

MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2026



The Indian EXPRESS

JOURNALISM of COURAGE

NEW DELHI, LATE CITY, 20 PAGES

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Happening today

● **LEADER OF OPPOSITION**
Rahul Gandhi is expected to appear before a special court in Sultanpur, UP, which is due to pronounce its verdict in a defamation case against him.

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Business as Usual

By EP UNNY



INAUGURATION OF RBI'S DATA CENTRE AND CYBERSECURITY TRAINING INSTITUTE IN ODISHA

Wars target economies, must protect India's banking from cyber terror: PM

Says Cong policies pushed banking system to brink of collapse, led to mounting NPAs

Sujit Bisoyi

Bhubaneswar, October 25

WARNING THAT modern wars are not fought with weapons alone but also by targeting economies, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday underlined the need to protect India's banking system from "cyber terrorists".

Modi was speaking at the in-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra and Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi in Bhubaneswar, Sunday. PTI

NATION

PAGE 9

PM WATCHES AS IAF JETS ROAR ACROSS SKIES IN VARANASI

auguration of the Reserve Bank of India's Data Centre and Cybersecurity Training Institute here.

"We all understand that modern warfare is not waged solely with weapons. Weakening a country can also be attempted by striking at its economy. As India gains financial strength, safeguarding our banking system against cyber criminals and cyber terrorists is

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge with party's Bihar unit chief Rajesh Ram and MP Akhilesh Prasad Singh in Patna on Sunday. ANI

'Modi ka baap bhi jayega': Kharge's remark triggers row, BJP calls for protest

Shah says Cong chief breached 'all norms of decorum'

Express News Service

Patna, New Delhi, October 25

A REMARK by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge — "Modi ka baap bhi jayega" (Even Modi's father will have to go) — at a Patna event on Sunday triggered a political row, with the BJP and its allies condemning the language as "abusive". The BJP announced a nationwide protest against the remark on Monday, with Union Home Minister Amit Shah accusing Kharge of breaching "all norms of decorum".

Kharge was speaking at Patna's Bapu Sabhagar during a programme marking the 139th birth anniversary of Bihar's first Chief Minister, Shri Krishna Singh, popularly

known as Shri Babu. Before he was interrupted by a man in the crowd, Kharge said the Congress would send those involved in alleged irregularities in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process to jail.

An audience member, Santosh Kumar from Chhapra, then shouted, "Modi nahin jayenga (Modi will not go)." Kharge responded, "Modi ka baap bhi jayega, baap bhi jayega. Modi ka baap bhi jayega. (Even Modi's father will have to go)."

Kumar later identified himself as a "dedicated Congress worker" and alleged that party workers had mistaken him for a BJP supporter and assaulted him while escorting him out. "My remarks were taken out of context. I want to see Modi removed from power, but my statement was cut short, leading to the misunderstanding," Kumarsaid, adding that he meant to say that unless there

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPRESS special

FLAT MARKETS FOR TWO YEARS A CONCERN

On FM table: Slashing capital gains tax rate, dollar-based taxation for foreign investors

Aanchal Magazine & Anil Sasi
New Delhi, October 25

AS INVESTORS grapple with a flat stock market trajectory for more than two years now, discussions within the government in the run-up to Budget 2027-28 include lowering the long-term capital gains tax from 12.5% now for both domestic and foreign investors, and letting foreign investors pay this tax on capital gains made in dollar terms as opposed to in rupee terms, to boost market sentiments.

Officials say the urgency to act fast is due to two key concerns. One, zero returns or losses in stock markets over the last two years come on top of poor wage growth, and this is a big sentiment dampener. It is felt across a larger spectrum of

Stock indices

	Change in %*	YTD change#
Sensex	-7.9	-14.2
Nifty 50	-6.5	-13.6
S&P 500 (US)	31.3	11.2
Nasdaq Composite (US)	40.2	11.7
FTSE 100 (UK)	29.3	7.4
Hang Seng (Hong Kong)	12.2	-12.3
Bovespa (Brazil)	57.9	27.7
Kospi (S Korea)	114.9	28.8

*% CHANGE OVER LAST TWO YEARS

#YEAR-TO-DATE CHANGE SINCE JAN 2, 2026

middle class with surging retail participation in markets now.

Post-Covid, stock market investments witnessed a sharp rise in participation by retail inves-

e EXPLAINED

Stock market challenge

For the government, it has been a challenge to explain the robust 7.8 per cent growth rate in April-June this year, especially when stock market indices actually dropped over the last two years, and poor wages growth in the private sector. The Budget may hence explore moves to boost the market.

tors (those holding up to Rs 2 lakh in shares) looking to diversify and supplement their regular income streams. According

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Fertiliser sales see sharp dip as El Nino dries up farm demand

Tractor sales also down 18.1% in Sept amid festival calendar shift

Harish Damodaran

New Delhi, October 25

IN WHAT could be a real indicator of deficient rains and the El Nino effect on farms, domestic sales of all fertilisers, including urea, are down compared to last year.

The sales drop during April-September 2026 over April-September 2025 — roughly co-

Production, import, sale of fertilisers

(lakh tonnes)

	UREA	DAP	MOP	COMPLEXES	SSP
PRODUCTION					
Apr-Sep 2025	144.44	20.01	0	59.29	29.36
Apr-Sep 2026	150.64	19.94	0	38.22	26.32
IMPORT					
Apr-Sep 2025	39.79	38.26	11.91	20.19	0
Apr-Sep 2026	55.89	33.99	16.79	13.86	0
SALE					
Apr-Sep 2025	193.08	43.89	10.94	77.27	28.68
Apr-Sep 2026	185.22	43.64	9.66	60.08	28.29

DAP (DI AMMONIUM PHOSPHATE), MOP (MURIATE OF POTASH), SSP (SINGLE SUPER PHOSPHATE).

SOURCE: THE FERTILISER ASSOCIATION OF INDIA.

inciding with the kharif (monsoon) planting season — has been the sharpest at 22.2% for

complex fertilisers containing nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P),

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Last day of Delhi SIR camps

At a Special Intensive Revision camp inside an MCD-run school in east Delhi's Chilla Village, Sunday. It was the last day of such camps held by the Election Commission across the Capital to enrol voters left out of the rolls in the SIR. ABHINAV SAHA **REPORT, PAGE 6**

Target was Aamir Khan, lack of access prompted shift to Tiger Shroff: Probe

Mohamed Thaver & Manish Kumar Pathak
Mumbai, October 25

THE ALLEGED shooters behind the attack on actor Tiger Shroff were initially told to target Aamir Khan, police sources told *The Indian Express*, adding that this was "in line with" the threats that Khan had received in July, allegedly from the Lawrence Bishnoi gang.

According to sources, during their nearly month-long stay in Mumbai, the alleged shooters conducted a recce of the area where Khan lives at least three times, but found that he was mostly away on film shoots or did not step out of his



The 11th accused in the shooting case in Mumbai Police custody, Sunday. SANKHADEEP BANERJEE

house for days. The target then shifted to Shroff, who was found to be more accessible, turning up for football on most Sundays

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

JASPER WIECK, GERMAN AMBASSADOR **PAGE 18**

As Siang dam protests turn violent, NHPC's Rs 11-cr PR push faces test

Jay Mazoomdaar & Shinjini Ghosh
New Delhi, October 25

A HEAVY security deployment maintained an uneasy calm at Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh's East Siang district after protests against the proposed Siang dam turned violent late on Friday and continued into the early hours of Saturday.

District Magistrate Jayanti Pertin told *The Indian Express* on Sunday afternoon that the



11,200-MW SIANG UPPER Multipurpose Project

law and order situation was under control. "It is too early to assess the damage. The restrictions on public gathering under section 163 of the BNSS in Pasighat, Mebo and Ruksin will continue until further orders," she said.

The simmering unrest underscores the resistance confronting the proposed 11,200-MW Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP) being undertaken by NHPC Limited.

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Didn't go to school, but took officials to SC over husband's 'custodial death'

Jayprakash S Naidu
Raipur, October 25

LEHRA BAI, 35, was not present in person when the Supreme Court came down hard on the Chhattisgarh DGP, Director General (Prisons) and Principal Secretary (Home) for their handling of her case, calling their actions "sacrilegious" and their claims "patently false and wholly reprehensible".



Lehra and Shravan Tamre. EXPRESS

It took a fight of more than two years, but the 35-year-old mother of two, who never went

to school, had made her voice heard, ensuring that the death of her husband, allegedly in custody, did not go unacknowledged. The Court directed the Chhattisgarh government to pay her interim compensation of Rs 25 lakh, ordered a CBI inquiry, and said that a criminal case be registered against the guilty officials.

On January 18, 2024, Shravan

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

{ JOGEN CHOWDHURY • 1939-2026 }

'A true artist': He blended traditional imagery with contemporary style

Trisha Mukherjee
New Delhi, October 25

THOSE WHO knew Jogen Chowdhury remember him as a welcoming presence in the otherwise intimidating art world. For those who never met him, his understated smile, which seemed to curl up at one end, remains memorable from photographs. It was as if he drew its intensity, warmth and depth from the bold lines on his canvas, always saying more than what meets the eye.

A towering figure in modern Indian art, Chowdhury passed away on Sunday morn-

ing at Ruby General Hospital in Kolkata after a 15-month-long battle with blood cancer. Sources at the hospital confirmed that he had been battling myeloproliferative neoplasm, a rare form of blood cancer, and was undergoing chemotherapy.

"He fell ill and was admitted in a critical condition," one source said. "Following the onset of sepsis and a worsening of his condition due to several underlying ailments, he was placed on the ventilator on Saturday. He breathed his last at 10:15 am."

Chowdhury, who was repre-

sented by Art Exposure, graduated from Kolkata's Government College of Art and Craft (1955-1960), followed by training in printmaking/painting at École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris (1965-1967). He is best known for his fusion of traditional iconography with a contemporary sensibility.

But his art was more than just the blending of two styles. "In his work the line work of the great Bengal tradition — Kalighat paintings and artists like Jamini Roy — merges with current socio-political realities to hold up a mirror to our current society," said writer and curator Ki-shore Singh, who remembered



As a TMC Rajya Sabha MP from 2014 to 2020, he sought to address the policy challenges facing the art community. COURTESY ROHIT CHAWLA

Chowdhury as an elegant man. What stood out in his art, for

friends, critics and contemporaries alike, was his laborious

cross-hatching technique which, as fellow artist KS Radhakrishnan noted, "takes a lot of patience and a lot of commitment."

"It looks simple, but it is really not, and with that he managed to express subtle and sophisticated ideas," said curator and historian R Sivakumar. He first discovered Chowdhury's work as a student visiting Delhi in the '70s, meeting the artist much later at the inauguration of Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal in 1982. Chowdhury's famous painting "Tiger in Moonlight" captivated him instantly, making him realise that the artist was "entirely distinct from his peers".

Singh agreed. "We have seen cross-hatching from FN Souza, but the brilliance with which Jogen da created depth with it, no other artist has been able to match."

Chowdhury was an artist not just in the way he thought of his own art, but in how he embraced all art. He refused to compartmentalise artists or movements into "insiders vs outsiders".

Artist Sudhir Patwardhan described him as "generous." "He viewed the artistic ecosystem as an expansive garden where every unique expression holds value. One of his statements, I remember, was 'Art is

like a garden where each flower is beautiful on its own'."

Photographer Rohit Chawla, who photographed Chowdhury two years ago for his book, *Portrait of an Artist*, captured that same unpretentious nature from behind the lens, noting: "He was a true artist, minus the bombast."

"Most artists are uncomfortable in front of the camera because they want to project a certain image of themselves. But he was easy in his skin," he added.

Keeper of the Art

Chowdhury served as the

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GAURAV SHARMA (21) did Hindi Honours with research at Kirori Mal College. He was among the higher scorers in his batch. This year he could not get into Delhi University's one-year master's programme, and he is now taking a part-time course in Portuguese.

Had he been on track, Gaurav would be closer to his goal of becoming an assistant professor. The National Education Policy's (NEP) one-year master's was meant to save him a year before applying for a PhD or appearing for NET. Instead, he is before the Delhi High Court, waiting for a way ahead and hoping it will ease his parents' growing anxiety about his future.

He is one of roughly 4,000 students from DU's first four-year undergraduate batch who are in limbo, with no certainty of a seat in the one-year master's course under the NEP. They have already lost the academic year 2026-27. At least 50-60 of them have been before the Delhi High Court since August, challenging how the university chose who gets in.

The court is now looking for a way to accommodate more students without disturbing the 2,500-odd already admitted, who are about to complete a semester.

According to DU's dean of admissions, Haneet Gandhi, about 2.5 lakh students applied in 2022, when the university adopted the NEP structure, for the 72,600-odd seats on offer. Around 23,000 students continued to the fourth year in 2025, according to Gandhi, while the rest graduated with a three-year degree.

Roughly 14,000 have applied for the one-year PG programme. "We were not anticipating that so many would opt to continue with academics and it is an extremely welcome change," Gandhi says.

DU has only about 3,000 seats for the programme, including School of Open Learning (SOL) seats. About 1,800 students are now admitted in the regular course. DU is admitting more or less anyone who applies for an SOL seat, says Gandhi, with nearly 4,000 students admitted under SOL. Students before the High Court say this still leaves out 4,000-5,000 who want to pursue a one-year regular master's.

"We were told it was a lucrative pathway"

In 2022, DU admitted its first batch under the NEP 2020's Undergraduate Curriculum Framework (UGCF). It was a four-year degree, followed by a one-year master's. Students could do four years of Honours with research in a single discipline, or a four-year bachelor's with a Major in a multidisciplinary course. Students could also exit after three years with a bachelor's degree, or with Honours if they had studied a single discipline. A little less than half of those admitted in 2022 chose to continue into the fourth year.

Gaurav was one of them. "We saw value in the four-year programme, thinking that it comprises a research component. At the end of third year, when we had an option to choose whether we want to continue with the fourth year or exit with an honours degree in third year, our professors advised and encouraged us to opt for the four-year course, assuring us that it is a lucrative pathway," he says.

Anshika Mishra did four-year English Honours at Shyama Prasad Mukherji College for Women. She had a plan for where the research year would take her career, and, like Gaurav, she stayed on for the fourth year. She has no master's seat either, and is now writing content for an NGO without pay.

Students who exited after three years could sit the CUET-PG and move straight into a master's course. Those who stayed on learned only later that a priority list would decide who got the limited seats.

"Had we known earlier that there would be a priority-system in admissions to the one-year PG course, I could have opted for other pathways," she says. "I

The fourth-year TRAP

About 4,000 students from Delhi University's first four-year undergraduate batch have no seat in the one-year master's course they were promised. **Sohini Ghosh** and **Sophiya Mathew** report on a lost year, and on the students now asking the Delhi High Court for a way forward.



(Top) Gaurav Sharma with Anshika Dubey and Priyanshu Pandey; (above) Dubey and Sharma with Anshika Mishra at Delhi University. ABHINAV SAHA/ PRAVEEN KHANNA

could have appeared for CUET-PG and exited in the third year itself."

Double the work, and still behind

Priyanshu Pandey (21) did a multidisciplinary BSc at Rajdhani College, with a Major in Electronics and minors in physics and math. He had to complete 50 credits over four years. Students who exited after three years had to complete 24.

"That's covering double the credits in an extra year," he says. "I laboured for four years, studying nearly double the subjects, but I am now not getting a seat."

The three-year graduates, he points out, are already admitted to master's courses. "Had we been on track, I would have completed my masters by 2027."

With his year wasted, Pandey is working as a home tutor on the side.

His position comes from how DU ranked applicants. Under the 2026-27 admission policy for the one-year PG course, students with a four-year Honours degree with Research or Entrepreneurship in the relevant subject are in the first priority category, P1. Those with a four-year programme degree and a Major in the subject are in P2. P1 candidates must be considered before P2 applicants, so a multidisciplinary student with a higher CGPA can be considered after an Honours graduate with a lower score.

DU has defended the ranking, saying the "difference between the two pathways" under the UGCF "begins at the onset of undergraduate admissions for itself," with Honours involving more stringent admission criteria. The university's Grievance Redressal Committee, in an order on September 9, held that there is a "difference in academic rigour" between students in

single-discipline and multidisciplinary programmes.

Mishra also questions the use of CGPA as a criterion. "Why is CGPA a criteria? CGPA differences also appear from college to college. Some colleges may have a self-imposed unsaid ceiling of marks they award, and that automatically puts us at a lower footing then. The practice so far has been CUET-PG for postgraduate admissions. Even Ambedkar University used CUET-PG as a deciding factor for admissions to its one-year postgraduate programme."

