contrasting starkly with euro zone equivalents, which have turned negative again for the first time in four months.

Little surprise, then, that euro/dollar has fallen below $1.10 this week for the first time since March last year, while the broader dollar index has hit its best level in more than 19 months.

But wait. This dollar surge is happening just as Big Tech investors get the jitters over AI valuations and on fear of a capital expenditure slowdown after Democratic victories in the midterm elections prompt calls for at least some data-center pushback.

The scale of the shake-out in AI-linked stocks has been withering for six weeks, seeing almost 30% wiped off the U.S. Philadelphia Semiconductor Index since early October.

So, why hasn't the fabled "AI dollar" gone with it?

Is the greenback simply lagging, or staying laser-focused on pumped-up Fed rate-rise expectations?

Or maybe it's getting a safety bid from worries about equity-market turbulence?

Barclays FX strategists this week reckoned their bullish "AI dollar" view remains very much intact for next year.

Their take hinges on the fact the dollar is mainly tracking AI capital expenditure (capex) numbers that have been driving GDP outperformance, forcing the Fed to rethink the level of slack left in the economy and where neutral interest rates lie.

And so despite the shake-out in AI stock prices, there's still been no change to estimates of hyperscaler investments pending through next year – not even since the midterms.

As a result, the Barclays team thinks the dollar will continue to gorge on that rather than the volatile equity market per se.

But there are as many questions in that as there are answers.

A severe tech-stock correction or even rout could well eat into investment plans quite quickly and douse any "wealth effect" from the AI-fueled stock rally of the past 18 months.

A downshift in AI build-out then starts to shave GDP bets, easing upward pressure on Fed rates and ultimately weighing on the buck.

How likely is that?

Bank of America's November survey of global fund managers offers some insight. The poll showed asset managers this month cut tech allocations by the most in 20 years, with a record net near 40% of respondents saying companies are "over-investing."

Perhaps most telling, more than half of the funds expect atleast one hyperscaler to cut capex in the next six months.

So AI capex can still be your lodestar, but it may not mean the "AI dollar" is the slam dunk for 2027 that markets have recently rushed to price.

'Chipdollars'

However, there's another way to view the nexus between AI and the dollar.

Deutsche Bank introduces its idea of "chipdollars," akin to the petrodollars of old.

World chip trade now exceeds oil and gas for the first time in history, it says, suggesting a less favourable outlook for the dollar.

The gist of Deutsche's view is that most US-designed chips are made outside the U.S., mainly in Asia.

As chip demand has soared and prices have risen, huge surpluses have built up in these countries.

Much of that cash has been recycled into U.S. capital markets, mostly equities rather than Treasury debt as in the past.

Cross-border circularity

Estimating foreign flows into U.S. equities this year at more than $1 trillion, the German bank said this funding of U.S. deficits is supporting the dollar and financing firms driving the AI build, then flowing back into chips in another loop of cross-border "circularity."

However, a big problem is that equities are three times more volatile than Treasuries, and tech stocks up to 10 times more so.

"Growing dollar dependence on inherently riskier capital should spill into higher U.S. dollar volatility over time," Deutsche strategist Mallika Sachdeva wrote.

There's no doubt the "AI dollar" is now a thing. It's just that it could go either way next year – not unlike its analog predecessor.

JERUSALEM

Israeli military says it completed ground attack in central Gaza



REUTERS

Israel's military said that a ground operation involving tanks in central Gaza despite a U.S.-brokered ceasefire had come to an end on Thursday. The Israeli military had said on Wednesday that it had launched an operation in a Hamas-controlled area of central Gaza, beyond the so-called "Yellow Line". AFP

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan military says it killed 22 militants in raids on hideouts



AFP

Pakistani security forces acting on intelligence raided militant hideouts in the northwest near the Afghan border, setting off gun battles that killed 22 militants, the military said on Thursday. It alleged that the militants killed were backed by India. The raids took place in the South Waziristan, Bannu and Tank districts. AP

KYIV

A third Ukrainian strike in 4 days halts rail traffic on Kerch Bridge



REUTERS

A third Ukrainian aerial attack in four days on the key Kerch Bridge linking Russia to Crimea halted rail traffic across the span on Thursday, after earlier strikes shut down the road section of the landmark. "We will respond to these attacks, and I want everyone to be clear about that," Russian President Vladimir Putin said. AP

SHENZHEN

Takaichi says Russia and Japan will keep talking as ties remain chilled



REUTERS

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said on Thursday that she and Russian President Vladimir Putin held talks and agreed to keep communicating in the first such encounter between the two countries' leaders in seven years. Japan's ties with Russia have long been strained by a territorial dispute dating back decades. AP

Myanmar guilty of Rohingya genocide: ICJ

The court finds that Myanmar's security forces killed thousands of Rohingya civilians, carried out sexual assaults and acts of extreme violence against children, and attacked fleeing Rohingya; the panel rejects Myanmar's claim that the 2017 operation was a legitimate counter-insurgency campaign

Associated Press
THE HAGUE

In a landmark judgment, the United Nations' top court ruled on Thursday that Myanmar committed genocide against the Rohingya minority in a brutal 2017 military operation and ordered the Southeast Asian nation to allow people who fled the violence to return home.

International Court of Justice (ICJ) President Yuji Iwasawa said the court, in a 9-6 decision, found that Myanmar "has committed genocide against the Rohingya group in northern Rakhine State, in violation of its obligations under the Genocide Convention".

The 15-judge panel of the World Court, which included Navi Pillay, the respected international jurist who won the Nobel Peace Prize last month, rejected Myanmar's defence that the 2017 campaign was a legitimate operation against insurgents.

Mr. Iwasawa said that "the court finds that Myanmar's security forces killed thousands of Rohingya civilians, perpetrated widespread acts of sexual violence, as well as acts of extreme violence against children, and attacked fleeing Rohingya as they sought to flee in large numbers".

The decision marks the first time the court has ruled that a state committed genocide and comes as the World Court also is handling genocide allegations linked to the Gaza conflict and the war in Ukraine.



Rohingya refugees look through a metal net as they watch the live announcement of ICJ verdict, in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. REUTERS

There was no immediate reaction from the Myanmar delegation in The Hague or from the government in Myanmar.

The court also ordered Myanmar to commit to reparations including allowing Rohingya "safe, voluntary and dignified return to their place of residence". It ordered Myanmar to investigate, prosecute and punish people found to have committed genocidal acts and to pay compensation to Rohingya. The amount will be decided in later court proceedings.

An umbrella organisation of Myanmar opposition groups said in a statement that "the struggle for justice will continue, and this judgment must now be enforced," calling on the international community to ensure it is fully implemented.

The court's rulings are final and legally binding, but it has no way to enforce them beyond reporting non-compliance to the UN Security Council.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the ruling "a demonstration of international justice and a reaffirmation that impunity for such horrific acts must not stand".

Shortly after the ruling was read, U.K. Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband said his government was expelling Myanmar's defence attache from the U.K..

In August 2017, Myanmar's military launched what it called a clearance campaign in Rakhine State in response to an attack by a Rohingya insurgent group. The campaign led to accusations that security forces committed mass rapes and killings and burned thousands of homes.

The court said that evidence showed Myanmar forces killed about 10,000 Rohingya.

About 1.2 million Rohingya refugees now live in Bangladesh, primarily in crowded camps across Cox's Bazar district, where they endure harsh conditions.