The rules that arrived after the exams

On July 4, DU offered its first-ever one-year postgraduate programme under NEP 2020: around 1,000-odd seats for nearly 23,000 graduates of its four-year programmes. Students say the seats were too few, and that by the time the bulletin was issued, several other universities had closed their admissions. On July 31, the university revised the seat matrix to around 2,500, which also fell short.

"The Bulletin of Information came after we completed our final exams in June, in July," Gaurav says.

However, DU says it uploaded the bulletin in December 2025 and the seat matrix in November 2025. It says the executive council resolution on eligibility and seats went up on its website on January 2, "more than six months in advance of commencement of admissions," and that it emailed heads of departments on January 13 to pass the information on to students.

Abha Dev Habib, professor of Physics at Miranda House, says students were let down by the delays. "There was a delay in notifi-

2.5 lakh

Nearly 2.5 lakh students applied to DU's UG programme in 2022. DU adopted the NEP UG framework (UGF) that year, ushering the first batch under the new programme.

72,600

Around 72,600 students were admitted to 2022 UG programme in DU

23,000

Around 23,000 of the first batch of 2022 NEP UGF entrants opted to continue their fourth year in 2025, while remaining opted to graduate with a three-year degree.

14,000

Nearly 14,000 applied for the one-year PG programme introduced by DU in 2026. This programme was aimed at those who had undertaken the 4-year UGF under NEP in DU.

3,000

DU says it initially announced 1,063 seats for its 1-year PG programme but then increased it to about 3,000 seats. Around 1,800 have taken admission in the 1-year PG regular course, according to DU.

4,000

DU says it has admitted around 4,000 students in its school of open learning, the distance-learning mode

Nearly 4,000 students remain in limbo with an academic year lost

"The much-touted programme has not worked as intended. Very few students have enrolled this academic year... The problems with this framework can't be resolved through minor changes"

RUDRASHISH CHAKRABORTY, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, KIRORI MAL COLLEGE

Had we known earlier that there would be a priority-system in admissions to the one-year PG course, I could have opted for other pathways. I could have appeared for CUET-PG and exited in the third year itself

ANSHIKA MISHRA, ENGLISH HONS GRADUATE, SHYAMA PRASAD MUKHERJI COLLEGE

cations at almost every stage. So the students' academic cycle has been disrupted."

No seat, high fees, and few options

Anshika Dubey (22) did four-year English Honours with research at Sri Aurobindo College. She says private universities are charging around Rs 3 lakh for the one-year course. "We completed our undergraduate paying around Rs 50,000-60,000 combined for the four years."

Mishra says she and others raised their concerns with the university repeatedly. "We held repeated discussions with the university administration. Where do the rest go? There is an option to take admission in a school of open learning course, but what is the career prospect after that? We did research for a year in my four-year course, there was a certain plan I had in my mind for my career trajectory." That open-learning route is where DU is now sending many of those left out. For Aaditya Tripathi, a History graduate from Hansraj College, it is not an easy answer. He says he faces nearly Rs 1.9 lakh in additional living expenses, and another year of study. "Due to this random policymaking by DU, my one year would be wasted," he says.

Unsure of the best course, Tripathi has enrolled in a two-year MA in History at DU as a "safer option." He is also trying for the one-year programme through the School of Open Learning (SOL), but worries about how the two kinds of degree are valued. "An open degree has a different worth," he says.

The uncertainty is hardest on outstation students, who must pay to live in Delhi. Tripathi, from Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh, estimates his monthly expenses at Rs 15,100-16,100; Rs 7,100 in rent, around Rs 4,000 on

food, Rs 2,000 on travel to classes and Rs 2,000-3,000 on miscellaneous items. Over a year, that comes to roughly Rs 1.81-1.93 lakh.

He says a meeting was held with members of the college-level committee tasked with implementing the fourth year, but students got no clarity on admission criteria for the one-year master's. The guidelines, he says, came only when the prospectus was out around May. "What happened was very shocking. This should ideally have been clarified in the third year or at the end of the third year."

His parents in Gorakhpur are deeply disturbed by the turn of events, he says, and the family feels helpless as he weighs his options.

From individual complaints to a court case

Students first approached the Delhi HC asking that the allocation rules in the Bulletin of Information be set aside "to the extent it discriminates against the petitioners."

On August 31, the court disposed of one petition filed by a group of students and told DU's Grievance Redressal Committee to "decide the above larger issue within three days and pass a speaking order." On September 9, the Committee upheld the priority system and the CGPA requirement. Several scores of students are now back in court challenging that order and seeking to quash the admission criteria DU issued in July. The court has asked for an equitable proposal to accommodate more students, and will hear the matter next on October 27.

Gandhi says that "to accommodate all," DU has now introduced direct entry to a PhD for undergraduates, without NET as a prerequisite but subject to an entrance test and other criteria set by the university. The number of seats is yet to be decided, she says, "depending on the number of applicants we receive."

"Our infrastructure and resources are limited, and a PhD does not require separate classrooms, it is more based on interpersonal interaction with the scholar's professor, and research-oriented," Gandhi says. "Having more PhD scholars is also something our teaching staff is willing to have more of, also from the perspective of furthering research."

Was the fourth year worth it? Teachers say the problems began with the framework itself. When DU introduced the UGCF in 2022, some Academic Council members opposed the hurried approval of syllabi, saying students were being asked to join before the full framework and evaluation scheme were clear. "Syllabi were also passed semester-wise, but suddenly the system changed. Neither teachers were equipped, nor was there any mentorship. The students really got lost," Habib says.

Enrolment in the fourth year is falling. In a letter dated July 10 to the Dean of Colleges, the Delhi University Principals' Association (DUPA) said around 30% of students opted for the fourth year in 2025-26, and only a limited number had so far shown interest for 2026-27.

Rudrashish Chakraborty, associate professor of English at Kirori Mal College, says: "...the much-touted fourth year under NEP-UGCF has not worked as intended. Very few students have enrolled for the fourth year this academic year, clearly because the experience of the last year suggests that students have been left uncertain about what comes next. The framework is structurally flawed, and its problems cannot be resolved through minor changes."

Teachers warn that the new criteria could raise dropout rates and discourage students from taking multidisciplinary courses. Since Major graduates are placed behind Honours graduates for postgraduate study in the same subject, they say, future batches may reconsider whether to continue into the fourth year.

For the first batch, that reconsidering has come too late. "Today, we don't know where to go," Gaurav says. "Our professors too are helpless."



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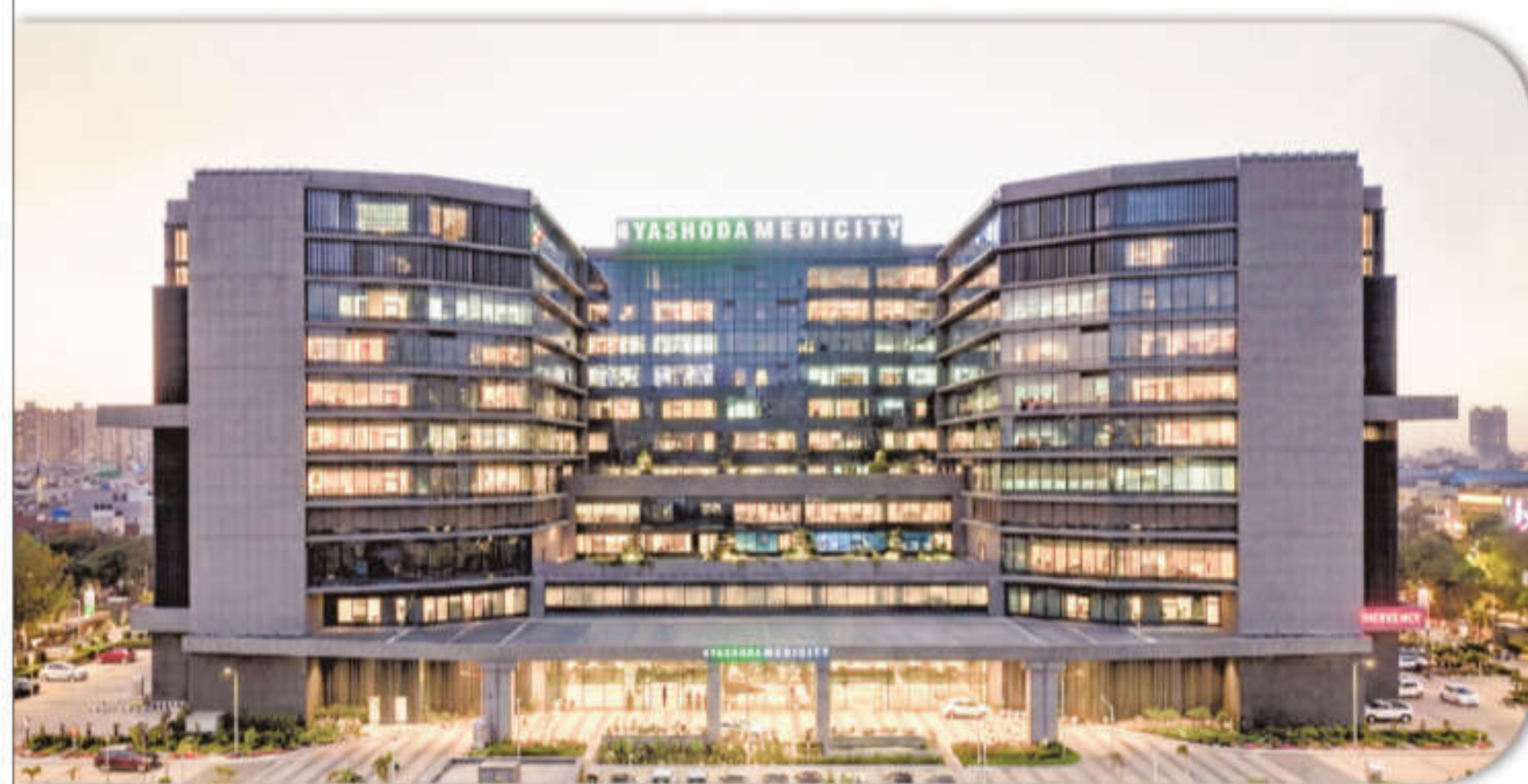
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On the last day of SIR camps, BLOs wait, go door to door

Devansh Mittal
New Delhi, October 25

AT THE MCD school in East Delhi's Chilla village, the Booth Level Officer (BLO) says he has not received even a single Form-6 application to enroll new voters through the day. In New Moti Bagh, the BLO says he visited 42 houses over five hours and got four Form-6 applications. In Sarai Kale Khan village, the BLO waited at the local MCD school "from morning to around noon" with other BLOs, "but no one came" to get enrolled.

Even on the last day of the Election Commission's special camps being held across Delhi to enrol voters left out of the rolls in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), BLOs mostly found them-

selves waiting for residents. The few that came forward, they said, were those who wanted help to resolve notices they were issued for not being able to link to the 2002 electoral roll.

Delhi had around 1.45 crore electors before the SIR began. When the draft electoral roll was published on August 31, around 97.5 lakh names were retained, while around 47.5 lakh electors were classified as "uncollectible" after BLOs found them to be ASDD (absent, shifted, deceased or having duplicate entries). So far, only around 4.7 lakh people have applied to be included in the electoral roll through Form-6 applications in Delhi.

Manoj Jeena, who works in a transformer factory in Loni, his wife Meenati and their two



At an SIR camp inside a government school in Delhi's Chilla Village, Sunday. ABHINAV SAHA

daughters had been issued notices for not being able to link themselves to the 2002 electoral roll, when the SIR last happened. "I was a voter then, but I don't remember any details and whether I was registered in Delhi or my village back then, which is why I did not fill that column," said Jeena, who had been called

by the BLO at Chilla.

The BLO said that there are very few registered addresses in the village. In the electoral rolls, in place of house numbers, most addresses of electors mention just "CV" or "Ch". "It is nearly impossible to locate electors in this area, that is why we are calling them to camps to resolve their

notices," the BLO said.

On September 29, the Election Commission directed the 20 states and Union Territories where the SIR has been completed to run a "special drive" to enrol voters "left out" of the rolls. The move came days after an investigation by *The Indian Express*, published on September

23, revealed that Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi had objected on record 14 times in 10 months to steps taken by the Commission under Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, including adding new voters and deleting names.

In Delhi, such camps were being organised on most weekends, since September 20, at government schools and offices for residents of nearby areas who want their names included in the electoral rolls after being struck off the draft rolls. Sunday marked the final day of these special camps—although all SIR-related applications can still be filled, submitted till October 30.

Nineteen-year-old Harsh Kumar, who studies at KCC College in Noida and recently became eligible to vote, was among the few who had come to the Chilla camp to be enrolled as a fresh elector. He has an Aadhaar Card and an electricity bill as proof of date of

birth and address. It should have been easy to enrol him.

However, the BLO got stuck at the declaration section that seeks the status of the applicant's parents vis-a-vis the last SIR. Harsh's father Vinod was not even in the BLO's list of electors.

The BLO told Harsh to get his father's Voter ID and, in the meanwhile, started looking for his father's name in lists of other BLOs. "How many times will we have to come with documents just to get enrolled?" asked Harsh.

Nearly 20 km to the west in New Moti Bagh, where a number of bureaucrats reside, BLO Deepak Grover faced other challenges. "In this area, people don't come for camps, so we have to go door to door and ask people if anyone wants to get enrolled in the electoral rolls," he said.

Grover started his morning at 10 am, ringing bells in the GPRA New Moti Bagh, going to

every house, every floor and every tower with an introduction and one question: "I have come from the election office. Does anyone want to get enrolled as a voter here?"

At three houses, staff members told the BLO to go away and come later. At a fourth house, a senior bureaucrat welcomed Grover inside his home as he got a Form-6 filled for his daughter-in-law.

At Sarai Kale Khan village, BLO Mukesh Chand Meena had to handle both the special camps and house-to-house visits. "I had even called some people who had been issued notices, but they told me they wouldn't come," he said.

He is tired after months of BLO work. "I don't know when this will get over," Meena said, as he packed up his stationery and got ready for house-to-house visits. By the evening, he was able to resolve around five notices and conduct verification of one Form-6 applicant.



UJVN Ltd.
(An Uttarakhand Govt. Enterprises)
H.O.: "UJVN", Mahanagar Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephone: 01359-263009, Fax: 01359-263009
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866 Website: www.ujvn.com

RO No. 994
e-TENDER NOTICE
Date: 24.10.2026

The office of Executive Engineer Project Distribution Division, Dakpathar (D.Dun) invites online bids from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:-

Tender No. E-PDD-08/2026-27

Name of Work: Procurement of spares for 33kV Lines & associated network from Dhakrani - Chibro "under PDD.

Estimated cost : 1. Rs. 19.93,548/- + GST extra

Date of availability of bid document on website : 26.10.2026 from 18:00 Hrs.

Last date for submission of bid on website : 18.11.2026 Up to 16.00 Hrs.

For eligibility criteria and full & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal <https://uktenders.gov.in/>

Executive Engineer, PDD

"AVOID WASTEFUL USE OF ELECTRICITY"

FORM NO. CAA. 2
[Pursuant to Section 230 (3) and Rules 6 and 7]
BEFORE THE NATIONAL COMPANY LAW TRIBUNAL, BENCH AT CHANDIGARH
CA (CAA) No. 32/Chd/Hr/2026
In the matter of sections 230 to 232 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with Companies (Compromises, Arrangements and Amalgamations) Rules, 2016 and in the matter of Composite Scheme of Arrangement between Aadhar Tours & Travels Private Limited, Pralhad Suppliers Private Limited, Shree Shiv Shakti Paridhan Private Limited, Disce Investment Private Limited, Sach Realtors Private Limited, Sheetalnath Properties Private Limited, Divya Buildmart Private Limited, Danta TradeLink Private Limited, Fortune IT Services Private Limited, Frigg Infrastructure Private Limited, Kalkin Propbuild Private Limited, MCCL Buildwell Private Limited, MCCL Industries Private Limited, Mehak Computech Services Private Limited, Treva Infotech Private Limited, Sweet Home Buildwell Private Limited, Ample Hotels and Resorts Private Limited, Unique Finman Consultancy Private Limited, M2K Developers Private Limited, Aggarwal Prop-Build Private Limited, Elite Homes Private Limited, Sadan Realtech Private Limited, Radhey Buildhome Private Limited, Janico Finlease & Investment Private Limited and Manvi Computech Private Limited and their respective shareholders

ELITE HOMES PRIVATE LIMITED
(CIN : U45201HR2005PTC144487), PAN : AABCE4378F
Regd. Off. M2K Corporate Park, 04th Floor, Block-N, Mayfield Garden, Sector-51, Gurgaon Sector 45, Gurgaon, Sector -45, Haryana, India, 122003

.....Applicant Company 21/ Demerged Company 1/Transferor Company 21
SADAN REALTECH PRIVATE LIMITED
(CIN : U68100HR2010PTC075381), PAN : AANCSS8844C
Regd. Off. M2K Corporate Park, Ground Floor, Block-N, Mayfield Garden, Sector-51, Gurgaon Sector 45, Haryana, India, 122003

.....Applicant Company 22/ Demerged Company 2/Transferor Company 22
NOTICE AND ADVERTISEMENT OF NOTICE OF THE MEETINGS OF UNSECURED CREDITORS OF THE APPLICANT COMPANY 21 AND APPLICANT COMPANY 22

Notice is hereby given that on or after dated September 28, 2026 ("Order"), the Chandigarh Bench of the National Company Law Tribunal ("NCLT" or "Tribunal") has directed meetings to be held of the unsecured creditors of Applicant Company 21 and Applicant Company 22 for the purpose of considering, and if thought fit, approving with or without modification, the Scheme of Arrangement between Aadhar Tours & Travels Private Limited, Pralhad Suppliers Private Limited, Shree Shiv Shakti Paridhan Private Limited, Disce Investment Private Limited, Sach Realors Private Limited, Sheetalnath Properties Private Limited, Divya Buildmart Private Limited, Danta TradeLink Private Limited, Fortune IT Services Private Limited, Frigg Infrastructure Private Limited, Kalkin Propbuild Private Limited, MCCL Buildwell Private Limited, MCCL Industries Private Limited, Mehak Computech Services Private Limited, Treva Infotech Private Limited, Sweet Home Buildwell Private Limited, Ample Hotels and Resorts Private Limited, Unique Finman Consultancy Private Limited, M2K Developers Private Limited, Aggarwal Prop-Build Private Limited, Elite Homes Private Limited, Sadan Realtech Private Limited, Radhey Buildhome Private Limited, Janico Finlease & Investment Private Limited and Manvi Computech Private Limited and their respective shareholders ("Scheme"). In pursuance of the said Order and as directed therein, further notice is hereby given that the meetings of the unsecured creditors of the Applicant Company 21 and Applicant Company 22 will be held on as under:

S.No.	Name of Applicant Company	Day, date and time of meeting
1.	Elite Homes Private Limited	Saturday, November 28, 2026 at 10:30 AM (10:30 Hrs)
2.	Sadan Realtech Private Limited	Saturday, November 28, 2026 at 11:30 AM (11:30 Hrs)

The Unsecured Creditors are requested to attend the respective meetings, only through video conferencing ("VC") in compliance with the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 ("Act") read with Companies (Compromises, Arrangements and Amalgamations) Rules, 2016 ("Rules") and other applicable rules, the applicable general circulars issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs for conducting general meeting through VC/OA/M and providing e-voting facility before the meeting and e-voting during the meetings through the facility provided by National Securities Depository Limited ("NSDL"). The detailed procedure for attending the meeting through VC and e-voting forms part of the notes to the notices of the meetings. The details of the remote e-voting are provided as below:

Cut-off date for E-voting Sunday, March 15, 2026

Commencement of remote e-voting period Wednesday, November 25, 2026 at 09:00 AM

End of the remote e-voting period Friday, November 27, 2026 at 05:00 PM

The remote e-voting module shall be disabled by the NSDL beyond the aforesaid date and time. The Applicant Company 21 and Applicant Company 22 are also providing the facility of e-voting at the respective meetings.

A copy of the said notices along with the explanatory statement under section 230 r. 232 of the Act and related annexures including the Scheme, can be obtained free of charge at the registered office of the Applicant Company 21 and Applicant Company 22 or from the authorized representatives of the respective companies namely, Mr. Rakesh Kumar, finleasejainco@gmail.com.

Voting rights of the unsecured creditors of the Applicant Company 21 shall be in proportion to the outstanding amount due to them by the Applicant Company 21, as on the cut-off date, i.e., March 15, 2026. A person whose name appears in the list of unsecured creditors as on the cut-off date only shall be entitled to vote.

Voting rights of the unsecured creditors of the Applicant Company 22 shall be in proportion to the outstanding amount due to them by the Applicant Company 22, as on the cut-off date, i.e., March 15, 2026. A person whose name appears in the list of unsecured creditors as on the cut-off date only shall be entitled to vote.

Unsecured creditors will be provided the facility for e-voting during the respective meetings and those who have not already cast their vote on the resolution by remote e-voting (prior to the meeting) will be eligible to exercise their rights to vote on such resolution at the meeting. Unsecured creditor who have cast their vote on resolution by remote e-voting (prior to the meeting) will also be eligible to participate at the meeting through VC but shall not be entitled to cast their vote on such resolution again.

Any Unsecured creditor requiring any assistance/clarification regarding the meetings may write on evoting@nsdl.com or finleasejainco@gmail.com.

Sd/-
Mr. Deep Chandra Joshi
Chairperson appointed by Hon'ble NCLT, Chandigarh
CA (CAA) No. 32/Chd/Hr/2026
Place: Jaipur

Dated this : 26.10.2026

Office of Superintending Engineer,
Rampur Circle, P.W.D. Rampur
E-Procurement Notice Inviting Tenders
(In anticipation of sanction)

Ref.No. 5891/E-Nivada-RampurCir/26-27

1- On behalf of the Governor of UP, tenders for following work on item rates invited by the Superintending Engineer, Rampur Circle, PWD Rampur online on website <http://etender.up.nic.in> from registered contractors Category as per below table dated 16.11.2026 at 10.00 am to 23.11.2026 at 12.00 pm. Technical bid /Prequalification of tenders shall be opened on 23.11.2026 at 12.30 pm in office of undersigned by tender committee in presence of authorised representatives/bidders who wish to be present. Financial bid of the tenders' who qualify in technical bid shall be opened on date and time as specified by a notice in the office of undersigned. In case of Government holiday the required process shall be carried out on next working day.

2- Details of the works are following :-

S- DISTRICT Name of Work

Estimated Cost Excl. GST (Rs.in Lakh)

Bid Security (Rs.in Lakh) (as per SBD only) by Net Banking (accepted)

Cost of Bid Document (only by Net Banking accepted)

Time of Completion (including rainy season)

Category of road contractor eligible

Address of Executive Engineer of the Executing work

Address of Superintending Engineer

Address of Chief Engineer

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

1 Rampur Construction of bypass road in Tehsil Shahabad on Shahbad Rampur Bazpur (SH-144) road and Bhemauna Shahabad Bilari (SH-125) road in district Rampur during financial year 2026-27. (including 5 years of maintenance)

3366.50 50.00 2354.00 12 Months A Road Category Construction Division, P.W.D. Rampur

Rampur Circle P.W.D. Rampur Moradabad Zone P.W.D. Moradabad

All work including 05 years maintenance period after completion of work.

> The Rates adopted in the BOQ are including all other taxes but excluding GST.

> The Bid Security and tender cost should be deposited online through Net Banking.

> Additional Security will be payable (as per rule at the time of Agreement) according to G.O. No 86 /2026 /649 /2026 /23-7099 /106 /2025 लोक निर्माण

अनुभाग-7 दिनांक 23-05-2026

All terms & conditions can be seen on website <http://etender.up.nic.in> The bidder have to login on Prahari URL <http://wms.uppwd.gov.in/Prahari> to upload required documents as per Government order 879.1./नेट्स-7-2020-176(नौ) /06 लोक निर्माण अनुभाग-7 दिनांक 25.08.2020&E.N.C./H.O.D.'s uppwd letter No.417/13लोकनिर्माण /20 दिनांक 28.08.2020

UPID-259351 Dt. 24/10/2026
www.upidadv.gov.in

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS

Open E-Tender

No. COS/CR/PUB/e-Tender/19/0162,

Date: 22/10/2026. The following E-Tenders can be accessed under the link www.ircps.gov.in

Offers for such e-Tender can be submitted only electronically by accessing the link www.ircps.gov.in

login -> E-Tender Stores/Supply. Vendors may also contact the following officials to obtain clarification regarding particular tender or IREPS related information if any, Dy. CMM/M-1/CLW/Chittaranjan,

9163340707 or AMM/M, 9163340706.

Office Address: Office of The PCMM/CLW/Chittaranjan. St. No.; Tender No.;

Brief Description of Item; Quantity; Earnest Money Deposit (Rupees);

Tender Closing Date & Time (IST) are as follows: [01]; 74263785; Set of Mn Pins and Bushes for Brake Gear Arrangement and details for WAG-9HIC Loco. Details of drawing as per Category No. V/9/0025 specen: IRS-R 65/78

[Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery]; 50.00 Set; 711000.00; 13/11/2026 at 11:00 AM. [02]; 74263784;

Brake Gear Arrangement and Details without Mn Pins and bushes and without Air Brake Cylinder for WAG-9HIC locomotive as per Drg.No. 1209-01.116-059 Alt-5, Category No. V/9/0028;

[Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery]; 50.00 Set; 7225800.00; 17/11/2026 at 11:00 AM.

PR6/526/ PCMM/CLW/Chittaranjan

Visit us on: www.facebook.com/cwrrailways

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I,Manya Pant Tiwari W/O, Bhaskar Chand R/o 1201a 13th Floor Tower P Amrapali Silicon City Sector 76 Noida (u.p.) 201301 have changed my name to Manya Pant. 0040885242-1

I, Chanchal Sharma D/o Pushkar Nath Sharma R/o Plot No-80, Haibat Pura, Najafgarh, Delhi-110043 my mother's name has been wrongly written as Bimla Devi in my 10th Class educational documents, my mother's actual name is Vimla Sharma.

0071067680-1

I, Km SURABHI SRIVASTAVA W/o ASHISH VERMA R/o Flat-2203, Tower-N15, Jaypee Aman, Sector-151, Noida, PO:Knowledge Park-1,Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh-2013010 have changed my name From KM SURABHI SRIVASTAVA to SURABHI VERMA for all future Purposes.

0071067739-1

I, Suraj Duggal, S/o Shri Mohan Lal Duggal, R/o D-401, Anand Lok Society, Mayur Vihar Phase-1, Delhi-110091, have changed my name to Suaraj Duggal for all purposes.

0040885340-3

I, Udayapratap S/o, Naresh Singh R/o, Bisahada, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh-201008 Have Change My Name To Uday Pratap Singh Shishodia 0071067677-1

I, Arunn Bhathi S/o Dharampal Singh Bhathi R/o B-8, Block-B, New Ashok Nagar,Vasundhara Enclave, East Delhi, Delhi-110096 have changed my name to Arun Bhati 0071067749-1

'Won't stop till we get union': Scuffles, tight security mark Jamia stir on Day 14

Tabshir Shams, Pragynesh
New Delhi, October 25

OVER 100 SECURITY personnel on duty, students trying to enter the varsity by climbing walls covered in barbed wires and metal spikes, alleged scuffles between protesters and security personnel, rallies and sloganeering as protesters on hunger strike kept themselves locked inside the Department of Political Science to ensure that their fast could not be broken: these were the scenes at Jamia Millia Islamia in Southeast Delhi on Sunday as the students' protest seeking reinstatement of its union entered the 14th day. Even as the varsity shifted the classes online on Saturday, tension did not abate in and around the campus with over 500 students gathering to back the stir on Sunday.

The protest site, near Gulistan-e-Ghalib, the library and the canteen were cut off from outside. No students were allowed inside.

Security personnel—from Delhi Police, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)—were deployed both inside and outside the campus. "About 150 to 200 security personnel were deployed outside the campus. Three people, who were not students, were detained from outside," a senior police officer said.

The officer added that an FIR has been filed over the chaos during the protest on Friday. After the university authorities lodged a formal complaint with the Delhi Police against Congress Lok Sabha MP Imran Masood, Rajya Sabha MP Imran Pratapgarhi and others, they were named in the FIR. They were accused of trespassing on the campus and inciting unrest.

What students seek

On Sunday, the students



Security arrangements were stepped up at the university on Sunday. TABSHIR SHAMS

wrote an email to Vice-Chancellor Mazhar Asif and said the hunger strike by five students would be called off only after receiving a written assurance on the acceptance of their demands. The main demand is the restoration of Jamia Millia Islamia Students' Union (JMSU), with a fixed election date and schedule. The last time the university held a student union poll was in 2005.

Protesters have rejected the administration's proposal to draft a union constitution first and set a deadline for the process. Lubaib, a PhD scholar and one of the organisers of the protest, told *The Indian Express*, "They (The university) shifted classes online to stop the mobilisation. They have also started vacating the hostels, but it has had no effect on our resolve. Students being stopped outside are still joining us, by climbing the wall." He added, "We wrote to the Vice-Chancellor today. We have also approached the administration informally, hoping they would talk to us, but they have not responded. We will not back down until we get a students' union."

Seeking an urgent meeting with the Vice-Chancellor and polls by November 30, pro-

testers have claimed that the committee that the administration formed to engage with them has not given a concrete, time-bound commitment. Protesters said they have drawn inspiration from Aligarh Muslim University, where the administration announced union elections after a prolonged hunger strike by students.

According to a varsity official, the administration has so far held four rounds of talks with the protesters. "The sequence has to be followed: first a constitution, then the electoral roll, then the election date," the official said, adding "After a 20-year gap, and with the Lyngdoh Committee recommendations and University Grants Commission (UGC) regulations having changed, this cannot be done in haste. A draft constitution committee has been formed and notified, and we are responding positively to the students' demands."

Protesters have cited the Supreme Court's 2006 judgment in University of Kerala v. Council of Principals, Colleges, Kerala and Others, and the Lyngdoh Committee recommendations, to argue that drafting a

FIR filed over unrest on Friday names Lok Sabha MP Masood, Rajya Sabha MP Imran Pratapgarhi

protest started, including rustication, suspension, campus bans and show-cause notices. They have also sought the removal of the Chief Proctor and Security Advisor, citing the treatment of students during the agitation.

Tense scenes

Scuffle between students and security personnel and similar tense scenes unfolding along Jama Masjid Road near the Central Mosque, and near the Department of Nanotechnology with students trying to scale the walls marked the afternoon of the 14th day of the protest.

Around 1pm, students from the boys' hostel marched to Gate No. 4 and were stopped. Some were driven away in police vehicles, protesters claimed. However, there was no official confirmation on detentions.

Near the Central Mosque, the walls were topped with metal spikes and rods. Students scaled these walls anyway.

Among them was Jaffer, a student of political science. His grey trousers tore on the way up and he got a minor bruise on his thighs. He jumped down on the other side, and he was inside the campus.

Inside, hundreds of students stayed around the protest site.

Rallies went out throughout the day. "Our resolve has only grown stronger," Ebin, one of the students on hunger strike, said, adding, "We will not leave this place until our demands are met."

For some, staying near the protest site has meant going without proper food and sleep. Shoyeb, a PhD scholar in law, walked out through a gate in the evening that remained closed to other students. Speaking in a half-spent voice, he said, "I have been inside for two days. I haven't eaten much. I'm very tired and dehydrated. I'm going back now to eat something and rest. I will come back at night and climb the walls to get in."

Portion of building under construction collapses, two feared trapped

Express News Service
New Delhi, October 25

A PORTION of an under-construction building collapsed in North East Delhi's Harsh Vihar area on Sunday evening with at least two people feared trapped, said police. National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel, among others, were deployed at the site for rescue operations.

According to Delhi Fire Service (DFS) officials, a call came around 6:46 pm to report that a building had collapsed in Milan Garden area of Harsh Vihar. The construction for another floor was underway in the building, which has just the ground floor.

Officers said that the construction started on Sunday morning, and the first stage of construction was over by 5 pm. As soon as the call came in, five fire tenders were rushed to the spot. Soon, NDRF personnel were deployed at the site, and rescue operations commenced with the help of locals.

Additional DCP Sandeep Lamba told mediapersons that they suspect some people might be trapped inside, but the number was not confirmed yet. A team of the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) also reached the site and joined the rescue and relief operation, a senior police officer said.

Police personnel and other emergency responders were at the spot, coordinating efforts to assess the extent of the damage and determine whether anyone was trapped beneath the debris. The rescue operations were on till the last reports came in.

The latest incident comes weeks after a pregnant woman and two children were killed and eight people, including a three-year-old, injured, after a four-storey building collapsed in Northeast Delhi's New Seemapuri on October 7. When Delhi experienced earthquake tremors the same evening, the building had developed cracks, officers had said.

Earlier, on September 6, a five-storey building, which was being used as paying guest accommodation, in Satya Niketan collapsed, killing five people.

Society survives by its institutions: Former CJI Chandrachud

Sohini Ghosh
New Delhi, October 25

FORMER CHIEF Justice of India D Y Chandrachud Sunday warned against the growing erosion of institutional trust in modern democracy, emphasising that “society survives by its institutions”.