West Asia crisis is the 'largest threat' to energy security: IEA

Agence France-Presse
PARIS



Fatih Birol

The crisis in the West Asia sparked in February by the U.S. and Israeli bombing of Iran has created the "largest threat" to energy security in history, the International Energy Agency (IEA) warned on Thursday.

The agency said in its flagship annual World Energy Outlook that consumers were increasingly footing the bill as the world runs out of ways to absorb the impact of the conflict on energy supplies.

The crisis, just like previous energy shocks, would certainly leave "lasting marks", the agency warned.

Gulf countries have been struggling to export oil since Iran began blocking the Strait of Hormuz and targeting tankers in the area, following U.S. and Israeli strikes that sparked the crisis in February.

"The Strait of Hormuz crisis has created the largest threat to energy security in history, one that dwarfs the scale of the oil shocks of the 1970s," IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol wrote in the report.

'Trump open to extending NATO-like clause to Ukraine'

Agence France-Presse
BERLIN



Jared Kushner

U.S. envoy Jared Kushner said on Thursday that President Donald Trump was open to extending to Ukraine a security guarantee similar to NATO's mutual defence clause, but stressed that Washington has to protect its interests too. "From America's perspective, giving an Article Five-like security guarantee is a really, really big deal," he told a press conference in Germany.

"And I think that that's something that President Trump is open to, but obviously it has to be in America's interest to do that," Mr. Kushner added. "We also have to make sure that it's part of a broader security package."

His comments came after Ukraine's allies gathered for a "Coalition of the Willing" summit in Berlin with with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, to emphasise support for Kyiv nearly five years since Russia's 2022 invasion, and to push for a European role in future peace negotiations.

Mr. Kushner added on Thursday that "we've gotten the Russians comfortable with that concept, where any security guarantee for Ukraine would be based on Article Five".

'Prevent recurrence'

He noted that this goes with Moscow's intention to "not have another war" in the future when this conflict is over, although acknowledging "scepticism" over the position.

Mr. Kushner said it was important to ensure that any deal struck will be kept and monitored – with consequences for any violations. He added there was more work to be done on that front.

Faith versus force



Rising dissent: Security forces members clash with Ultra-Orthodox Jewish men during a protest against pressure to conscript to Israel's military, following the arrest of draft evaders, in Jerusalem on Thursday. REUTERS

Denmark ratifies deal with U.S., Greenland

Agence France-Presse
COPENHAGEN

Denmark's Parliament on Thursday voted to ratify the security agreement signed in September with the United States and Greenland, aimed at easing tensions over President Donald Trump's desire to annex the Arctic island.

Denmark's Parliament, the 179-seat Folketing, approved the text after a second reading, with all 109 deputies present in the chamber voting in favour.

The agreement will enter into force once Denmark officially informs the U.S. that it has ratified the deal.

Ancestral home of Yunus set ablaze as violence grips Dhaka

Press Trust of India
DHAKA



Muhammad Yunus

Crude bomb explosions rocked Bangladesh's capital before dawn, while former interim government chief Muhammad Yunus's ancestral home was torched in Chattogram. The unrest followed a Thursday "lockdown" call by the banned Awami League, led by former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Police and witnesses said at least four people were wounded. Witnesses reported explosions of a series of improvised devices, arson attacks and vandalism in Dhaka despite stepped-up security.

Police said they stepped up security overnight, mobilising more personnel at major flyovers across the capital.

At the same time, officers were seen checking vehicles at entry and exit points and questioning motorcyclists and drivers of suspicious vehicles.

COP31 cover text draft drops references to fossil fuel phase-out, net zero dates

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI



A boxing-themed demonstration calling for an electrification target based on renewable energy, at the COP31 on Thursday. REUTERS

The latest iteration of the COP 31 draft cover text has eliminated references to fossil fuels phase-out and net zero dates but has also deleted references to a firm $120 billion adaptation-finance target that developing countries have been asking for as "legally binding financial obligations" on developed countries. This suggests that the most ambitious demands of both the developed and developing country blocs have been eliminated.

The COP31 Presidency's revised draft cover decision, dated November 19, has 80 paragraphs, down from 144 in the November 16 version. The summit officially ends on November 20, though negotiations frequently overshoot into the weekend.

A major concern raised by developing countries, of phasing out unilateral trade measures such as the CBAM (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism) by 2027, that was present in the earlier draft has also been eliminated.

However, a widely expected outcome of raising electricity's share in final energy consumption to 35% by 2035, scaling up the use of carbon capture utilisation technologies and making early warning systems universal by 2027, continue to find mention in the text. A broad commitment to triple adaptation finance also remains.

"The draft cover text weaves the 35% electricity in final energy consumption by 2035, alongside tripling renewable energy capacity and doubling the rate of energy efficiency improvement by 2030," Ajay Mathur, India's lead negotiator at Paris COP and former DG, International Solar Alliance, said in a statement. "The electricity usage in India went up by 13% in 2025 due to the Hormuz crisis alone. It will be an ambitious goal for India to achieve 35% electrification by 2035," he added.

Tallest building in Riyadh damaged in new Houthi attacks

Agence France-Presse
RIYADH

A skyscraper in Riyadh housing the headquarters of Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund was damaged on Thursday, witnesses said, as the kingdom reported new attacks by Yemen's Houthis (Ansar Allah).

Saudi Arabia has been battling a surge in attacks since fighting reignited in neighbouring Yemen's civil war, where Riyadh backs the internationally recognised government against the Houthis.

In the early hours of Thursday, a powerful blast was heard in the Saudi capital. Around the same time, civil defence authorities issued a warning for "potential danger" but said minutes later that the danger had passed.

The Saudi-led military coalition fighting the Houthis said it had "addressed a missile threat launched by the terrorist Houthi militia towards Riyadh".

Witnesses later said that Riyadh's Public Investment Fund Tower, which at 80 storeys is the tallest in the city, had been damaged.

"The facade is damaged across several floors, with windows blown out," said one person. Since early September, most employees in the building had been working remotely.



Hausa ways: Deaf residents use sign language to gesture during a group photo at a community meet in Zuba. AFP

Deaf Nigerians keep indigenous sign systems alive

Agence France-Presse
ABUJA

With a quick flick of the wrist, Umaru Zayyanu conveys the phrase "I am a Nigerian". But the 37-year-old is not speaking – or signing, rather – in the west African nation's official sign language. Instead, he's using Hausa sign language.

Such indigenous sign languages abound in Africa's most populous country, where deaf people were communicating with each other long before the advent of formal sign language taught in deaf schools, in 1960. Today, Nigeria, like many countries on the continent with limited budgets, has a hard enough time placing children in dedicated schools for the deaf and hard of hearing.

"Indigenous signing systems should be studied, documented and preserved before changes in education, migration, technology and wider use of Nigerian Sign Language cause some of them to decline or disappear," said Festus Zenda, who has helped document the local sign language used by the Tiv ethnic group, in Benue state. Nigerian sign languages, like their spoken counterparts, are sometimes confined to a small number of speakers in a country crowded with some 500 tongues and an unknown number of sign languages. But Hausa sign language has become a lingua franca for deaf people across the north of the country.

Nigeria traces its official sign language to Andrew Foster, an American who introduced formal deaf education across a swathe of African countries at the dawn of independence from colonial powers. Under a USAID programme administered by Gallaudet University – the United States' premier university for deaf and hard of hearing students, and Foster's alma mater – researchers were providing training to deaf educators in Nigeria, which touched on local languages as well.

The programme was shut down last year as Washington slashed foreign aid spending. Nevertheless, Nigerian researchers and activists continue to document indigenous sign languages.