Speaking at the 55th Foundation Day and degree distribution ceremony of the University College of Medical Sciences (UCMS) at Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi, the former CJI delivered a convocation address urging graduating doctors to reject workplace exploitation and dedicate themselves to the unglamorous, foundational work of healthcare.

He highlighted the role public institutions play in shaping excellence. “I think it is critical in today’s times; institutions matter. We are today living in an age where everybody wants to bring down every institution in a democracy. Remember, a society survives by its institutions,” said the former CJI.

“You have attained this level of excellence because of the institution of the UCMS, of Delhi University, of its traditions... because of what you have learned by way of experience in the institutional processes of GTB Hospital. Institutions make all the critical difference.”

Drawing a parallel between human anatomy and institutional building, he said, “A healed organ inside a body, and a foundation (of an institution), has something in common: nobody sees them. A foundation is the part of a building no one

photographs, and no one admires. The internal organ is only captured by scans... It lies buried and unthanked, and yet everyone stands on the foundation”.

Reminding the graduates of their responsibility to carry forward this legacy, he added, “This institution was built that way. It was built in the wards of GTB Hospital, in emergency rooms... and through hundreds of thousands of patients who came here and come here... every doctor who walked these corridors left a footprint without knowing they were building anything. Now it is your turn... the start that the most important work of your lives will be the work no one sees. You will also find that the people you stay with will not always be people you would choose as your own, but yet, you have to work with them.”

On the work environments often faced by medical professionals, former CJI encouraged the younger generation to reject systemic exploitation as an acceptable norm saying, “Some of it will feel unfair, and sometimes it will be unfair. I also, as a young lawyer, had to grow (up) on a prolonged period of exploitation. Unfortunately, exploitation is something which all of us... suffer at some point in time or the other,” he said.

“But you, so many of you as part of Gen Z, must stand up; that exploitation is not an acceptable dictionary of the language in a modern hospital. But understand what is happening to you. You are being remodelled. The very lines along which you struggle are the lines along which you will become strong.”



ब्रिक-राष्ट्रीय पशु जैव प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, हैदराबाद
BRIC-National Institute of Animal Biotechnology, Hyderabad
(An Autonomous Institute of Dept. of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology, Govt. of India)
Near Gowildoddi, Gachibowli, Hyderabad, Telangana India - 500 032.
Tel: +91 40 2312 0103/115. Email: admin@niab.org.in; Web: www.niab.res.in
Advt. No. 31/2026
BRIC-NIAB invites applications from suitably qualified, dynamic, result oriented and dedicated Indian citizens for filling up the following positions:

S.No.	Position	Pay Level	No. of Posts
1	Scientist-D	12 as per 7th CPC	01 Position: (UR)
2	Scientist-C	11 as per 7th CPC	04 Positions: 2 - UR, 1 - OBC & 1 - EWS

For more details, please visit NIAB website www.niab.res.in
Date of commencement of online applications: 26th October 2026
Last date for submitting online applications: 30th November 2026 by 5 PM

Sd/- DIRECTOR, NIAB



BIOTECHNOLOGY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COUNCIL (BRIC) - RAJIV GANDHI CENTRE FOR BIOTECHNOLOGY (RGCB)
An Institution of BRIC, Department of Biotechnology (DBT) Ministry for Science & Technology, Government of India
Thycaud PO, Thiruvananthapuram 695014, Keralam, www.rgcb.res.in

PhD ADMISSIONS 2027
Advt No. RGCB/PhD/2027-I/October 2026 October 21, 2026
BRIC-RGCB invites application for admission to the **Ph.D. program 2027** January session in various domains of Biotechnology from post-graduates having a minimum of 60% marks or 4-year Bachelor's degree having a minimum of 75% marks in Life/Environmental/Veterinary/Pharmaceutical/Medical Sciences or allied subjects and as per UGC guideline. The candidate should have a valid JRF (UGC/CSIR/ICMR/DBT or any other nationally-competitive fellowship) offered by the Government of India and should be valid for a period of 5 years. Complete information, application format, eligibility and other details are available on RGCB website (www.rgcb.res.in). Applications along with prescribed fees must be submitted online through the link given in the web portal on or before **November 08, 2026**. Incomplete applications and applications without processing fees will be rejected.
Sd/- Director

**बीसीसीएल**
BCCL
भारत कोकिंग कोल लिमिटेड
Bharat Coking Coal Limited

Bharat Coking Coal Limited
(A Mini Ratna Company)
Regd. Office: Koyla Bhawan, Koyla Nagar, Dhanbad, Jharkhand-826005, Telephone: 0326-2230190
CIN: L10101JH1972GOI000918
Email: cos.bccl@coalindia.in website: www.bcclweb.in

Extract of Unaudited Financial Results for the Quarter & Half-Year Ended September 30, 2026 (₹ in Crore)

Sl. No:	Particulars	Quarter Ended			Half - Year Ended		Year Ended
		30.09.2026	30.06.2026	30.09.2025	30.09.2026	30.09.2025	31.03.2026
		Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Audited
1	Total Income from Operations	4,571.15	3,723.24	3,643.54	8,294.39	7,545.33	14,924.26
2	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before tax, exceptional and/or extraordinary items)	185.78	(103.07)	(48.06)	82.71	199.34	149.18
3	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after exceptional and/or extraordinary items)	185.78	(103.07)	(48.06)	82.71	199.34	149.18
4	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax (after exceptional and/or extraordinary items)	123.74	(68.09)	(52.99)	55.65	123.88	128.28
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit/(Loss) for the period (after Tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after Tax)]	85.14	(40.69)	(98.76)	44.45	45.01	160.29
6	Equity Share Capital [Face value of share ₹10/- each]	4657.00	4657.00	4657.00	4657.00	4657.00	4657.00
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) as shown in the Audited Balance Sheet of the previous year						1121.80
8	Earnings per Share (EPS) (of ₹10/- each)*						
	Basic (in ₹):	0.27	(0.15)	(0.11)	0.12	0.27	0.28
	Diluted (in ₹):	0.27	(0.15)	(0.11)	0.12	0.27	0.28

*EPS is not annualized for the quarter and half year.

Notes:

1. The above are the extracts of the detailed formats of the Financial Results for the quarter and half-year ended September 30, 2026 filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Financial Results for the quarter and half-year ended September 30, 2026 are available on the Stock Exchange websites and Company's website and can also be accessed by scanning the Quick Response Code provided underneath.
Company's website : www.bcclweb.in
BSE Limited : www.bseindia.com
NSE Limited : www.nseindia.com

2. The above financial results have been reviewed and recommended by the Audit Committee and thereafter approved by the Board of Directors at their meetings held on October 25, 2026. As required under Regulation 33 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 as amended, the Statutory Auditor has reviewed the above financial results for the quarter and half-year ended September 30, 2026.

3. The Financial Results of the company have been prepared in accordance with the Companies (Indian Accounting Standards) Rules, 2015 ("Ind As") prescribed under section 133 of the Companies Act, 2013. (For detailed notes refer to the websites mentioned in Note 1 above).

Place : Dhanbad
Date : 25.10.2026



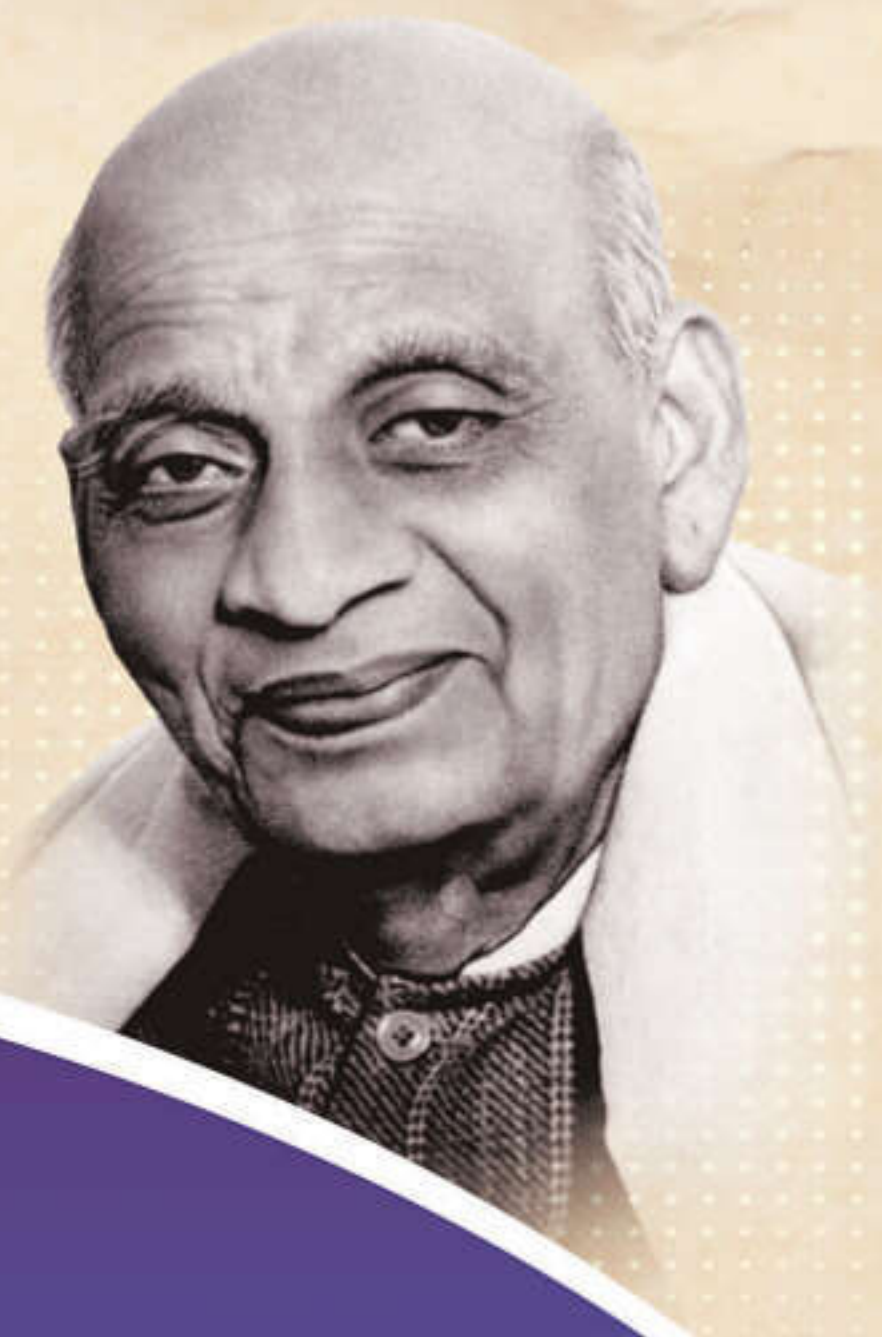
For Bharat Coking Coal Limited
Sd/-
Debanuj Debnath
Company Secretary & Compliance Officer

**सत्यमेव जयते**

केंद्रीय सतर्कता आयोग
CENTRAL VIGILANCE COMMISSION



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**Shri Narendra Modi**
Hon'ble Prime Minister



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New Delhi



Coffee With...

SAMAJWADI PARTY (SP) leaders and workers deployed in the election war room set up by party chief Akhilesh Yadav at party headquarters have to be more energised than before. Credit goes to the party's Firozabad MP Akshay Yadav, who has made coffee of various varieties available to them. Akshay, a coffee lover, is monitoring the arrangements for the ongoing Uttar Pradesh legislative council and the upcoming Assembly elections. Akshay happily shares the brew with others, it is learnt.

Special Screening

RENOWNED SPECIAL public prosecutor and BJP's Rajya Sabha MP Ujjwal Nikam's courtroom feats, especially the 2008 Mumbai terror attack trial, are the subject of a new film: 'Prahaar — The Untold Story of Ujjwal Nikam'. On Saturday, a special screening of the film was organised at Delhi's Odeon cinema by his lawyer son Aniket Nikam, who is a BJP spokesperson in Mumbai. A special screening of the film may also be held for MPs during the upcoming Winter Session of Parliament, it is learnt. Actor Rajkummar Rao has essayed Nikam's role in the film.

Diplomats' Day

CELEBRATING OCTOBER 24 as the International Day of Diplomats, which was proposed by an Indian diplomat in 2017, has now become institutional, being celebrated in various geographies from the United States to Sri Lanka. The day was proposed by poet-diplomat Abhay K, currently the Indian Ambassador to Azerbaijan, and was first celebrated in 2017 in Brasilia, bringing together diplomats from Bangladesh, Brazil, France, Ghana, India, Israel, Italy, Mexico, South Africa, and Turkey.

Amit Shah to join 'Save Democracy' march in Karnal

Karnal: UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah will participate in a 'padyatra' in Haryana's Karnal on November 5 under the 'Save Democracy, End Anarchy' campaign, BJP state president Archana Gupta said on Sunday. Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini, Union minister Manohar Lal and others will also join him. PTI

Keralam: Arlekar's move to oust PSC chief kicks up row

Keralam ex-Gov's step came days before he moved to Tamil Nadu

Express News Service
Thiruvananthapuram,
October 25

DAYS BEFORE moving to Tamil Nadu this month, former Keralam Governor Rajendra Arlekar recommended to President Droupadi Murmu the removal of state Public Service Commission (PSC) chairperson M R Baiju and other members, sparking a political controversy amid an ongoing police inquiry into alleged recruitment irregularities at the commission.

Arlekar left Keralam on October 22, a day before Om Prakash Mathur succeeded him as Governor. Lok Bhavan sources confirmed the recommendation to remove the PSC chairperson and dissolve the entire commission. The chairperson was not available for comment.



Rajendra Arlekar

Opposition leader and former Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan termed the move "illegal", calling it a violation of constitutional provisions.

"PSC members are appointed under Article 316 of the Constitution for a term of six years. Their removal must follow the procedure prescribed under Article 317," he said on X. "The Supreme Court should conduct a probe into the allegations, and the President can take further action only based on the court finding. Whereas such a process has not taken place in the case of the Keralam PSC. Hence, the Governor has no right to make such a recom-

mendation. His recommendation should be seen as a continuation of his illegal interference in the state so far."

Keralam Revenue Minister A P Anil Kumar echoed this view. "The Governor's recommendation to the President without keeping the government informed or even taking it into confidence is a matter of grave concern. At the same time, I do not justify the PSC chairperson and members who are facing allegations related to exams. At a time when the police probe into the issue is currently going on, making a hasty recommendation just before leaving the Lok Bhavan is not in keeping with constitutional propriety," he said.

BJP state president Rajeev Chandrasekhar, however, said the Governor's recommendation was "a severe setback" to the Congress government's bid to "shield CPI(M)'s alleged malpractices in the PSC".

Under Article 317 of the Constitution, the President has the authority to remove a state PSC chairperson or members. The President must refer the

allegations to the Supreme Court for an inquiry. If the court's report supports the removal, the President can issue an order removing the chairperson or members.

The Keralam PSC has faced allegations of irregularities in recruitments conducted during the previous CPI(M) regime. The State Crime Branch is probing alleged malpractices in the recruitment process for a key post at the state Planning Board. In June 2026, an internal PSC inquiry found serious lapses in the evaluation process, allegedly benefiting a CPI(M)-affiliated candidate.

Following the inquiry, several organisations, including the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's student wing, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), and the BJP's youth wing, the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, petitioned the Governor seeking the removal of the PSC chairperson and members.

Other recruitments conducted by the current PSC have also faced allegations of political interference and favouritism.

'More faith in Suvendu than CBI': RG Kar victim's father

Tanusree Bose
Kolkata October 25

THE FAMILY of the doctor who was allegedly raped and murdered at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital has expressed deep dissatisfaction with the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe, stating they now hold more faith in Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari than in the central agency. The parents appeared visibly unhappy after the Supreme Court granted bail to former RG Kar principal Sandeep Ghosh.

On October 15, the Supreme Court granted bail to Ghosh in connection with the CBI's probe into alleged financial irregularities at the institution. After waiting over two years for justice while navigating different courts, the victim's father voiced his frustration to *The Indian Express* over the phone on Sunday: "Sandeep Ghosh has got bail in all the cases; he will walk out."

Criticising the performance of the CBI's Special Investigation Team (SIT), the father questioned the lack of outcomes in the probe. "Do not know what they are doing; they just submit envelopes in court, but we do not know what they are submitting. What is the progress? Nothing. No one is being arrested or convicted, so what can we call progress in the case," he said.

He alleged that the agency has been unresponsive to family inputs. "We are in communication with the CM; he is helping us as much as he can, but the matter is not in his hands. If the court had handed the investigation over to the CM, then I am sure there would have been some result by now. We have more faith in CM Suvendu Adhikari than the CBI," he said.

EXPRESS special

A Cong spokesperson, a sting, and fresh fault lines in Karnataka Congress

Alva entered active politics following her husband's death in 1992

Akram M
Bengaluru, October 25

AT THE centre of the alleged sting operation video row in Karnataka involving former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is Kripa Alva, a Congress spokesperson from Mangaluru in Dakshina Kannada district, who appeared before the Crime Branch for questioning on Sunday.

The police had issued Alva a notice following a complaint filed by Siddaramaiah, who alleged that unidentified individuals had circulated a fabricated video containing malicious allegations against him to blackmail and defame him.

The 60-year-old Congress leader was chairperson of the Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights from 2015 to 2018, during Siddaramaiah's first term as Chief Minister. Alva entered active politics years after she was widowed in 1992. Her husband, Amar Alva, a prominent figure in Mangaluru, was shot dead in a killing attributed to gang rivalry.

She subsequently founded the Amar Alva Charitable Trust and was associated with several social service organisations before joining the Congress. She had unsuccessfully lobbied for a party ticket to contest elections from a constituency in Dakshina Kannada district.



The police had issued Kripa Alva a notice after a complaint filed by Siddaramaiah.

Alva's alleged role in the purported sting operation came under scrutiny after the video began circulating online. She is purportedly heard with Rakesh Shetty, managing director of Kannada news channel Power TV, during the sting operation conducted in 2023. Siddaramaiah has accused Alva and Shetty of being involved in what he describes as a fabricated video.

Meanwhile, Karnataka minister and Siddaramaiah's son, Yathindra has alleged that a woman Congress leader orchestrated the purported sting to secure the party ticket from Puttur constituency in the next Assembly election. The Karnataka Congress unit has also issued Alva a show-cause notice over the episode. Multiple attempts to contact Alva were unsuccessful, with her phone switched off over the preceding three days.

After effects of 'sting'

On October 13, a Bengaluru civil court restrained media organisations and digital plat-

forms from publishing, broadcasting or circulating the videos and related material, and directed that access to the content be blocked.

In his plea, Siddaramaiah argued that the footage and its presentation were intended to cause irreparable damage to his reputation.

The controversy has escalated into a political flashpoint for the Congress, as it has revived questions about factional tensions within the state unit and the political fallout of the purported sting.

Kumaraswamy slams Congress

Union Minister for Steel and Heavy Industries H D Kumaraswamy, who has repeatedly attacked the state government over the controversy, said on Sunday that Chief Minister D K Shivakumar and other Congress leaders knew why the sting operation had been conducted. He alleged that the JD(S) was being targeted over the issue.

"Select police officers are appointed to investigate the case," Kumaraswamy said, alleging that after the purported blackmail of Siddaramaiah, the state government was attempting to blackmail the regional party.

Responding to questions about the investigation, Karnataka Home Minister Priyanka Kharge said it was only a matter of time before those involved were exposed. "Who did it? Why did they do it? Who got the video years after the sting was conducted? How was it uploaded all of a sudden amid wide publicity? Everything will be exposed in a few days," he added.

Creamy layer row: 'Centre awaiting SC directions for CSE service allocation'

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, October 25

THE CENTRE is awaiting directives from the Supreme Court on the implementation challenges arising from the top court's March 11 judgment concerning criteria for determining the creamy layer status of Other Backward Classes (OBC) civil services candidates, sources said on Sunday.

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has sought directions to allow the government to proceed with service allocation to the 958 candidates recommended by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) for CSE-2025 on the basis of the OBC creamy-layer determination applied before the March 11 verdict.

The DoPT's plea arises from the top court's judgment in the 'Union of India vs Rohith Nathan' case.

In its verdict, the top court, among other things, held that 'creamy layer' status for reservation of OBCs cannot be decided solely based on parental income and treating similarly placed employees of private entities and PSUs differently from government employees, for deciding reservation, would amount to hostile discrimination.

According to sources, the department and all training institutes are fully prepared to allocate services to candidates of the Civil Services Examination (CSE) 2025 and start the foundation course at the earliest.

The delay in the course commencement will have no bearing on the seniority, graduation or other service conditions of CSE-2025 candidates, they said. The CSE 2025 results were declared on March 6 — five days before the judgment was delivered.

In the wake of the results, the DoPT examined the implemen-

tation challenges arising from the Supreme Court's March 11 judgment, covering implications for service and cadre allocation, existing seniority and gradation, past recruitment, and the implementation of the OBC reservation policy.

In view of these challenges, on August 24, the department filed a Miscellaneous Application with the top court, seeking clarification and directions on implementation of the judgment, the sources said.

The results of CSE-2025 were declared while service allocation for the examination was yet to be finalised.

Since service allocation is difficult to undo once made, the DoPT has sought directions from the Supreme Court before proceeding further, the sources said. The judgment dismissed the civil appeals preferred by the Union of India and directed the creation of supernumerary posts to accommodate the respondents and intervenors in the case within six months, in accordance with the principles laid down by the court.

During the intervening period, the DoPT examined the judgment's implications for various recruitments, including service and cadre allocation based on the CSE-2025, as well as orders passed by various high courts and tribunals.

The matter required holistic examination in consultation with stakeholders, including the UPSC, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, and the Ministry of Law and Justice, the sources said.

The exercise also involved collating data of candidates across fourteen CSE years and assessing the implications for existing seniority and gradation, potential cascading claims, and the OBC reservation policy across the country, they said.

Raj Thackeray deletes post on Modi-Adani documentary film

Express News Service
Mumbai, October 25

MAHARASHTRA NAVNIRMAN Sena (MNS) president Raj Thackeray on Sunday deleted a social media post related to a controversial documentary on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and industrialist Gautam Adani following a request from the Mumbai Police Commissioner.

"I am deleting the post on the documentary. The fire has already been ignited. I had ignited the spark through a presentation on authoritarianism in this country in January 2026. That is now growing into a wild-fire. Our struggle continues," Thackeray said on a social media post.

"My opposition is not directed against any specific individual, but rather against the rise of a monopoly. I have often stated in my speeches that the PM should foster the growth of many industrialists across the country, creating vast employment opportunities and gener-



Raj Thackeray

ating immense wealth for the nation, and empowering them to conquer the global market," he said.

According to Thackeray, the post about the documentary, made by tech entrepreneur Saabeer Bhatia, received 4.8 million views on X alone, with an equally overwhelming response on Facebook. He said the intention was to bring the issue to public attention and that this had been achieved.

Thackeray said he had received a request from the Mumbai Police Commissioner to take

Actor Dhanush meets women's wing of renamed fan club amid political buzz

Press Trust of India
Chennai, October 25

ACTOR DHANUSH on Sunday met members of the women's wing of his restructured fan club at a private college here, posing for photographs with hundreds of supporters and presenting them with a silver lamp as a return gift.

The meeting comes shortly after the actor reorganised his fan network, formerly Dhanush Narpani Mandram, into a welfare movement named 'Dhanush Narpani Iyakkam'.

Dhanush has not officially announced any political ambitions. However, the restructuring and the introduction of a new official logo have sparked speculation in Tamil Nadu about a possible entry into politics.

Scores of women fans from various districts, including Coimbatore and Ranipet, braved heavy rain to attend the event.

During the interaction, the actor posed for photographs with the fans and gave each of them a silver 'Kamatchi' lamp.

The lamps gifted to the fans featured on their bases an embossing of lotus, which also happens to be the election symbol of the BJP and it triggered speculation in the social media about the political inclination of Dhanush.

"I came from Porur and had been waiting since 9 am," a fan told *PTI Videos*, adding, "He patiently took photos with everyone. When I asked, he immediately hugged me. The lamp he gifted will remain a great memory." Rajeswari, who travelled from Coimbatore, said the gesture was unexpected. "I cried out of happiness. He gave us a lamp as a gift, which was very surprising," she told *PTI Videos*.

Rajarajeswari from Thanjavur said the actor welcomed them warmly, asking, "How are you? Come in."

● NAVEEN PATNAIK QUESTIONS BJP'S COMMITMENT TO ODISHA'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AS THE MAJHI GOVT EXPLORES LEGAL OPTIONS TO COUNTER ANDHRA'S MOVE TO HOLD LOCAL POLLS IN THREE VILLAGES

Odisha and Andhra's decades-old dispute over a panchayat is back in focus

Sujit Bisoyi

Bhubaneswar, October 25

ANDHRA PRADESH'S move to hold local body elections in three villages in the disputed Kotia panchayat has reignited a long-standing boundary dispute, putting the BJP government in Odisha on the defensive and giving the Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) fresh ammunition to target it over its promise to resolve the issue under the "double-engine" government.

The development has also put the BJP in a politically difficult position, with Andhra Pradesh governed by the Telugu Desam Party (TDP)-led coalition. The TDP is a key NDA ally at the Centre.

Calling Kotia an integral part of Odisha, Leader of Opposition

and former Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik questioned the BJP's commitment to protecting the state's territorial integrity and safeguarding Odia pride.

"Despite Odisha having a so-called double-engine government, it is deeply concerning that Andhra Pradesh has proceeded to announce elections in Kotia. What happened to the BJP's assurances that Kotia belongs to Odisha?" Patnaik wrote in a recent letter to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi.

Pointing to the BJP's dependence on the TDP to sustain its majority at the Centre, Patnaik questioned whether political compulsions were behind the Majhi government's silence.

The BJD chief's attack draws on the "Odia *asmita* (Odia pride)" narrative that helped the

BJP challenge the previous BJD government in the 2024 Assembly elections. The BJP had repeatedly raised the issue of alleged interference by bureaucrat-turned-politician V K Pandian in the state's governance and the BJD's affairs.

With the Kotia dispute back in the spotlight, Patnaik has sought to turn that narrative against the BJP.

"Will the double-engine government stand firm in safeguarding Odisha's territorial integrity and Constitutional rights, or will it once again yield to pressure from the Centre? Was the 'Go Back Andhra' slogan merely an election gimmick to secure votes...?" he asked.

A 25-member BJD delegation also visited Kotia on Friday to assess the situation and inter-



A 25-member BJD delegation also visited Kotia on Friday to assess the situation. EXPRESS

act with residents.

The BJP hit back at Patnaik, with Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari accusing the former CM of failing to resolve the dispute during

his 24-year tenure.

"They neither resolved the problem nor fought it effectively in the court of law. I urge him to come for an open debate over what his government has done

in 24 years for Kotia," Pujari said.

On Andhra Pradesh's decision to hold local body elections in the disputed area, Pujari said the Odisha government was exploring fresh legal options to protect the state's territorial integrity and interests.

Odisha has already moved the Supreme Court, seeking contempt petition against Andhra Pradesh over its notification to hold local body polls. The petition has been filed by Koraput district collector, Pujari said.

Amid the political sparring, former Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who has visited Kotia several times in recent times, called for unity among political parties to find a solution.

Kotia comprises a cluster of 28 villages with a population of

nearly 5,000. Since the 1960s, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh both have claimed jurisdiction over 21 of these villages.

Residents of the panchayat receive welfare benefits from both states, but the unresolved dispute over jurisdiction has left them caught between competing administrative claims, raising questions about their identity and the certainty of governance.

The dispute reached the Supreme Court in 1968, when the Odisha government challenged Andhra Pradesh's interference in the region. On December 2 that year, the court directed both states to maintain a status quo.

On March 30, 2006, the Supreme Court dismissed Odisha's petition on technical grounds and again directed the two states

to maintain the status quo.

In March 2023, the then BJD government approached the Supreme Court, arguing that the disputed region had been included in Odisha's Pottangi block in Koraput district in the 2011 Census. It also cited Odisha's collection of land revenue from the villages.

In November 2021, Patnaik, then the CM, met his Andhra Pradesh counterpart, Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, and agreed to establish a joint institutional mechanism to resolve various bilateral issues.

After the BJP came to power in Odisha, Majhi constituted a 16-member committee headed by Pujari for special development plans for Kotia and ensured the implementation of schemes through convergence.



Acted against 392 local body officials in MP for procurement anomalies, says Addl Chief Secy

Express News Service
Bhopal, October 25

DAYS AFTER a video surfaced showing Madhya Pradesh Additional Chief Secretary Sanjay Dubey warning urban local body officials that procurement irregularities would not be tolerated, the senior bureaucrat disclosed that action has been taken against 392 officials, including 135 Chief Municipal Officers (CMOs).

Dubey said seven officials have been dismissed from service and action has been taken against more than 80 contractors and suppliers, besides recovering Rs 3-4 crore from officials and employees over irregular payments. The disclosure comes against the backdrop of a departmental review in which Dubey confronted municipal officials over discrepancies in the payments made for goods procured by them.

Dubey said the action varied according to the seriousness of the irregularities and the negligence involved. "The greater the irregularity and the more serious the negligence, the stronger the action taken against the person concerned," he said.

"We recovered around Rs 3-4 crore from officials and employees who had made irregular payments. We took action against more than 80 contractors and suppliers who had provided these materials or services... The process is continuing," he said.

A presentation by Anshuman Raj, Additional Managing Director of the Madhya Pradesh State Electronics Development Corporation, had cited purchases worth approximately Rs 1,134 crore through the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) by 374 urban local bodies over three years and estimated that around Rs 250 crore could have been saved if purchases had been made at average prices.

CENTRALISED CONTROL WHERE NECESSARY: IAF CHIEF

‘No permanent geographic split of fighter assets under theaterisation plan’

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, October 25

IN HIS first comprehensive articulation on the theaterisation plan, Chief of Air Staff AP Singh said on Sunday that the Indian Air Force is not in favour of permanently splitting fighter assets geographically, advocating instead for a tailored structure built around India's specific security requirements rather than replicating foreign models.

In an exclusive interview to PTI, the Air Chief Marshal said the guiding principle for theaterisation should be "centralised control" where necessary and "decentralised execution" where appropriate as he cited ongoing conflicts in various geographies to assert that air power can decisively shape military outcomes.

Air Chief Marshal Singh also emphasised that the "transformation of this scale" should be implemented in phases so that operational readiness is "never compromised" and warned against the "trap" of trying to predict the future battlefield with "excessive certainty". Announced in 2019 as India's most ambitious military reform since Independence, the theaterisation plan seeks to integrate the three services for greater operational synergy.

The proposed architecture envisaged three integrated commands: a Northern Theatre Command in Lucknow focused on China, a Western Theatre Command in Jaipur to address challenges from Pakistan, and a Maritime Theatre Command in Thiruvananthapuram.

However, progress has stalled due to divergent views



Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal AP Singh takes a selfie during the IAF Day Aerial Display 2026 in Varanasi on Sunday. PTI

among the three services over the proposed command structures. The IAF has been cautioning against implementing the plan in a hurry and has strong reservations about splitting its fighter squadrons under the proposed structures.

"We are not viewing theaterisation as an exercise to permanently divide fighter assets geographically. The IAF is fully committed to jointness and integration," he said, outlining the IAF's vision for the project. At the same time, he asserted that air power remains India's primary responder to any security challenge.

The IAF chief noted that the real question is how to employ air power to its greatest effect within an integrated structure, arguing air power's defining strengths are its speed, reach, flexibility and ability to concentrate combat power rapidly at

the point of decision. "The guiding principle should, therefore, be centralised control where necessary, and decentralised execution where appropriate. That way, air power can be concentrated where it is needed most, while commanders retain the agility to act swiftly on the ground," he said.

The IAF chief, then, highlighted how the joint structure during Operation Sindoor produced desired results. "Our own experience bears this out. During Operation Sindoor, under a joint architecture established by the Chief of Defence Staff and the three service chiefs, the centralised allocation and timely reallocation of critical resources proved decisive in the outcome."

He also called for avoiding the trap of trying to predict the future battlefield with "excessive certainty".

"As we design future structures, we must also avoid the trap of trying to predict the future battlefield with excessive certainty. What we can anticipate is that the next conflict will likely be faster, more autonomous, yet more network-dependent, more transparent, yet more deceptive and more precise in some respects, and characterised by mass in others," he said.

"Our structures must be able to absorb that shift. They should be evaluated against India's specific security requirements, not built by replicating models from other countries, because each nation operates within its own strategic, geographical, technological and operational environment," he noted.



Indian Air Force's Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team performs during the 'Wings Over Ganges' airshow in Varanasi on Sunday. PTI

With airshow over Varanasi's ghats, IAF marks its 94th anniversary

Maulshree Seth
Lucknow, October 25

FROM THE banks of Ganga in Varanasi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday watched the 'Wings Over Ganges' airshow to mark the 94th anniversary of the Indian Air Force (IAF).

Along with French Rafale and Russian Sukhoi-30MKI, indigenous Tejas fighter aircraft also showcased the IAF's operational capabilities over the Ganga. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also attended the event.

The event brought together military aviation and Varanasi's cultural landscape, with aircraft formations flying over the Ganga and the ancient city's ghats. The display featured fighter jets, helicopters, transport aircraft and aerobatic formations, highlighting the IAF's combat readiness, precision flying and coordination across different aircraft platforms.