Islam to become the world's largest religion by 2035, says Pew Research

According to the Washington-based think tank, Muslims will surpass Christians in numbers by 2035; by 2070, Pew says, there will be more than 3.6 billion Muslims and just under 3 billion Christians; Pakistan will have the largest Muslim population, followed by India, Nigeria and Indonesia

Associated Press
NEW YORK

Islam is expected to surpass Christianity as the world's largest religion by 2035, according to detailed projections released Wednesday by the Pew Research Center.

Pew, which has been issuing authoritative reports on religious demography for 25 years, said both Islam and Christianity are growing, but Islam is growing much faster. A key reason, Pew said, is that Muslims tend to have more children than other major religious groups.

Pew senior demographer Conrad Hackett explained that conversion and other ways of changing religious identity are much smaller factors than fertility rates.

During 2020-2025, the fertility rate for Muslims was 3.1 children per woman, followed by the rate for Christians at 2.5, according to Pew. The average fertility rate for all other women was 1.6, below the level of 2.1 that's considered necessary for each generation to replace itself.

According to the centre's latest estimates, there were 2.27 billion Christians and 2.02 billion Muslims worldwide in 2020. Pew's new projections forecast that there will be 2.57 billion Muslims and 2.52 billion Christians by 2035.

By 2070, if recent trends continue, there will be more than 3.6 billion Muslims and just under 3 billion Christians worldwide.

The estimates are part of a broader Pew project examining how the size of major religious groups could change between 2020 and 2070. The projections take into account recent differences between religious groups' age profiles, fertility rates, and patterns of religious switching and migration.

Among the many notable findings: Pew projects that the United States, within 40 years, will no longer have a Christian majority. Christians now account for 62% of U.S. adults, according to Pew, and will fall below 50% by 2065. In neighbouring Canada, Christians are expected to drop below 50% by 2030, Pew said.

Many not choosing faith

In both countries, a significant reason for the drop is the concurrent increase in the number of people with no religious affiliation. By 2070, they are projected to account for 41% of the U.S. population and to outnumber Christians in Canada.

The world's population is projected to increase by 29% between 2020 and 2070, Pew said. Of the religious groups it analysed, Muslims and Christians are the only ones expected to keep pace, with Christians growing by 30% and Muslims by 80%.

Although Hindus and Jews are growing in absolute numbers, they are projected to decline as a percentage of the global population, Pew said. It forecasts that Buddhists would shrink both in number and as a portion of the world's population, in part due to expected declines in the overall populations of China, South Korea and Japan.



Ardent devotee: Prayers are offered on the occasion of Bakrid in Chandigarh. AKHILESH KUMAR

Over the coming decades, the research centre said, most of the world's population growth is expected to occur in Africa, particularly south of the Sahara Desert, where most people are Christians or Muslims. The region's high fertility and rising life expectancy will boost the global numbers of both faiths, Pew predicted.

By 2070, it said, more than half of the world's Christians will live in sub-Saharan Africa, and Congo will surpass the U.S. as the country with the most Christians, with their ranks increasing more than threefold to 299 million.

The populations of other major regions are expected to grow more modestly, or even decline.

For example, the number of people living in Europe will shrink by 17% by 2070, Pew said, and the number of Christians there will drop by a third, from 505 million to 324 million.

Over the same period, the percentage of Europe's population that is Muslim is expected to increase from 6% to 13%.

In the U.S., Pew projects that the number of Christians will decline from about 217 million in 2020 to about 174 million in 2070.

Several mainline Protestant denominations in the U.S. have faced declining membership over many years. However, Jeffrey Brodd, a religious studies professor at California State-Sacramento, suggested a rebound was possible following congressional election victories this month by several Democrats active in these moderate-to-liberal denominations.

By Pew's estimates, Muslim women gave birth to more babies than women in any other religion during 2020-2025. About 252 million babies were born to Muslim mothers, compared with 208 million born to Christian mothers.

Muslims are the only major religious group expected to have growing numbers of births in the decades ahead. The other groups are projected either to have steady numbers of births or to experience gradual decline.

If recent trends continue, according to Pew, Pakistan will have the largest Muslim population by 2070, followed by India, Nigeria and Indonesia – which currently has the most Muslims.

No 'clash of civilization'

Gina Zurlo, a senior researcher at Harvard Divinity School specialising in religious demographics, said Christian-Muslim relations are "extremely important" in light of the evolving trends.

"The 'clash of civilization' theory still looms large in some religious communities and there is a lot of misunderstanding of both religions from both sides," she said via email. "Many Christians are not happy to see that Islam will be the world's largest religion and it's causing even more angst."

"I hope people seek opportunities for greater interreligious education," she added. "Personal contact is important – when people have personal relationships across religious differences, it 'humanises' the 'other' in fruitful ways."

Alan Cooperman, Pew's director of religion research, noted that most of the projected proliferation of Muslims and Christians was occurring in countries where they already are the majority – with conversion playing only a minor role.

"I don't think this is a situation in which the growth of Muslims is coming at the expense of Christians," he added. "I do worry about mischief being made with headlines or narratives that take this finding and portray it as sort of a clash where Christians are losing to Muslims."

Many countries have seen a steady proliferation of the "nones" – people who are atheist, agnostic or religiously unaffiliated.

Excluding China, which has a high proportion of "nones" but faces a sharp decline in overall population, the ranks of "nones" elsewhere will grow by more than 180 million by 2070, the research centre said.

The "nones" already account for a majority of the population in 10 countries, including the Czech Republic, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Uruguay and Vietnam, according to Pew. South Korea, France and the United Kingdom are forecast to join this group by 2070.

Rohingya a 'distinct lineage' close to Bangladeshis and Burmese: study

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The Rohingya are a distinct genetic group with genomic ancestry closer to Bangladeshis but considerable genetic mixture from the Burmese lineage. While this isn't surprising from a linguistic-cultural perspective, it is the first such comprehensive study from a genomic analysis perspective.

"Burmese" here is a stand-in for East and Southeast Asian ancestry in general. The study underlines what is now a basic principle of genetics that all ethnic populations are a result of intermingling of multiple population groups through history.



Rohingya refugees watch the ICJ ruling on whether Myanmar govt. committed genocide against them, in Bangladesh, on Thursday. AFP

The analysis comes on the heels of a Thursday verdict by the International Court of Justice. In a 9-6 ruling, the court held that Myanmar had committed genocide against the Muslim minority Rohingya in the north Rakhine State.

This was the verdict on a 2019 case brought to the court by The Gambia in which it accused the Myanmar government of trying to destroy the Rohingya.

The Burmese state has tried to portray the Rohingya as "outsiders" from Bangladesh to justify atrocities against them.

The genetics study, which appeared on November 17 in the journal *Scientific Reports*, does not say anything about citizenship, but notes, "This study addresses a critical void in the evolutionary history of a deeply marginalised group and unequivocally reinforces that modern human populations are intricate mosaics of diverse ancestral lineages, fundamentally shaped by historical migrations and gene flow that transcend contemporary political boundaries."

The Rohingya migrated into the Arakan region within the last millennium and, following this, the ancestral Rohingya mixed with those with Southeast Asian ancestry from local Myanmar-related populations, authors of the study underline.