The indigenous Tejas per-



PM Narendra Modi with Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath. PTI

formed a series of manoeuvres, while the nine-aircraft Surya Kiran aerobatic team's synchronised aerial displays drew applause from spectators gathered along both banks of the river.

The programme also featured formations named after religious and cultural landmarks associated with Kashi, including 'Ganga', 'Vishwanath' and 'Dashashwamedh'. IAF officials said that in one

display, three Chetak helicopters flew over the river as flowers were showered as a tribute to the holy river. An 'Omkar' formation of three Mi-17V5 helicopters carried the national flag and the IAF flag.

The show also included flying demonstrations by Mirage-2000, Jaguar, MiG-29 alongside transport and surveillance aircraft. A simulated aerial combat sequence illustrated the co-

ordination and decision-making involved in air operations.

Earlier in the day, in a roadshow-like welcome, PM Modi stepped out of his car to greet people gathered along the route from Police Lines helipad to Namo Ghat. Residents and BJP workers lined the nearly eight-km stretch, with cultural performances organised at 12 locations. The route reverberated with drumbeats, damru playing and conch-shell blowing as crowds raised slogans of 'Har Har Mahadev', 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Modi-Modi' to welcome the Prime Minister to his parliamentary constituency. People also took photographs and videos of his convoy as it moved towards the venue.

The Prime Minister also inaugurated a garment manufacturing plant of Ahmedabad-based Arvind Limited at Khochawan in the Mirzamurad area of the city. Built across around seven acres at a cost of Rs 150 crore, the facility is expected to employ 1,000 women, of whom over 300 have already been recruited and are undergoing training.

Prioritise products by local artisans: PM appeal before Diwali in Mann Ki Baat

Express News Service
New Delhi, October 25

IN HIS monthly Mann Ki Baat radio address on Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged citizens to prioritise products crafted by local artisans during the upcoming festive season, framing the 'vocal for local' campaign as a vital push toward an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

Characterising the monthly broadcast as a "pilgrimage" (teerth yatra) to understand and salute people's efforts, PM Modi highlighted grassroots innovations, global market expansion for indigenous goods, technological advancements, and key historical figures.

With major festivals like Diwali and Chhath approaching, PM Modi called for local support alongside cleanliness drives. "During the festive season, we often buy many things for our families and loved ones. This time too, do prioritise products made by local artisans when you shop; your purchases will boost their morale. As this movement gains momentum, the dream of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' will be realised all the

The Prime Minister spotlighted Punjab's 'Kheti Virasat Mission' in the Malwa region. The initiative promotes traditional, chemical-free cotton farming that yields naturally coloured cotton, eliminating the need for fabric dyes

faster. For that, I personally urge you to prioritise and highlight products crafted by local artisans."

Highlighting sustainable agriculture and heritage preservation, the Prime Minister spotlighted Punjab's 'Kheti Virasat Mission' in the Malwa region. The initiative promotes traditional, chemical-free cotton farming that yields naturally coloured cotton, eliminating the need for fabric dyes.

PM Modi said that international markets are increasingly opening up to local Indian goods, citing Bihar's Purnia

makhana reaching Greece and Karnataka's Kalaburagi arhar dal being exported to the Maldives. Additionally, sales of Khadi Gram Udyog products crossed Rs 28 crore in a single day this Gandhi Jayanti, marking a Rs 1.5 crore increase over the previous year.

He also commended innovative packaging initiatives such as Shabari Natural, which sells honey, mahua, chironji, and bamboo-based products in packaging featuring traditional tribal art, and earned Japan's Good Design Award.

PM Modi lauded a community-led environmental initiative in Uttarakhand's Tehri Garhwal region, where residents rejuvenated the drying Heval river by harvesting rainwater, recharging groundwater, and planting trees. He added that the International Year of Millets had catalysed a massive surge in the number of farmers cultivating millets.

Detailing technological integration in daily life, PM Modi said the government's telemedicine platform, e-Sanjeevani, has completed 50 crore consultations, enabling rapid

diagnosis and treatment for fevers, infections, and delivery-related complications.

Reflecting on his recent visit to Chennai and IIT Madras, he highlighted cutting-edge innovations developed by Indian youth. He named the 'Sudha Gopalakrishnan Brain Centre', which has created a global benchmark brain-imaging platform that generates high-resolution, digital 3D images to map and study 100 human brains in minute detail.

PM Modi also thanked organ donors, noting that organ donation saves lives and advances medical science.

Concluding his address, PM Modi paid tribute to notable national icons whose birth anniversaries fall in late October and early November, encouraging youth to study their lives. They are Narinder Singh Kapany (October 31), a pioneer known for his work in fibre optics; Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (October 31), whose birthday is celebrated nationwide as Ekta Diwas; Maharishi Valmiki (October 26); and Bhai Parmanand Ji (November 4), a freedom fighter associated with the Arya Samaj.

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BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

A southern alliance and an elephant in the room

ANDHRA PRADESH Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu apparently seeks to forge an informal “southern alliance” — to arguably work with his counterparts in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka and Kerala towards building a \$10 trillion-plus bloc by 2047. The five states together account for less than a fifth of India’s population but over 31 per cent of its GDP, 35 per cent of factories and foreign direct investment equity inflows, and 26 per cent of total GST revenue collections. Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai house the country’s busiest airports after Delhi and Mumbai, with Kochi at No 8, just below Kolkata and Ahmedabad. Even more striking are the 2,100-odd global capability centres of the world’s top multinational firms, employing nearly 24 million professionals — more than 80 per cent of these are in Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai.

The economic heft, however, hides structural weaknesses. The first is ageing populations. The current median age in the five southern states, at 33-36 years, is more than the 30 years for all-India and 23-26 for Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Roughly 19 per cent of Kerala’s population and 16 per cent of Tamil Nadu’s are aged above 60 years, as against the national average of 11.4 per cent and 8.5-9 per cent for Bihar and UP. It translates into heavy reliance on migrant labour from the North and East — be it for factories, construction sites, office complexes, hotels or poultry farms. That isn’t a bad thing, from a national integration standpoint. More concerning, however, is the fiscal position. TN’s outstanding liabilities of Rs 10.4 lakh crore (2025-26 budget estimate) exceed that of any state government. AP’s and Kerala’s debt-GDP ratios of 35.4-35.5 per cent are higher than the 29.2 per cent average for all states. The southern states also have a 45 per cent share in the accumulated losses of all state-owned electricity utilities.

The South’s problems partly resemble those of Europe from rapid population ageing and ballooning public debts. While some of that is due to sustained investments in public health-care and education — which have helped lower fertility rates and raise life expectancies — there has also been a profusion of cash transfers, highly subsidised power and public transport, and other such schemes with low positive externalities. Unlike Europe, the South thankfully isn’t facing economic stagnation. Naidu’s proposed alliance would do well to address the elephant in the room: Broken state finances that can derail the region’s long-term growth prospects. It would add to the credibility of collective bargaining with the Centre, whether on fiscal devolution or delimitation.

In Israel, stakes are high, change has constraints

GOING BY pre-election estimates, neither Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu nor his principal challenger, Gadi Eisenkot, former chief of the General Staff of the Israel Defence Forces, is expected to secure a majority in the 120-member Knesset in Israel. Such an outcome would be far from unusual — Israel held five general elections between 2019 and 2022. Netanyahu is seeking a seventh term as PM, and the election is widely being viewed as a referendum on his handling of Hamas’s horrific terror attack three years ago and Israel’s devastation of Gaza in response, which has drawn widespread international condemnation. Eisenkot, too, has made the October 7 attacks central to his campaign, holding Netanyahu responsible for what he describes as the country’s gravest security failure. With both leaders likely to depend on smaller parties to cobble together a governing coalition after the vote on October 27, that question may not be unambiguously settled.

In any case, whoever takes the reins of power, little will change in Israel’s foreign policy. Netanyahu and Eisenkot may differ on domestic issues, from exemptions for ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) men from military service to the powers of the judiciary. But on Palestine, Iran and the wider region, their differences lie more in the means than the ends. Eisenkot has been critical of Netanyahu’s handling of the Gaza war, but like all Jewish parties except left-wing Democrats, he opposes Palestinian statehood. On Iran, he has called Netanyahu “unfit for launching another operation” without ruling out future strikes to prevent Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons. In Lebanon and Syria, he supports retaining what Israel calls “security zones”. And on the West Bank, while pledging to crack down on settler violence, he has remained ambiguous on settlement expansion. A change of guard after the election may alter tactics, but is unlikely to fundamentally change Israel’s strategic course.

Nevertheless, this election could prove pivotal for Israel and the region. US President Donald Trump’s endorsement of Netanyahu shows how closely the Israeli leadership is tied to Washington’s West Asia strategy. With reports that the US and Israeli militaries are preparing for fresh strikes against Iran after the US midterm elections on November 3, the outcome in Israel is bound to have implications for the conflict’s next phase. The stakes, as framed by the energy crisis triggered by the war, are global.

FREEZE FRAME

BY EP UNNY



Starlink episode points to tightropes in changing political economy

THERE IS something deliciously ironic about Elon Musk accusing Reliance Industries of oligarchic behaviour. One of the world’s richest men has complained that one of India’s richest is blocking Starlink’s entry into the Indian market. The Indian government insists that Starlink is subject to the same regulatory requirements as its competitors, foreign or Indian. Whether Musk’s accusation holds merit remains to be established, but the high profile utterance raises questions that go well beyond satellite broadband. It touches on the character of Indian capitalism, its relationship with the state, and the changing political economy of globalisation.

The temptation to dismiss the episode as a quarrel between billionaires would miss the point. What is interesting in this episode is the difference between two traditions of capitalism, the sources of their extraordinary private fortunes, and the circumstances under which governments permit competition to temper established commercial interests.

India’s experience with capitalism has always been complicated by the relationship between business and the state. The much-derided licence-permit raj was initially justified by the scarcity of capital and the need to direct investment towards national priorities. In practice, it also created substantial opportunities for rent-seeking. The ability to obtain a licence, secure foreign exchange or negotiate an exception could be as important to commercial success as the ability to produce innovatively. Navigating that environment was itself an important source of competitive advantage. The resulting industrial structure rewarded political access and regulatory knowledge alongside productive capability. Established business houses ac-

quired advantages that were difficult for potential entrants to overcome.

While the reforms of 1991 fundamentally altered this landscape, they did not eliminate the intimate relationship between economic power and political authority. As the economy expanded, some of the most valuable opportunities arose in sectors where the government continued to control access to scarce resources such as telecommunications spectrum, to name only one.

The vital point for this piece however is not to assert that every Indian fortune is indecorous, but simply that markets cannot be presumed to be competitive merely because ownership is private. An economy can liberalise extensively like we have and still retain formidable barriers to entry.

America’s history offers an interesting contrast. Its 19th-century industrial expansion produced the great fortunes of John Davison Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, Cornelius Vanderbilt and others, often accompanied by monopoly power, political influence and ruthless commercial practices. American capitalism required antitrust legislation precisely because the market, left to itself, did not reliably preserve competition. The Sherman Act of 1890 and the subsequent development of competition policy reflected a recognition that successful capitalism could generate destructive concentration of economic power.

What distinguishes the American experience, however, is the tradition of technological disruption and occasional institutional resistance to monopoly. New firms have repeatedly emerged to challenge established industries, drawing on deep capital markets, research universities, entrepreneurial networks, government-



RAJAT KATHURIA

The question is whether India possesses sufficiently strong institutions to sustain competition when the commercial stakes are high and political influence is concentrated

In Iran war, no clarity on what a win might look like



SYED ATA HASNAIN

I BEGAN studying West Asia in 1967, while still at school. Almost six decades after my first encounter with the region, I find its strategic environment more complex than ever. The current US-Israel confrontation with Iran poses a deceptively simple military question: What would victory actually look like?

Nearly eight months into the war, US and Israeli strikes have damaged Iran’s military infrastructure, yet Tehran retains the ability to threaten regional security and shipping. Overwhelming American superiority has not delivered a decisive political outcome.

The November 3 midterms may influence US President Donald Trump’s choices, but cannot replenish munitions or resolve Washington’s uncertain objectives. Does America seek to eliminate Iran’s nuclear capability, dismantle its missiles, secure Hormuz, or change Tehran’s behaviour? Each demands a different strategy. Regime change would require far more. Without clarity, further military escalation may merely prolong the conflict.

The apparent reluctance to employ America’s full military might is not necessarily evidence of weakness. It may reflect recognition that escalation without a defined end state can create more problems than it solves. Iran, meanwhile, has organised much of its defence around the knowledge that it cannot win a conventional contest with the US. Missiles, drones, dispersed launchers, underground facilities and the capacity for intermittent attacks offer another method: Remaining dangerous enough to deny an adversary an easy conclusion.

My study of Iranian missile development taught me how little outsiders know about concealed inventories. Destroyed launchers and damaged factories reveal neither serviceable weapons remaining nor Iran’s capacity to replace them. Historical links with North Korean missile technology and Chinese equipment, alongside relations with Russia, merit attention. Yet these do not establish that any country is currently replenishing Iran’s arsenal.

Supply chains challenge assumptions

about isolation. Iran’s northern land borders, Caspian access and overland commercial routes receive little attention compared with its vulnerable southern coastline. Across West Asia, ISIS and the Houthis have demonstrated how weapons move through indirect networks despite surveillance, hostile borders and maritime interdiction. Iran’s requirements are far greater than those of insurgent organisations, making direct comparisons imperfect. The question is how quickly Iran can restore sufficient capability to remain dangerous.

The US faces its own industrial problem. Reports of exceptionally heavy expenditure of Patriot interceptors, alongside other precision munitions, underline the mismatch between the speed of consumption in combat and the years sometimes needed for replenishment. America must also maintain commitments to Ukraine and preserve readiness for contingencies in the Indo-Pacific.

Iran’s endurance has limits, too. Inflation, disrupted trade, reduced revenues, and civilian hardship can gradually erode the state’s freedom of action. But economic distress does not automatically produce political collapse. A country can remain militarily disruptive long after its society has suffered greatly.

Israel can impose further punishment, but it cannot by itself guarantee Iranian submission. The Gulf states have little appetite for an expanding war that threatens their infrastructure and economic ambitions. A wider confrontation involving Yemen or renewed attacks on shipping could enlarge the conflict without clarifying how it ends.

After November 3, Trump may enjoy greater political freedom or face sharper congressional scrutiny. Either result leaves the military dilemma intact. The challenge for Washington will be to determine how much more military force can realistically achieve, and when diplomacy must take over. Ultimately, the ability to end a war on acceptable terms is a greater measure of military success than the ability to prolong it.

The writer is Governor of Bihar and former commander of the Indian Army’s Chinार Corps

funded scientific research and a large domestic market. Musk’s own fortune is an example of this process. Tesla challenged an established automobile industry, while SpaceX transformed the economics of space launches and subsequently built an entirely new satellite communications business.

But the American story also requires qualification. SpaceX benefited enormously from public procurement, NASA contracts and decades of publicly financed research. Tesla benefited from policy incentives and public investment in the transition towards electric vehicles. The American state has been present in most innovative industries in some way. The relevant distinction, however, is between state intervention that creates opportunities for innovation and competition and state intervention that primarily protects established producers from challengers.

The Starlink outburst brings these differences between India and America into sharp relief. Satellite broadband is a technologically demanding business, with huge fixed costs, vast economies of scale and potentially large benefits for remote areas. It is this aspect that is especially relevant for India. It is, however, also a sector in which security and spectrum management along with international obligations necessitate regulatory responsibilities. Naturally satellite operators, whatever their identity, should be subject to regulation.

In this background, it is interesting to note that Starlink, Reliance Jio and Eutelsat OneWeb have obtained preliminary approvals but are still awaiting the final steps needed for commercial operations, such as security clearances, data integrity and spectrum assignment. There is, neverthe-

● WORDLY WISE
Democracy is not just the right to vote; it is the right to live in dignity.
— Naomi Klein

Young are protesting in Europe — not to reject, but to preserve



VICTOR DS

ACROSS EUROPE, people are taking to the streets to protest against the rising cost of living, education and the growing difficulty of building a stable future. As a young Belgian who has recently entered the workforce, I understand their frustration. We are told that hard work, education and ambition will allow us to build the lives we want. In Belgium, buying a house with your partner and settling down has long been considered a step towards adulthood, often around the age of 30. This is becoming harder to realise without financial support from family. Recent figures suggest six in 10 young homebuyers get such assistance, compared with around three in 10 a decade ago. Financial security increasingly depends not only on hard work, but also on the circumstances into which one is born. Education faces similar pressures.