In high spirits



People roll barrels of Beaujolais Nouveau wine during the official launch of the 2026 vintage in Lyon, France, on Thursday. AP

Colombian teenage climate activist wins International Children's Peace Prize

Shilpa Elizabeth
BENGALURU

Seventeen-year-old Colombian climate activist Francisco Javier Vera Manzanares has been awarded the 22nd International Children's Peace Prize award at a ceremony in The Hague.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Kailash Satyarthi presented the award to the teenager for his efforts to put children's rights at the heart of climate justice.

In an interview with *The Hindu*, Mr. Manzanares said, "It has been a long journey, and I feel very happy that our work has received this recognition. It is not just a personal achievement, but the result of the collective effort of the movement, alongside my fellow Guardians, colleagues, and friends."

" I feel very proud and happy, but I also see this as a great opportunity to reach more people, strengthen our work and continue the struggle," the teen said.

Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg are among previous winners of the honour, which amplifies the stories of children fighting for the rights of young people.

The finalists were selected from 280 nominations across 57 countries.

Now living in exile in Spain, Mr. Manzanares' journey as an activist started in Colombia in 2019, when he and six friends organised protests after witnessing the devastation caused by wildfires in the Amazon.

This movement went on to become known as "*Guardianes por la Vida*", or Guardians for Life, and has since planted 5,000 trees across Europe and Latin America and reached over 50,000 people through environmental leadership workshops.

His campaigning played a vital role in securing Colombia's 2024 ratification of the Escazú Agreement, the world's first legally binding treaty with specific protections for environmental human rights defenders.



Big win: Francisco Javier Vera Manzanares was selected as the winner from 280 nominations across 57 nations. X/@FRANCISCOACTIV2

Despite the death threats that forced him to flee to Spain, Mr. Manzanares continues to campaign for both environmental protection and to defend the human rights of climate activists internationally.

"I believe in the power of kids. I believe children are political agents," he said, asserting that they have the capacity to identify problems in their communities and solve them.

"Sometimes when we talk about children in the context of climate change, they are presented simply as victims. But I have seen the power of children, adolescents, and young people to transform our society. When children participate and give their opinions and are actively heard by the governments, they are also strengthening democratic mechanisms," Mr. Manzanares added.

He highlighted the current geopolitical situation and inadequate and unequal funding to developing countries as major challenges to climate action, and also pointed to the need to hold governments and the private sector accountable.

'Forced to flee'

Marc Dullaert, founder and chair of the KidsRights Foundation, the charity behind the award, said, "Despite being a model of peaceful activism for climate rights defenders everywhere, our 17-year-old winner, Francisco, has been forced to flee across the world due to violent death threats made against him.

It is shameful that governments are not able to protect him, fellow child activists, and their right to be heard."

Alongside the award, Mr. Manzanares will receive an international platform and funding through the KidsRights Foundation's International Children's Peace Prize Project Fund to help expand his work worldwide.

He now intends to scale his mission globally, aiming to empower at least 20,000 more children via training programmes on climate justice, children's rights, and peace-building.

(For full interview: newsth.live/JavierInterview)

MAJOR MILESTONE

Bumrah surpasses Srinath to join India's top-10 Test wicket-takers



AP

Pacer Jasprit Bumrah overtook Javagal Srinath to enter the top-10 wicket-takers for India in Tests. The pacer achieved the feat on the opening day of the first Test against New Zealand when he took three for 52. In his 53rd Test, Bumrah has 237 wickets at an average of 19.75, with a best of six for 27.

DUBIOUS DISTINCTION

Latham in joint-fourth spot among openers with most ducks in Tests



AP

New Zealand skipper Tom Latham on Thursday joined Virender Sehwag in fourth spot among openers with most ducks in Tests. The left-hander was dismissed for a two-ball blob on the opening day of the Wellington Test. Latham now has 15 ducks. West Indies' Kraigg Brathwaite tops the list with 19.

HAPPY HUNTING GROUND

Centurion Nicholls continues his love affair with Basin Reserve



AP

It's (Basin Reserve) a special place to play for any cricketer, probably any cricket fan. You come down, it's such a beautiful setting and there is obviously a lot of history here as well. So yeah, it's nice to have another hundred here — Henry Nicholls after notching up his fifth Test century at Wellington.

COMMENDABLE SHOW

Velavan stuns top seed in thrilling final to emerge champion in Qatar



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

World No. 38 Velavan Senthilkumar beat Swiss World No. 17 and top seed Dimitri Steinmann in a five-game thriller (5-11, 11-8, 7-11, 12-10, 11-9) to clinch the QSF 3 PSA Copper squash tournament in Doha on Thursday. Second-seeded Velavan rallied from 1-2 down to bag his third Copper-level crown of the year.

Nicholls and Phillips lead New Zealand's fightback

The two add 173 for the unbroken sixth wicket to take the Black Caps to 243 for five at close; Bumrah scalps three after Gill opts to bowl; India prefers Washington and Akash over Jadeja and Siraj

INDIA IN NZ

Amol Karhadkar
WELLINGTON

Jasprit Bumrah had New Zealand on the ropes. Henry Nicholls and Glenn Phillips, however, ensured India had little to show for its early dominance, stitching together an unbroken 173-run stand for the sixth wicket to turn the opening day of the first Test at the Basin Reserve on Thursday on its head.

New Zealand, reduced to 70 for five early in the second session, finished at 243 for five, with Nicholls having crossed his hundred (113 batting, 221b, 14x4) and Phillips (94 batting, 182b, 13x4) close to the milestone.

India had its chance to break the partnership late in the day when Prasidh Krishna induced a top-edge from Nicholls, then on 102. But a miscommunication between Devdutt Padikkal at short fine-leg and Rishabh Pant resulted in the former dropping a sitter.

The softer ball and clear skies made batting easier and Nicholls-Phillips capitalised on them. While Nicholls provided solidity at one end, Phillips counter-attacked with a crisp cover drive to get off the mark and made the most of the fuller deliveries from Prasidh.

Nicholls, meanwhile, grew increasingly assured, bringing up his maiden Test fifty against India with a pull off Anshul Kamboj.

The partnership not only arrested New Zealand's slide but also ensured India's four-pronged pace attack had little to show for its toil after lunch.

Washington Sundar, preferred ahead of Ravindra Jadeja, was forced to bowl extensively as the support bowlers struggled to extract much from the surface, with India also falling behind the required over-rate. Nicholls had little trouble converting his fifty into a hundred.

India's decision to field appeared vindicated early on, with Bumrah striking in the opening over. Tom Latham shouldered arms to the third ball, only to see it nip back and knock over his off-stump.







Lead acts: Nicholls and Phillips mixed caution with aggression to prop up the Kiwis on the opening day after Bumrah's triple strike left them reeling. AP & AFP

Sharp catch

The Indian spearhead returned before lunch to remove Daryl Mitchell, who walked down the wicket but failed to keep the ball down, allowing Yashasvi Jaiswal to take a sharp catch at forward short-leg.

Kamboj and Akash Deep, picked ahead of Mohammed Siraj, kept the pressure on with probing spells. Kamboj had Devon Conway driving at a full-length delivery, with Pant pouching the edge behind the stumps.

He was also unlucky when Rachin Ravindra nicked him behind in the 21st over, but India opted against reviewing it despite Pant pressing Shubman Gill at first slip into opting for a review; however, the captain went with the bowler who, just like the umpire, didn't hear the sound.

Bumrah's dismissal of Tom Blundell after lunch briefly extended India's dominance. Blundell hung his bat out and Gill took a neat catch at first slip.

But Phillips countered and survived a contentious DRS review off Bumrah, with the ball appearing to make multiple impacts before the TV umpire ruled bat-first. The onus will again be on Bumrah to repeat his heroics with the second new ball on the second morning.



Butter fingers: Padikkal drops an easy chance offered by Nicholls late in the final session. AP

SCOREBOARD

NEW ZEALAND — 1ST INNINGS
Tom Latham b Bumrah 0 *(2b)*, Devon Conway c Pant b Kamboj 4 *(13b)*, Henry Nicholls (batting) 113 *(221b, 14x4)*, Rachin Ravindra c Pant b Akash Deep 15 *(50b, 2x4)*, Daryl Mitchell c Jaiswal b Bumrah 1 *(8b)*, Tom Blundell c Gill b Bumrah 5 *(22b)*, Glenn Phillips (batting) 94 *(182b, 13x4)*; Extras (lb-5, nb-6): 11; Total (for five wkts. in 82 overs): 243.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-2 (Latham, 0.3 overs), 2-12 (Conway, 3.2), 3-51 (Rachin, 19.1), 4-52 (Mitchell, 20.6), 5-70 (Blundell, 28.2).

INDIA BOWLING
Bumrah 17-5-52-3, Kamboj 18-4-57-1, Akash Deep 15-5-33-1, Prasidh 16-2-58-0, Washington 16-2-38-0.

Toss: India.

Kotak straight-bats Siraj, Jadeja omission

Amol Karhadkar
WELLINGTON

Mohammed Siraj was as instrumental as captain Shubman Gill in India drawing the series in England last year. With 43 wickets in 11 matches, he is India's leading wicket-taker in the ongoing World Test Championship (WTC) cycle. A workhorse who thrives on intensity, Siraj has a knack of swinging games against the tide.

Ravindra Jadeja, meanwhile, is the senior-most member of India's Test contingent and has the second-best batting average in SENA countries since 2021, behind Rishabh Pant.

Yet, when Gill and Tom Latham exchanged team-sheets moments before the toss at Basin Reserve on Thursday, neither featured in the XI.

Both made an appearance as substitute fielders on a day India failed to build on Jasprit Bumrah's new-ball exploits.

No wonder when batting coach Sitanshu Kotak addressed the post-match media conference after India spent most of the day in the field, seven of the 12 questions were about Siraj and Jadeja's exclusion. A couple more sought answers on Anshul Kamboj's readiness for Test cricket and the lack of support for Bumrah.

Kotak, not part of the select group that decides the XI, could only toe the team management's line, offering mundane responses such as "this is the best XI everyone felt", "I personally don't think it was a wrong decision" and "there is nothing wrong" with Siraj.

Siraj had an ordinary outing in the two-Test series in Sri Lanka in August, but has claimed 95 wickets in 23 Tests across Australia, South Africa and England. He also appeared to be bowling with rhythm during India-A's match against New Zealand-A.

As for Washington Sundar being preferred over Jadeja, Kotak said the decision was influenced by the presence of four left-handers in the Kiwi top-order, and the possibility of the offie playing a bigger role in the second innings.

But if India felt the conditions were conducive to a four-pronged pace attack, did it really need a tweaker?



Talking point: Siraj and Jadeja missed out on spots in the XI. FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

Shelton cruises; Tiafoe's win helps Alcaraz advance

ATP FINALS

Agencies
TURIN

US Open finalist Ben Shelton did his part. Now he needs some help from top-ranked Alexander Zverev to advance at the ATP Finals. Shelton twice aced his way out of trouble in the first set tie-breaker and beat Rafael Jodar 7-6(8), 7-5 on Thursday.

If Zverev wins a set against Arthur Fils in the final match of the group, Shelton will reach the semifinals. Zverev has already advanced with two wins, while Fils is 1-1.



Raising his game: Tiafoe kept his semifinal hopes alive. AP

Fils' only chance of advancing is by beating Zverev in straight sets.

American Frances Tiafoe defeated Italian Flavio Cobolli 7-6(6), 6-0, his first set win guaranteeing Carlos Alcaraz a spot in the next round.

Debutant Tiafoe kept his hopes of a semifinal spot alive and faces Daniil Medvedev in his last group match on Friday. Medvedev is still in with a chance of advancing.

Firouzja pips Caruana, runs into Giri in final

TOTAL CHESS

Jayantho Sengupta
BUDAPEST

Alireza Firouzja overcame Fabiano Caruana in the Armageddon to reach the final of the Total Chess World Championship Tour Pilot here on Wednesday, setting up a title clash with Anish Giri.

Giri won both sessions against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, while Firouzja needed the decider after Caruana recovered from Tuesday's defeat to win Wednesday's session 15-5. The two-day final begins on Thursday, with Caruana and Vachier-Lagrave contesting third place.

After sweeping Tuesday's four blitz games, Firouzja won the first three on Wednesday before Caruana took the fourth. The American then drew the first rapid encounter and won the second to lead 7-5.



Dominant: Giri remained unbeaten across 14 games against Vachier-Lagrave. FLICKR/FIDE

Caruana followed with a Fast Classic victory to force the Armageddon. Having scored more points across the two days, he chose black and needed only a draw, but Firouzja won with white.

Giri followed Tuesday's 14.5-5.5 victory with a 12.5-7.5 win, remaining unbeaten across all 14 games. He won once in blitz and the second rapid encounter on Wednesday before drawing Fast Classic with black.

Hans Niemann beat Le Quang Liem in both sessions to advance to the match for fifth place, while Jan-Krzysztof Duda overturned his opening-day defeat against Ian Nepomniachtchi and won the Armageddon.

Levon Aronian advanced through Armageddon against Shakhriyar Mamedyarov and will face Wesley So for 13th place. Magnus Carlsen progressed against Bibisara Assaubayeva to meet Vladislav Artemiev for 17th. Carlsen, Richard Rapport and Abhimanyu Mishra forfeited their Fast Classic games after their match outcomes had been settled. Among the Indians, Arjun Erigaisi beat Jorden van Foreest with white in the Armageddon to set up a meeting with Haik Martirosyan for ninth place.

R. Praggnanandhaa beat Nodirbek Abdusattorov with black in Fast Classic to turn a 3.5-8.5 deficit into an 11.5-8.5 victory. Having won Tuesday's session 11-9, he advanced to face American Abhimanyu Mishra in the match for 21st place.

R. Vaishali lost 9-11 to Abhimanyu Mishra and will meet Abdusattorov for 23rd place.

(The writer is in Budapest at the invitation of Total Chess).

INBRIEF



Comfortable victories for Sourav and Advani

Sourav Kothari, *in pic.*, blanked Chau Hon Man 4-0 in the IBSF World Snooker Championships at the Yeshwant Club in Indore on Thursday. Favourite Pankaj Advani finished the league phase with a comfortable 4-1 win over Iran's Shahin Sabzi. Unheralded Indian Uzair Khan stunned former champion and title contender Ali Alobaidli of Qatar 4-1. Out of the 21 Indian men in the fray, 14 made it to the knockouts. In the women's section, India's Amee Kamani, Keerthana Pandian and defending champion Anupama Ramachandran advanced to the knockout quarterfinals with all-win records.



Harmer spins South Africa to Test win over Bangladesh

Off-spinner Simon Harmer, *right*, took six for 51 as South Africa beat Bangladesh by nine wickets to clinch the first Test in Johannesburg on Thursday. Starting the fifth day on 100 for five in its second innings, Bangladesh was bowled out for 168. South Africa needed only 1.3 overs to score the 12 runs required for a victory which took the defending champion to the top of the current World Test Championship table.