There is no denying that governments must make difficult choices about public spending, debt and interest payments. But these decisions can have consequences for the opportunities available to the next generation. I do not believe our governments are deliberately making life harder for young people. Policymakers must balance competing priorities with limited resources. This does not mean young people should remain silent. Peaceful protest is an essential part of democracy, allowing citizens to express their concerns and ask their representatives to reconsider their priorities. The current frustration is understandable, and governments should listen to it.

There is, however, a distinction between legitimate protest and violence. Some individuals and organised groups exploit demonstrations to engage in vandalism and confrontation. Their actions can intimidate the public, create difficulties for police and overshadow the concerns of peaceful demonstrators. Those who protest peacefully should not be associated with those who deliberately cause harm. Protecting the right to demonstrate must go hand in hand with protecting public safety.

Despite these concerns, I remain optimistic. Buying a home, achieving financial independence and starting a family may require more time, planning and sacrifice than they did for previous generations. But I do not believe our ambitions have become unattainable. I still believe young Europeans can achieve remarkable things through hard work, determination and the opportunities our societies provide.

I still value the stability, freedoms, public institutions and quality of life Europe offers. The protests should not be interpreted solely as a rejection of Europe or its governments. They can be understood as a demand to preserve the opportunities that make our societies worth living in. I do not expect governments to solve every problem overnight, nor do I believe the state can guarantee everyone the life they desire. I simply hope we can continue working towards a society in which effort and ambition still matter, regardless of one’s family background. Our generation faces challenges, but also inherits strong institutions, democratic freedoms and considerable opportunities. I remain hopeful that, by acknowledging our difficulties without losing faith in our future, we can protect what makes Europe a good place to live.

The writer is an auditor based in Ghent, Belgium

40 YEARS AGO

October 26, 1986



Terror attack in Punjab village

SEVEN PEOPLE were killed and six seriously injured when three terrorists sprayed bullets from Sten guns in a busy market in Khuban village in Abohar tehsil, Ferozepur district. According to official reports, the extremists came to the village on foot at around 7.30 pm and escaped on foot after the killings.

Buta Singh heads to attack site

THE HOME Minister, Buta Singh, is leaving for Abohar following reports of a major terrorist attack. According to reports given to the Home Minister by the Punjab government, a

group of terrorists resorted to indiscriminate firing in Khuban village in Sadar police station, Abohar town.

No decision on Congress posts

THE CONGRESS-I president, Rajiv Gandhi, has not yet made a decision on scrapping the posts of vice-president and working president, now held by Arjun Singh and Kamalapati Tripathi respectively. This became obvious when the official letters sent to the two leaders asking them to attend the meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board mentioned their official posts. Party sources indicated that a decision on the retention of the two

posts would be considered when the question of recasting the AICC-I setup is taken up.

Pakistan to get AWACS soon

THE REAGAN administration will soon clear sales of AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) to Pakistan. A top Pentagon official announced that Washington was also willing to deploy American planes and ground staff in Pakistan till such time as Pakistan got its own AWACS from the United States. In what will be the most significant defence transfer to Pakistan, the administration has declared that it would most probably supply Pakistan with the E-3 AWACS.



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● **WHAT THE OTHERS SAY**
To save his far-right alliance, Netanyahu is throwing Israel's economy under the bus
— *Haaretz, Israel*

We need to address the issue of soil health. Four steps can improve the situation



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI
AND RITIKA JUNEJA

THE UNION Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Shri. Singh Chouhan, launched his rabi campaign, "Khet Bachao Abhiyan" (Save the Farm Campaign), on October 22 in Karnal, Haryana. His focus is to correct the imbalanced use of chemical fertilisers, which is harming soils and groundwater and polluting the air. He has appealed to farmers to use balanced doses of chemical fertilisers, in line with the doses recommended by state agriculture universities for major crops. He is well aware of the problem, but the issue is whether the farmers will heed his advice, especially when the pricing policy of urea, diammonium phosphate (DAP) and muriate of potash (MOP) gives them wrong signals. Sixteen years after the nutrient-based subsidy (NBS) was introduced, the imbalance in the use of nitrogen (N), Phosphate (P) and potash (K) has worsened.

Crops, like humans, need a balanced meal. ICRIER's recent policy brief, 'Repurposing India's Fertiliser Policy towards Nutrient Optimisation', compares actual nutrient use in 20 major states with crop- and irrigation-specific norms between 2009-10 and 2024-25, neatly bracketing the NBS reform of 2010.

The results are sobering. Nationally, nitrogen use has moved from 7 per cent below its recommended dose to 6 per cent above it. The phosphorus deficit has narrowed only from 29 to 22 per cent, while the potassium deficit has deepened from 48 to 72 per cent. Farmers apply just 9 kg of potash per hectare against a need of 32 kg. The N:P:K ratio stands at 10.5:4.1:1, against a de-



ILLUSTRATION: C R SASIKUMAR

rived normative 2.8:1.5:1. Eleven of 20 major states, led by Jharkhand (72 per cent) and Punjab (65 per cent), overuse nitrogen. Every state under-applies potash; Haryana and Jharkhand apply barely a tenth of what their crops need.

Why has a reform meant to fix the imbalance made it worse? Simple economics. NBS let the prices of phosphatic and potassic fertilisers float with world markets, but kept urea out at a fixed price. Between 2010-11 and 2024-25, DAP prices nearly tripled to Rs 54/kg, and MOP rose six-fold to Rs 52/kg, while the price of nitrogen in urea rose by just 1 per cent. Farmers respond to relative prices. Nitrogen also makes the crop look green, while the damage from missing potash shows up later, and quietly. So, nitrogen's share in NPK use is back to about 67 per cent — the 1970-71 level.

The damage runs from the soil to the plate. Of the 96 lakh samples tested under the Soil Health Card scheme in 2025-26, 72 per cent were low in nitrogen, 52 per cent in organic carbon, 42 per cent in boron and 37 per cent in zinc. Low nitrogen despite its overuse is no

paradox: Carbon-starved soils cannot hold what is poured on them, and crops take up only 30-40 per cent of the nitrogen applied. Part of the rest escapes into the air as nitrous oxide, a greenhouse gas 273 times as potent as carbon dioxide; Punjab's fertiliser-related emissions are nearly double the national average. Some of the chemical leaches into groundwater. Nitrate above safe limits has been found in parts of 502 districts and carries the risk of "blue baby syndrome" in infants and chronic illness in adults.

Potassium deficiency weakens resistance to drought and disease and lowers grain quality; phosphorus shortage delays flowering. When soils lack zinc and other micronutrients, the grains they yield do too, fuelling the hidden hunger that afflicts millions.

All this also comes at a steep fiscal price. The subsidy budget for 2026-27 is Rs 1.71 lakh crore. The disruption in the Strait of Hormuz could push the subsidy bill to anywhere between Rs 2.5 lakh crore and Rs 3 lakh crore, with the urea subsidy amounting to two-thirds of this. The benefits are skewed, too: Punjab gets about Rs 25,700 of ni-

The subsidy budget for 2026-27 is Rs 1.71 lakh crore. The disruption in the Strait of Hormuz could push the subsidy bill to between Rs 2.5 lakh crore and Rs 3 lakh crore

trogen subsidy per hectare, 10 times what Kerala gets. Add MSP-based procurement and subsidised power, and the rice-wheat rotation gets locked in. All this hurts aquifers.

What, then, is the way out? Four steps can improve the situation.

One, move from input price subsidy to a direct benefit transfer on a per-hectare basis and neutral across nutrients and crops. This will ensure that farmers face the market price of each nutrient and urea loses its artificial edge. AgriStack is creating digital farmer IDs linked to land records and crops sown, and a framework for fertiliser sale (FFS) will tie each purchase at the point of sale to that identity. But identifying tenants remains a challenge. If this seems too abrupt, bring urea under NBS while lowering DAP and MOP prices in step, keeping the overall subsidy budget at around Rs 2 lakh crore.

Two, reward balance where decisions are made. PM-PRANAM was supposed to reward states that use fertilisers in a balanced way. But so far, nothing has been disbursed. The scheme needs fixing, and its implementation should be expedited.

Three, plough the savings in fertiliser subsidy into drip irrigation and fertigation, and backproduct innovation. These include customised and coated fertilisers, triple super phosphate (TSP) — in place of DAP — biofertilisers, nano fertilisers, and gene-edited seeds using nitrogen more efficiently.

Four, follow the 4Rs — right source, rate, time and place — with plot-level advice based on soil tests. Rotating cereals with pulses can cut the next crop's nitrogen need by 20-30 per cent. But none of this will stick in Punjab and Haryana unless power pricing and procurement are reformed.

The yardstick of success must change from total fertilisers applied to balanced supply of nutrients. India's soils have been quietly underwriting our food security for decades; that account is now overdrawn. The real question is whether the government will bite the bullet before the soils give way. The cost of waiting is rising with every season.

Gulati is distinguished professor and Juneja is senior fellow at ICRIER. Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bihar drug crisis

THE EDITORIAL rightly observes that prohibition has displaced, rather than defeated, addiction ('Bihar needs to talk about prohibition, addiction', *IE*, October 24. Bihar needs pragmatic, evidence-based solutions beyond the binary of banning and legalising. First, prioritise treatment over imprisonment for eligible first-time offenders possessing small quantities for personal use, building on Section 64A of the NDPS Act. Second, earmark a fixed share of excise and GST revenues for a Bihar De-addiction Fund, with centres in every district hospital. Third, equip ASHA workers and teachers with screening tools and establish a toll-free helpline. Finally, create a narcotics analytics cell to dismantle supply chains.

Bablu Kumar Gupta, Lucknow

Strengthen credibility

THE UNITED Nations must demonstrate that international law applies consistently, regardless of a country's power or influence ('UN needs a chief who can restore its moral authority', *IE*, October 24). The next secretary-general should strengthen mediation, improve accountability, and press member states to honour their commitments. Reforming outdated decision-making structures is equally important.

Pon Arunkumar, Namakkal

RBI's challenge

MONETARY POLICY must look beyond the immediate rise in prices and assess its wider impact on household budgets and business costs ('The problem is inflation's second-round effects', *IE*, October 24). Persistent inflation can influence wages, rents and service charges, making temporary price pressures harder to contain. The RBI must balance price stability with economic growth while communicating its decisions clearly. The government, meanwhile, should improve supply chains and address avoidable distribution costs. Coordinated action is essential to prevent inflation from becoming entrenched without unnecessarily weakening demand.

K Sakunthala, Coimbatore



VIJAY PRASHAD

A BOOKSTALL is modest: A few tables, books arranged by volunteers, someone who knows which pamphlet might interest a passing reader. It has become part of our culture in West Bengal that during Durga Puja, bookstalls are set up near pandals so that visitors can glance at them and buy something to nourish their minds and souls. The attacks on bookstalls of the Left this year have revealed the difference between the ruling BJP's confidence in its power and in its ideas. You would only overturn a table of books if you did not know how to argue against them.

The CPI(M) has approached the Calcutta High Court over an alleged attempt by the police and municipal authorities to remove its temporary stall in Jadavpur, while several Left parties have evidence of vandalism at several locations. Finance Minister Swapn Dasgupta said that he hangs his head in shame because these attacks go against the culture of intellectualism in West Bengal. But hanging his head is insufficient, since a genuine condemnation by a sitting minister should produce consequences. Expressions of embarrassment cannot substitute for the government's obligation to defend basic democratic rights.

The bookstalls bring political literature into the everyday life of Durga Puja. A family comes to visit the pandals and encounters a history of the working-class movement, or a pamphlet about unem-

We hope that trade unions, student organisations, cultural associations, and neighbourhood groups will create a Red Books Day in solidarity with the vandalised bookstalls of Durga Puja

Who is afraid of books in a pandal?

ployment. The encounter requires neither party membership nor agreement with the ideas. It is an opportunity to browse, to argue, to buy a book, or to walk away, the ordinary freedom of the festivals that such intimidation seeks to destroy.

The anti-intellectualism of the BJP, as the leader of the far right in India, has a political purpose. It seeks to interrupt the process from experience to explanation, from a worker knowing that wages are inadequate or a young person knowing the humiliation of unemployment to learning about the structures of exploitation. The communal politics of the BJP seeks to silence this political education and redirect the resulting anger towards a neighbour, a religious minority, or an invented internal enemy. A bookstall becomes dangerous for the far right because it asks questions (Who owns the wealth? Who performs the labour?) that the owners of property would rather be put out of reach.

Since 2020, the International Union of Left Publishers has held a global celebration of the joy of reading called Red Books Day. It is held on February 21, the anniversary of the publication of *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848 and International Mother Language Day: Millions gather to read any red book, defend radical books, and celebrate their publishers.

Reading in public in this way creates a particular kind of collec-

tive life. The books are read and discussed; the experiences brought to the reading circle unsettle easy interpretations. We celebrate reading because reading is the doorway to knowledge, rationality, and a better society of humans. Reading together allows people to acquire confidence in their capacity to understand the world and change their circumstances.

On the Left, we welcome the circulation of arguments about our ideas to see if they withstand scrutiny. After the October Revolution, Lenin was asked if the old libraries should be burnt; he said no. For Lenin, the entire corpus of past knowledge, even by conservatives, helped humans enrich their minds. The entire set of traditions of thought must remain alive and help us to bring the totality of human insights into our current struggles to overcome suffering.

We are against banning books, against burning books. We want books to be read, and people to flourish in the process. The response to the attacks in West Bengal should extend beyond condemnation. We hope that trade unions, student organisations, cultural associations, and neighbourhood groups will go out into the streets and create a Red Books Day in solidarity with the bookstalls of Durga Puja. More stalls, more translations, more reading circles, more arguments conducted without fear. Build the stalls again, then build another one, then invite everyone to read.

Prashad is chief editor, LeftWord Books (New Delhi)

At COP, a move from climate learning to climate action

ponent of formal education.

The emergence of climate change education coincided with the growing recognition, since 2010, of climate change as a major developmental challenge. This called for a shift in understanding, as awareness had to expand beyond conservation to encompass resilience and sustainability. Climate literacy in education was strengthened through the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023. The national model, Mission LIFE, is also rooted in climate change education (CCE). Globally, CCE is undergoing a similar transition from awareness to action. Italy has systematically integrated climate change and sustainability as compulsory topics in schools, while the US state of New Jersey has incorporated climate change learning standards across multiple subjects and grade levels. The

strength of CCE lies in its interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature, bringing together scientific, social, economic and policy perspectives. Led by UNESCO, the Greening Education Partnership has emerged as the world's largest collaborative platform for climate-ready education. Around 100 countries and thousands of organisations have joined the initiative, which spans campuses, curricula, teacher training

Two areas that require more attention are teacher capacity-building and the development of knowledge platforms for communities that share a common geography and face similar disasters

and community interventions.

COP31, which begins on November 9 in Antalya, Turkey, is particularly important for sustaining this momentum. It offers an opportunity to formalise measurable national commitments to CCE. Discussions at the summit are likely to highlight the growing international preference for cross-curricular climate learning. Two areas that require more attention are teacher capacity-building and the development of knowledge platforms for communities that share a common geography and face similar disasters.

COP31 also provides India with a platform to showcase its growing leadership in CCE. India can demonstrate how sustainability has been mainstreamed through the NCF-SE 2023, Eco Clubs for Mission LIFE and NISHTHA, the Centre's flagship teacher professional development programme. The UGC's *Guidelines and Curriculum Frame-*

work for Environment Education at Undergraduate Level (2023) has a mandatory course that covers sustainability, climate policy, renewable energy and green technology. India can also highlight the need for a stronger regional approach to evolving CCE from an awareness-based initiative into a competency-based endeavour focused on climate literacy, resilience, innovation, entrepreneurship and green skills.

The COP's Turkish presidency has already identified climate action education across all segments of society by 2035 as one of its key priorities, to be pursued through collaborative projects. COP31 offers a historic opportunity to elevate CCE from awareness-driven learning to competency-driven transformation.

The writer is director, Environment Education and Awareness Division, TERI

Twenty-five years of reshaping how state thinks about infrastructure



RAJIV GAUBA

IN OVER 25 years in public life, first as Gujarat chief minister and then Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has led a major expansion of infrastructure. The transformation of Gujarat's infrastructure during his tenure as CM is an important part of the state's development story. At the national level, too, the transformation has been truly momentous. India's airport network has more than doubled. The railway system has seen major expansion and modernisation, from dedicated freight corridors and electrification to the high-quality experience offered by Vande Bharat trains and redeveloped railway stations. National highways have expanded substantially, and new expressways, ports and metro systems have transformed the country's connectivity landscape.