The scores: Bangladesh 400 and 168 (Harmer 6/51) lost to South Africa 557 and 12/1 in 1.3 overs.
PoM: Rabada. *South Africa won by nine wickets and leads the two-match series 1-0.*

IWL: East Bengal-NITA FA match abandoned due to rain

Defending champion East Bengal FC's Indian Women's League fixture against NITA Football Academy was called off owing to torrential rain at the Kalyani Stadium in Kolkata on Thursday. The revised date and kick-off time will be announced later.



Rathnayaka helps Sri Lanka extend Test into fourth day

Sri Lanka mounted a resilient rearguard to stave off an innings defeat and frustrate Pakistan on Thursday, reaching 309 for nine on day three of the second and final Test in Rawalpindi. Milan Rathnayaka, *in pic.*, hit an unbeaten 60 while Sonal Dinusha (54) and Kusal Mendis (53) defied Pakistan's pace attack.

The scores: Sri Lanka 98 & 309/9 in 93 overs (Kusal Mendis 53, Sonal Dinusha 54, Milan Rathnayaka 60 batting) vs. Pakistan 325.

SYED MUSHTAQ ALI TROPHY — FRIDAY'S MATCHES

Elite: Group A: At Mumbai: Chandigarh vs. Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka vs. Jharkhand, Bengal vs. Mizoram, Rajasthan vs. Baroda.
Group B: Indore: Punjab vs. Tamil Nadu, Jammu & Kashmir vs. Bihar, Delhi vs. Saurashtra, Railways vs. Haryana.
Group C: Mohali & New Chandigarh: Maharashtra vs. Assam, Madhya Pradesh vs. Andhra, Kerala vs. Tripura, Himachal Pradesh vs. Pondicherry.
Group D: Kolkata: Hyderabad vs. Goa, Uttarakhand vs. Odisha, Chhattisgarh vs. Gujarat, Vidarbha vs. Mumbai.
Plate: Sovima: Arunachal Pradesh vs. Meghalaya, Services vs. Nagaland, Sikkim vs. Manipur.

LIVE TELECAST

SMAT: JioHotstar, 9, 11 a.m. 12.30, 12.45, 1.30 & 4.30 p.m.
Pakistan vs. Sri Lanka: Second Test, Day 4, VETO App, 10 a.m.
Rising Stars Asia Cup: India-A vs. Nepal, Sony Sports Ten 1 & LIV, 3.30 p.m.
Tennis: ATP Finals, FanCode, 4 p.m.
ISL: Sony Sports Ten 2 & LIV, 5 & 7.30 p.m.
New Zealand vs. India: First Test, Day 3, Sony Sports Ten 1 & LIV, 3.30 a.m. (Saturday)

India begins title defence with a thumping victory

The host, spurred on by an enthusiastic crowd, makes good of penalty corners to overpower Malaysia after an early setback; China thrashes Thailand; Japan edges past South Korea

WACT

Aashin Prasad
BHOPAL

It wasn't a complete performance, but after falling behind to an early goal, India overpowered and overran Malaysia to begin its Women's Asian Champions Trophy (WACT) title defence with a 4-1 win here on Thursday.

Spurred on by a rousing home crowd at the International Sports Complex in a commanding second half display, there were plenty of positives for Sjoerd Marijne's team after a tepid start.

It was particularly memorable for forward Mumtaz Khan, who got on the scoresheet on her return, and debutant Puja Sahoo, who scored on her senior team debut.

In the opening quarter, Malaysia maintained its shape and made inroads into India's circle through Siti Shaikh and Nur Shamine Azureen, keeping India's new-look defence on its toes.

Counter-attack

But India was caught out on a devastating counter, where Malaysia turned its penalty corner defence into attack.



Cashing in: Skipper Salima, second from left, puts India ahead after a goalmouth scramble. A.M. FARUQUI

Azmyra Azhairy showed excellent control and burst of pace to get past Jyoti to surge through the right side and penetrate the Indian circle before squaring the ball towards Nuramirah Zulkifli.

Navneet Kaur failed to cut out the pass, allowing Zulkifli to get the ball under control and reverse hit past Bansari Solanki.

Luckily for India, the response was immediate, when an opportunistic Mumtaz capitalised on a rebound to reverse flick the ball high into the net for the equaliser.

In the third quarter, India ramped up the intensity, pinning the Malaysians into their own 25-yard circle and increased their PCs.

After four unsuccessful attempts, India converted three of its nine in the second half to pull ahead.

Early in the third quarter, after a goalmouth scramble, injector Salima Tete moved unmarked into position to poke the ball home for the go-ahead goal.

Malaysia's PC defence repelled two more attempts, before a variation enabled another breach.

Deepika flicked it behind for Puja, whose drag flick took a couple of deflections before sounding the board.

Deepika turned provider again, when her drag flick was deflected home from close range by Lalremsiami to put Malaysia beyond reach.

The results:
China 7 (Qingmiao Feng 27, 32-pc, Quichan Deng 28, 42, Qixiao Wei 33-pc, Yujun Chenm 38, Heyang Zhang 56-pc) bt Thailand 0.
Japan 1 (Hanami Saito 60-pc) bt South Korea 0.
India 4 (Mumtaz Khan 19, Salima Tete 35-pc, Puja Sahoo 39-pc, Lalremsiami 49-pc) bt Malaysia 1 (Nuramirah Zulkifli 19).

Rakshitha stuns Tokyo Olympics champ Chen

BADMINTON

Press Trust of India
KOWLOON

India's Rakshitha Ramraj pulled off a stunning upset, defeating Tokyo Olympics champion and world No. 4 Chen Yu Fei of China 21-18, 24-22 at the Hong Kong Open Super 500 badminton on Thursday.

She had shocked Denmark's Mia Blichfeldt in the opening round.

"I think this is one of my biggest wins in my career so far. And she's my biggest idol and I still can't believe that I won against her. So I think this will be one of the most memorable days in my badminton career," Rakshitha said.

The in-form Lakshya Sen outwitted Denmark's Rasmus Gemke 21-11, 21-18 to continue his impressive run.

The men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty also stormed into the quarterfinals with a 21-19, 21-16 win over Malaysia's Nur Mohd Azriyn Ayub and Tan Wee Kiong.

In women's doubles, Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopi Chand lost to the American duo of Lauren Lam and Allison Lee 20-22, 13-21 in pre-quarterfinals.

The results (pre-quarters):
Women: Rakshitha Ramraj bt Chen Yu Fei 21-18, 24-22.
Doubles: Lauren Lam & Allison Lee bt Treesa Jolly & Gayatri Gopi Chand 22-20, 21-13. **Men:** Lakshya Sen bt Rasmus Gemke 21-11, 21-18. **Doubles:** Satwiksairaj Rankireddy & Chirag Shetty bt Nur Mohd Azriyn Ayub & Tan Wee Kiong 21-19, 21-16.

CWG gold medallist loses arm in bike crash

Agence France-Presse
KUALA LUMPUR

Malaysia's Commonwealth Games gold medallist weightlifter Muhammad Hafizuddin Roslin had his right arm amputated after a serious motorcycle accident.

The 21-year-old was conscious and in a stable condition in a Kuala Lumpur hospital on Thursday, three days after the crash, Malaysia Weightlifting Federation president Ayub Rahmat said. Hafizuddin won gold in the 88kg event in Glasgow in July and was a prospect for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"He is awake and smiling," Malaysia Weightlifting Federation president Ayub Rahmat said.

"Physically his condition is improving but this incident has had a great impact on his future."

Manush being picked over veteran Harmeet for Mixed Team World Cup comes under scrutiny

TABLE TENNIS

K. Keerthivasan
CHENNAI

The decision to drop Harmeet Desai and include Manush Shah in the Indian team for the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) Mixed Team World Cup in Chengdu from November 29 to December 6 has come under scrutiny.

Based on the Table Tennis Federation of India's (TTFI) points system (released in July) and its selection criteria, Harmeet should have made the cut instead of Manush. On the cut-off date (November 2, 2026), the former had 55 points (domestic ranking: 35 points; world ranking: 20) and the latter 40 (domestic ranking: 5 points; world ranking: 35).



Bone of contention: Based on TTFI's points system (released in July) and its selection criteria, Harmeet should have made the cut instead of Manush. FILE PHOTOS: SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

On several previous occasions, the TTFI has strictly adhered to its points system while selecting teams. When picking the squad for the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, for instance, it dropped Manika Batra because she had fewer points and named her as a reserve.

However, going by the world rankings, Manush was ahead of Harmeet in men's singles and doubles, and mixed doubles. And it is also reliably learnt that the Indian team was selected going by TTFI's points system in all three previous editions of the Mixed Team World Cup.

"What should I do to make it to the Indian team? I skipped a few WTT Feeder events to play in domestic tournaments and accumulate points. I did not enter WTT tournaments abroad because I believed I would be there in the team for the Mixed Team World Cup. In the previous editions of the tournament, the TTFI used its points system. So, why the change now?" Harmeet asked.

Indu Puri, chairperson of the ad-hoc committee, referred the questions to the Selection Committee.

One of its members, speaking on condition of anonymity, told *The Hindu*: "It was a decision unanimously agreed upon by the committee. This is not a tournament like the Asian Games or WTT. The Mixed Team World Cup is different, with doubles playing a major role. The TTFI's points system will not be applicable here. Manush is among the world's top-six in mixed doubles and is the highest world-ranked Indian in men's singles."

A top paddler told *The Hindu*: "This is unprecedented. The TTFI's Selection Committee has bypassed its own policy and picked Manush. The federation has not made such an exception for Sharath Kamal or Manika Batra or any other top player in the recent past. Never before has any exception been made for any tournament".

The squad: Men: Ankur Bhattacharjee, Payas Jain, Manush Shah, Manav Thakkar. **Women:** Diya Chitale, Syndrela Das, Yashaswini Ghorpade, Sutirtha Mukherjee.

Shot-putter Kiran docked for eight years

Sports Bureau
KOLKATA

The National Anti-Doping Agency has handed Hangzhou Asian Games bronze medallist shot-putter Kiran Baliyan an eight-year suspension for multiple anti-doping rule violations, including a positive result for banned steroid methandienone. The case had been continuing since 2024 and involved a lawsuit. International weightlifter Sairaj Pardeshi was served a four-year suspension, while Greco-Roman wrestler Deepak got a two-year ineligibility.

Race-walker Munita Prajapati, triple jumper Khushbu Varma and shot-putter Malkeet Singh were provisionally suspended for consuming different banned substances.

'Cummins will struggle to lead without refuting Bancroft's words'

SANDPAPERGATE

Press Trust of India
SYDNEY

Former Australia wicketkeeper Ian Healy has said Pat Cummins will struggle to lead the Test side unless he clearly refutes Cameron Bancroft's claim that the entire team knew about the ball-tampering plan in Cape Town in 2018.

Bancroft, one of the central figures of the 2018 Sandpapergate scandal, on Tuesday asserted that the entire team knew about the conspiracy but he ended up taking "the bullet" for everyone. That was after Cummins dismissed former teammate Usman Khawaja's claim in his book that the entire team knew about the ball-tampering plot as "complete and utter nonsense."



In the eye of the storm: The latest revelations have pushed Australia captain Cummins on the back foot. FILE PHOTO

Weighing in to the controversy, Healy said, "I would feel without refuting Bancroft's words again, he (Cummins) will struggle to captain the team.

"You've had a big part of your credibility taken away with that press conference now that it's been proven to be not as complete as Pat made it out to be," he told SEN. Asked if Cummins need to stand down as the captain, Healy said, "No, he doesn't need to. And I don't want to get into another panic mode of what happened in 2018, it was panic, and they tried to do an investigation in no time, didn't talk to anyone, it was rubbish. It was a lack of quality and rubbish, and rushed, and panicked".

Dhoni told me to focus on fitness after my first season, says Nishant

S. Prasanna Venkatesan
INDORE

Having shared a dressing room with M.S. Dhoni at Chennai Super Kings (CSK), Nishant Sindhu would have found it hard to resist the temptation to pick his brains on hitting sixes. But when he spoke to the former India captain about his batting, Dhoni's advice was simple and sensible.

"We batted together in a practice match, during which I spoke to him about my batting. He said that I'm not a big guy who can hit sixes at any time. He told me not to copy him or anyone else, but to just focus on my game," the all-rounder, who has been retained by Gujarat Titans (GT), recalled in the wake of Dhoni's IPL retirement.



Nishant. R.V. MOORTHY

Of all his interactions with Dhoni, the one that stands out most in Nishant's memory is a rather amusing fitness reminder.

"After my first season, he laughed and playfully told me to do more fitness work. I was kind of chubby at that time," Nishant said. He took the advice to heart and worked on his fitness.

The 22-year-old also spoke about the pointers he received from Ravindra Jadeja on his bowling after starring in Haryana's seven-wicket win over Tamil Nadu.

He returned figures of three for 22 with his left-arm spin and scored an unbeaten 37 in their Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (SMAT) Group-B clash here on Wednesday.

"Jaddu *bhai* told me a few things about the grip, what I could do better, and how to bowl when the batter is hitting us. It helped me a lot, and I just tried to implement those things," he said.

After two ordinary outings against Punjab and Saurashtra, Nishant was pleased to make an all-round contribution against Tamil Nadu.

"It was a good, impactful performance. I'm very confident and I'll carry that forward," he said.



Bumrah — the postman who seldom fails to deliver

Plucked out from anonymity despite an action that could so easily have put the traditionalists off, he took little time to establish himself as a premier pacer; his unique skill-sets allowed him to flourish anywhere in the world, on any kind of track because he can take the pitch out of the equation effortlessly



The ball to dismiss Tom Latham with the third delivery of the series was special, one that came in a touch after pitching and befuddling the experienced left-hander, who allowed it free and unchecked access to the off-stump



R. Kaushik
WELLINGTON

As Jasprit Bumrah starts his walk-run towards the bowling crease, you brace yourself for the magical. For the out of the ordinary. You prepare to be shocked out of your wits, even though you have seen what he can do, time after time. You don't dare blink, because you feel an event is about to unfold. An event of great impact and effect, an event to elevate you to a different plane even if you are just a distant bystander, watching the master go about his business as if it were just another day in office.

There is a reason why Bumrah enjoys the pre-eminent status conferred on him by the pundits, those who have been there and done that. His peers find him an unfathomable riddle; they base their opinion on what they have come up against in their careers. His illustrious seniors, who have a much larger sample size for comparison, are also in awe of his genius, drawn magnetically to the braced left knee, the hyperextended right arm, the metronomic accuracy with which he attacks either the top of the stumps or the toes that stand between the ball and the base of the wickets.

In a world of chaos and uncertainty, Bumrah is a bank, a postman who mostly delivers and seldom disappoints. India must be thankful they have in their ranks one of the all-time greats, even if his international career is less than 11 years old and even though he is now being managed with great care and diligence so that his protesting body doesn't pack up entirely and therefore prevents him from turning up for the clashes that truly matter - such as Test faceoffs, or marquee white-ball events such as the World Cups and the Champions Trophy.

Bucking convention

Bumrah has bucked convention in so many different ways that it is hard to know where to begin. There is much that John Wright has contributed to Indian cricket, but none of them will top his unearthing of a rare, unpolished (at the time) gem that has now attained a magnificent sparkle which is the envy of the rest of the world.

Wright, the pugnacious left-handed opening batter who also led New Zealand with distinction, was India's first overseas coach. Appointed to that role towards the end of 2000, he oversaw a difficult phase in Indian cricket, mired in the aftermath of the match-fixing scandal of earlier that year that weaned fans away from the sport and left them feeling disillusioned, if not downright cheated. There was anger and despair among the teeming masses who had invested so much in the fortunes of the national team, only to learn that not all of their heroes were driven by the pride and privilege of representing the country and targeting victories.

Wright ushered in professionalism. Aghast at the 'service' players received at nets from liveried butlers when they should instead have solely been focussed on polishing their skills, he quickly read the riot act. He ensured that nets weren't seen as a lark but that there was focus and discipline and an uncompromising approach that would then seamlessly segue into matchplay. Within months of taking charge, he oversaw one of the greatest Test series of all time, as India bounced back from the ignominy of a three-day hammering in the first Test in Mumbai in early 2001 to complete an extraordinary 2-1 triumph against all-conquering Australia.

Wright's creative mind

Success has many fathers and therefore V.V.S. Laxman's elevation to No. 3 in *that* Test at the Eden is attributed to numerous individuals. But the idea originally stemmed from Wright's creative mind, much as he might not want to say so in public, and triggered a great fightback during which Laxman posted the highest individual Test score by an Indian at the time and joined hands in a series-turning partnership with the man with whom he swapped places in the batting order, Rahul Dravid.

Dravid was one of the prime movers behind Wright's appointment as the Indian coach; during his four and a half years as the boss, the affable Kiwi struck a chord in all cricket-loving Indians, but he didn't sever his connections with Indian cricket once his tenure ended in 2005 after Pakistan's two-format tour of India. The Indian Premier League allowed him to stay connected with the country where, by his own admission, he is more popular than in the country he represented with distinction for so long, and it was in his role as talent scout for Mumbai Indians that he noticed the raw diamond that Bumrah was.

Plucked out from anonymity despite an action that could so easily have put the traditionalists off, Bumrah took little time in establishing himself as a premier pacer. His international debut came in January 2016 in Sydney, in a 50-over game against the host nation, but during his early days, he was considered a white-ball specialist and there was little haste in trying to integrate him with Test cricket. Head coach Ravi Shastri and skipper Virat Kohli carefully worked out his entry point into the five-day game, and on the eve of the first of three Tests against South Africa in January 2018, Shastri told one of his friends in Cape Town that he would unleash a 'rocket' the following day.

New and effective

Bumrah's first Test wicket was the effervescent A.B. de Villiers; his first bowl in Test cricket was otherwise commonplace, one for 73 from 19 overs after being brought on first change, but when he was given the new ball in the second innings, he was a lot more effective, with the scalps of de Villiers (again), skipper Faf du Plessis and Quinton de Kock on his way to three for 39 from 11.2 overs. It didn't take Bumrah to announce himself; since then, he has been announcing himself in one city after another, from one forum to the next, in this format and then that.

Just like Sachin Tendulkar quickly became the bulwark of the Indian batting after his debut as a curly-haired, baby-faced early teen in Pakistan in 1989, Bumrah rapidly climbed up the pecking order in all formats to become India's most feared bowler in all conditions. His unique skillsets allowed him to flourish anywhere in the world, on any kind of track because he can take the pitch out of the equation effortlessly. When there is help, like there was on Thursday morning at the Basin Reserve on day one of the first Test, he can be practically unplayable. If he didn't pick up more than three wickets in his first two spells on the first day, it was because several of the deliveries were too good for the batters, who didn't get close enough to the ball to nick it.

Bumrah has this unique knack of stepping up and delivering in the big occasions, of overturning lost causes and altering destinations in the bat of an eye. His parsimonious two-over spell in the climactic stages of the 2024 T20 World Cup final against South Africa, in which he also dismissed Marco Jansen, is as iconic as the screaming yorker with which he sent Ollie Pope's stumps flying in Visakhapatnam in February 2024. In the previous game, Pope had driven India ragged by sweeping and reverse-sweeping to help England overturn a massive first-innings deficit and conjure a near-miraculous win in Hyderabad. A week later, Bumrah put Pope and England in their place, turning in a performance of such authority and command that even battle-hardened English pros were eating out of his hands.

These days, Bumrah doesn't play too frequently for India. Indeed, his last international appearance before the Basin Test came on October 3, in the Asian Games final against Pakistan. Bumrah has been available for selection since then, but the team leadership group and the selectors know that there is no point making him play meaningless T20Is on a bilateral basis or to play him in ODIs at home where everything is so different from what will be on offer in the Africas in October next year.

Bumrah was always being readied for this two-Test series, and for some, if not all, of the five Tests for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series at home against Australia from January 21. At the time of writing, India are still in with a chance of making it to the final of the World Test Championship and therefore Bumrah currently has an important role to play in that endeavour. After the BGT showdown, India don't have any red-ball series lined up until after the 50-over World Cup which, in all likelihood, will also be Bumrah's last, like it most certainly will be for Rohit Sharma and Kohli. He owns two T20 World Cup winner's medals, but hasn't been a part of a team that has gone all the way in the longer, 50-over format. India haven't won an ODI World Cup since 2011, their stirring campaign of 2023, also at home, falling flat at the final hurdle against the uncompromising Australians. Like Rohit, Bumrah is determined to lift the 50-over World Cup trophy aloft before reassessing his options, and therefore there is no dearth of motivation or inspiration as he enters potentially the most important 12 months of his career to date.

Reaffirming his quality

On Thursday, Bumrah reaffirmed his quality with a probing if somewhat rusty first spell, courtesy the long break since the Asiad final during which he has bowled only six competitive overs in nearly 50 days, and then ramped it up in an exceptional second burst of 7-3-16-2 when he spewed venom. There was seam, there was bounce, and there were the trademark sandshoe-crushing yorkers that threatened limbs and egos. The ball to dismiss Tom Latham with the third delivery of the series was special, one that came in a touch after pitching and befuddling the experienced left-hander, who allowed it free and unchecked access to the off-stump.

Daryl Mitchell was outthought and outfoxed by a nip-backer designed to exploit his tendency to run down the track and plonk his left foot well outside off. These two dismissals showed Bumrah at his clinical, switched-on best, and even though he flagged slightly at the end of a long day following his first substantial Test bowl since last November when he bowled 32 overs in South Africa's first innings in Guwahati, he was no less dangerous.

India didn't help their cause by leaving out Mohammed Siraj and Ravindra Jadeja, which meant that Bumrah apart, none of the other four bowlers had even 50 Test scalps. For a while, that didn't matter as the virtuoso got to work. Like only he can. Until Henry Nicholls and Glenn Phillips got to them. To all of them apart from Bumrah, of course, it goes without saying.

THE GIST

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- Bumrah was always being readied for this two-Test series, and for some, if not all, of the five Tests for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series at home against Australia from Jan. 21