While these changes have rightly attracted considerable attention, a more fundamental change that Modi's governance brought about is the paradigm shift in how infrastructure is conceptualised, planned and delivered. Previously, infrastructure creation was approached in a piecemeal manner, with a ministry, department or agency responsible for individual projects. Citizens or businesses, however, do not experience infrastructure along departmental lines. A person commuting to work, a farmer transporting crops to a mandi, or a manufacturer managing a supply chain relies on roads, railways, ports, water, and power as an integrated system. When even one link in this chain is weak or missing, the return on every other investment and ease of living suffers. Rather than looking at infrastructure solely through the lens of the department responsible for delivering a particular asset, Modi focuses on the larger outcome it is meant to achieve. This outcome-oriented, citizen-centric perspective has been a hallmark of his approach to administration.

We can see the beginnings of this approach in his tenure in Gujarat. Initiatives such as Pragati Path, Pravasi Path, Vikas Path and Kisan Path were designed around distinct connectivity requirements. The development of Special Investment Regions, including the Dholera Special Investment Region, brought together land, infrastructure and connectivity with the objective of creating large economic nodes. Modi's idea was to plan infrastructure in relation to how people lived, where their livelihoods were located, where industry could develop and how goods needed to move.

Did government departments not coordinate before Gati Shakti? Of course they did. But there is a fundamental difference between the coordination that governments have traditionally practised and the approach Gati Shakti seeks to institutionalise. Instead of discovering interdependencies when they spark a conflict on the ground, planners now identify them while projects are still on the drawing board. Before a road is designed, what else is slated for that corridor? If a port is meant to serve a wider region, how will its hinterland be connected, and can these investments be sequenced so that one is ready the moment the other goes live? The Gati Shakti approach helped discover such interdependencies and mitigate conflicts, which helped plan projects in such a way that it optimised the costs.

While it is tempting to describe Gati Shakti as an infrastructure reform, it is much more than that. It is a shift in how the government thinks about public investment. Indian businesses compete in global markets where logistics costs, reliability and delivery times affect the final price of a product. As India enters into new trade agreements and seeks to deepen its participation in global supply chains, the ability to move raw materials and finished goods efficiently becomes an important part of competitiveness. Reducing logistics costs, therefore, cannot be separated from the way roads, railways, ports, waterways, warehouses and industrial locations are planned together.

Planning is only one part of the challenge; effective execution is equally important. Infrastructure projects can encounter a range of bottlenecks during implementation, whether related to land acquisition, statutory clearances, shifting of utilities, law and order, or coordination between different ministries and between the Centre and the states. PRAGATI was conceived to address these challenges by bringing the relevant authorities together to review projects, resolve implementation issues and accelerate delivery.

Together, Gati Shakti and PRAGATI illustrate a defining feature of Modi's approach to administration: The ability to see the larger system while remaining attentive to the specific bottlenecks that can hold up an individual project.

Ultimately, the significance of Modi's 25 years in public office lies not just in the physical assets built on the ground, but in how he has reshaped the way the state thinks about infrastructure itself. A state that takes a system-level approach, firmly anchored on providing a seamless experience to citizens and improving the productivity of the wider economy.

The writer is member, NITI Aayog and a former cabinet secretary

UP medical college student found dead in hostel park

Express News Service
Lucknow, October 25

THE BODY of a 27-year-old MBBS student was found in a park below his hostel at a government medical college in Pratapgarh district on Sunday.

Police said no suicide note had been recovered and the cause of death would be clear after postmortem examination.

The student, Mithlesh Kumar, was found lying in the park by fellow hostel residents. A security guard alerted the college authorities, who informed the police and Kumar's family in Ballia. He was taken to hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival.

"The picture will become clear once the postmortem re-

port is received," said Pratapgarh Circle Officer Ashutosh Mishra.

Kumar was a student of the 2024 batch at Dr Sone Lal Patel Medical College and was in his first year after failing his examinations twice, police said.

His room was on the first floor of the seven-storey hostel building, which he shared with two other students. Police searched the room but found nothing suspicious. Police are examining CCTV footage near the hostel and questioning students, including Kumar's roommates. They also recovered his cellphone and spectacles from the hostel rooftop, officers said.

A probe is underway, and police are awaiting postmortem report to establish circumstances surrounding his death.

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

BORDER SECURITY FORCE

Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant officers on their Balidan Diwas.

 INSPECTOR DHARAMBIR SHARMA 24 BN BSF 12.07.1955 – 26.10.1990	 HEAD CONSTABLE C M HARISH 133 BN BSF 03.02.1965 – 26.10.2005
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INDO-TIBETAN BORDER POLICE (ITBP)

Constable Raghubir Singh

ITBP salutes its braveheart Constable Raghubir Singh of 3rd Battalion, who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty on this day in Jammu & Kashmir in 1989.

CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE FORCE

DG and all Ranks of CRPF pay solemn tribute to Constable Ignatious Kairo of 16 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice while assisting Indian Army in recapturing the posts occupied by the Pak Army during the Indo-Pak War of 1965 in Jammu & Kashmir, on 26 October 1965. CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.

DG and all Ranks of CRPF pay solemn tribute to Constable Ravinder Nath Singh of 74 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice after sustaining grievous injuries while bravely countering an attack by terrorists in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, on 26 October 1992. CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.

DG and all Ranks of CRPF pay solemn tribute to Constable Raj Kumar Sharma of 136 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice after sustaining grievous injuries while countering an attack by Maoists in Jharkhand, on 26 October 2006. CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.

‘India will hammer drug cartels’: Shah hails Op Trident that unearthed hawala network

Express News Service
New Delhi, October 25

SIMULTANEOUSRAIDS across Assam, Mizoram and Manipur have led to the arrest of 18 people and the freezing of 1,424 bank accounts, exposing hawala transactions worth Rs 100 crore and rupturing the finances of a narcotics cartel led by a Myanmar-based drug lord arrested earlier this year, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday.

In a post on X, Shah said Operation Trident was carried out on October 23 to dismantle an international narcotics cartel operating across India, Myanmar and Bangladesh. "The operation unearthed hawala transactions worth Rs 100 crore, led to the attachment of properties worth Rs 17.82 crore and resulted in the seizure of 500 detonators and Rs 12 lakh in cash," he said.

Shah said the network trafficked narcotics across the borders of India, Myanmar and Bangladesh through the "Death Triangle Corridor".



Union Home Minister Amit Shah

Congratulating the anti-narcotics team drawn from central agencies and the police forces of the three states, Shah said the operation reflected the government's resolve to eradicate every drug network by December 31, 2029. "India will hammer until the last nail is driven into the coffin of drug cartels," he said in the post.

Under "Operation Trident", the Narcotics Control Bureau, with 38 teams, raided 38 locations simultaneously across the three states, Assam, Mizoram, and Manipur against transnational narco-financial syndi-

cates, aiming to dismantle the operational and financial backbone of the cartel.

The raids followed days of covert intelligence fusion, joint target-mapping and high-level tactical briefings among central and state agencies, a government statement said, and were designed to strike the syndicates logistics nodes and illicit financial arteries at the same time.

The multi-state operation followed intelligence-led investigations by the NCB, Mizoram Police and Enforcement Directorate, tracing backward and forward links in cases selected for a 360-degree probe, it said.

"The cartel was led by Myanmar-based kingpin Thangcintuang alias Chintuang alias Tuanga who orchestrated the cross-border routing of methamphetamine and heroin across Myanmar-Mizoram-Manipur-Assam-Tripura corridor into mainland India and Bangladesh. He was arrested in May this year," it said.

Acting under a unified com-

mand structure, 38 multi-agency composite teams were mobilised concurrently across 38 pre-identified locations in the three states. "The strikes covered key urban hubs and sensitive border corridors, including Aizawl, Champhai and the Indo-Myanmar border trading town of Zokhawthar in Mizoram, along with linked operative bases in Churachandpur, Manipur, and the Cachar transit corridor in Assam," it said.

Despite challenging terrain and vast geographical spread, exceptional inter-departmental coordination ensured all searches, enquiries, and financial audits were executed simultaneously, preventing the flight of suspects or concealment of illicit assets, the statement said.

"Earlier phases of the probe dismantled key parts of the cartel, including kingpin Thangcintuang, alias Chintuang or Tuanga, who was arrested in Delhi after inter-state surveillance and intelligence-led operations," the statement said.

Minor girls' abuse: New FIR registered against Veeramani

Chennai: Police registered a case against granite baron Veeramani after a minor girl complained. Eight people have been arrested; complaints concern 12 minor girls. The eighth case dates to October 21.

Veeramani, Shanthi and Mahendrasimhan were arrested by Chennai Police Anti-Vice Squad on August 29. Ganesan, accused of possessing a video without informing police, was arrested on September 22. Three drivers accused of transporting minors were arrested on October 5, followed by CNS manager Sakthivel on October 18.

ASIT is questioning four suspects at Peravallur police station. Archana was also questioned about Veeramani's activities and alleged financial transactions to evade legal action. Look Out Circulars have been issued against five suspects to prevent them fleeing the country. PTI

Land, a cancelled marriage & money: 3 Assam men held in Bengaluru blast case

Express News Service
Bengaluru, October 25

THE BENGALURU police arrested three childhood friends from Assam in connection with Tuesday's improvised explosive device (IED) blast in Pulakeshinagar, stating personal rivalry was the motive behind the incident that injured two workers.

Commissioner of Police Seemant Kumar Singh said the police had examined every possible angle, including terrorism, before establishing the motive, adding that 10 police teams examined 1,500 CCTV cameras and questioned over 100 people.

The police identified the arrested men as Bhurhan Ahmad Burbhuiyya, 20, Jahidull Hussain Burbhuiyya, 27, and Sajidull Lashkar, 22, all natives of Dinanathpur in Assam's Hailakhandi district. Jahidull is related to Allauddin Barbhai, 53, a security guard from Assam who was among the injured victims, police said.

According to police, Bhurhan worked as a welder and electrician at Maski in Karnataka's Raichur district. Jahidull worked as a salesman at a Cake of the Day shop in Jayanagar in Bengaluru, and Sajidull worked at Bytwoodcoffee in Malleshwaram.

A police officer said Jahidull and Allauddin had family disputes between them.

"There was a land dispute, a financial dispute, and recently Jahidull's sister's marriage was cancelled reportedly due to Allauddin's interference. In order to avenge it, Jahidull sought his childhood friend Bhurhan's help," the officer said.

The three friends had created a WhatsApp group, and Bhurhan suggested the IED blast, according to the police.

Seemant Kumar Singh said, "He has done research online on how to create an IED. There is a lot of browsing history and



Bhurhan, Jahidull and Sajidull were arrested in connection with the October 20 blast

we are looking into it. We will also see the places from where raw materials were sourced."

After allegedly assembling the IED device, Bhurhan came close to where Allauddin lived in Bengaluru.

He called him up and said there was a parcel in his name which could be collected at a petty shop near his residence.

Allauddin collected the parcel and went to his room. However, he did not open it soon. According to the police, Bhurhan phoned him and pressured him to open the parcel.

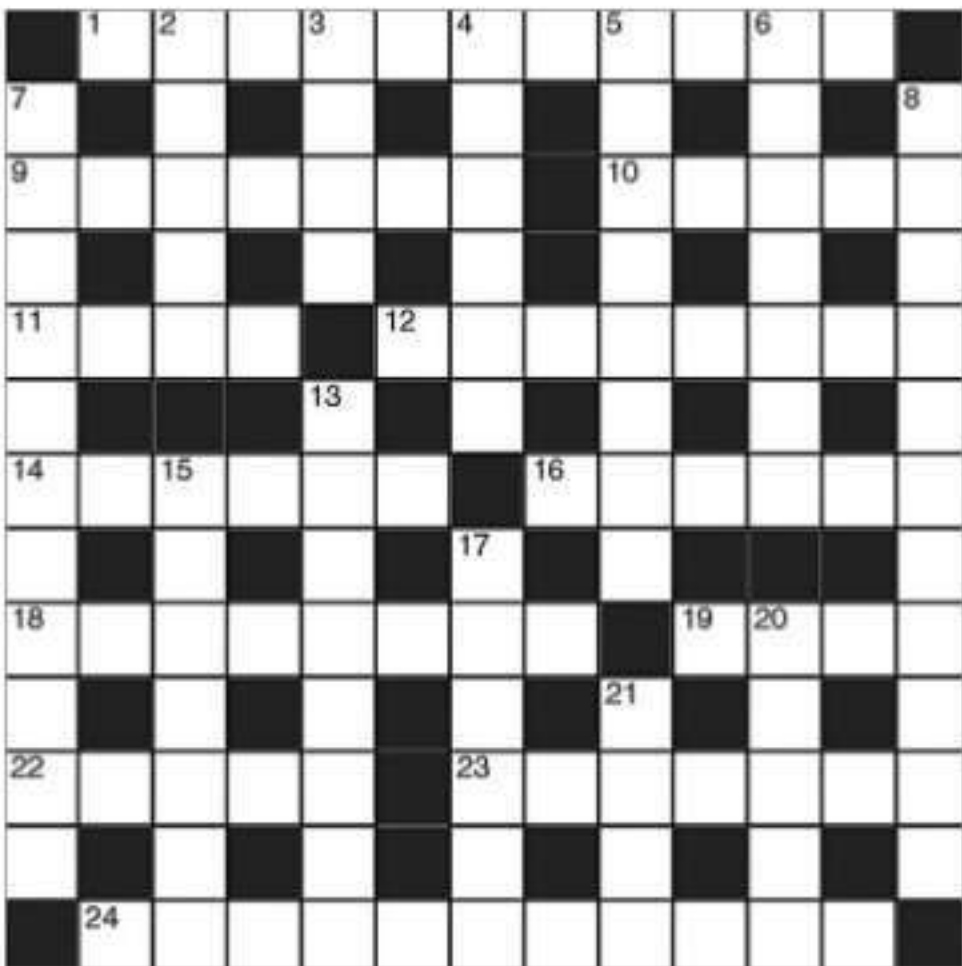
But Allauddin found it hard to open the parcel. Suraj Kumar, 28, a painter from Gokharpur, helped him open the parcel, which then exploded, injuring both. Suraj was injured more severely.

The blast occurred at an under-construction building in East Bengaluru's Pulikeshinagar on the night before the main Dasara celebrations, and early speculation suggested it could have been the result of someone experimenting with making an explosive device.

The police said they made the arrests within 72 hours of the incident.

A National Investigation Agency (NIA) team also arrived in Bengaluru to see if there was any terrorism angle to the blast.

CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1 Strictly it's where the rent is due (2,3,6)
9 There's nothing to restrict the view (7)
10 Girl who may feel badly about public relations (5)
11 Lord of high standing and narrow outlook (4)
12 He owns land next to the bank (8)
14 Submit and face the wall (6)
16 Averts disaster only to die of hunger (6)
18 Sea and shore — or just the shore (8)
19 Model company (4)
22 So one perhaps may find a catch in it (5)
23 Conrad's whirlwind romance? (7)
24 Didn't succeed in crossing the ice? (4,7)

DOWN
2 Reserved for skating (2,3)
3 Welcome sort of shower (4)
4 Fast, the Italian's pulse (6)
5 Social occasion for Alice in Boston? (3,5)
6 Real reform that is right before time (7)
7 Remark about some section (11)
8 Secret shuffle in silent dance (11)
13 Spring after spring — what a surprise! (4,4)
15 No one takes part — it's most offensive (7)
17 Grab a bit of sleep perhaps (6)
20 A desire to get together (5)
21 Capable of being put out with oxygen (2,2))

SOLUTIONS CROSSWORD 6128 **ACROSS:** 1 Patron, 4 Shortage, 9 Tea set, 10 Advanced, 12 Echo, 13 Stood, 14 Idea, 17 Construction, 20 High standing, 23 Real, 24 Patch, 25 Stet, 28 Enormity, 29 Poirot, 30 Set aside, 31 Repaid **DOWN:** 1 Patience, 2 Teaching, 3 Over, 5 Hydrostatics, 6 Repay, 7 Accede, 8 Endear, 11 Stout-hearted, 15 Strip, 16 Moans, 18 Victoria, 19 Agitated, 21 Orders, 22 Resort, 26 Amos, 27 Rose

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective circles below. Select the letters in the shaded circles and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

I am who I choose to be. I always have been what I chose though not always _____. - Lois McMaster Bujold (4,1,7)

LVAAE **AEEDLT**
BCAIS **OOSHPW**

ANSWER: I am who I choose to be. I always have been what I chose though not always _____ - Lois McMaster Bujold (4,1,7)

OVER THE HEDGE



CALVIN & HOBBS



MARVIN



DIFFICULTY LEVEL 1s INSTRUCTIONS

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL
1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

SUDOKU 6483

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 6482

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

ROYAL STARS

ARIES (MAR 21 - APR 20): Parents have to be patient with their kids today. All of you have to be patient with others when discussing shared property, taxes, debt, inheritances, as well as social occasions or involvements with friends and groups. Tonight: Check your belongings.

TAURUS (APR 21 - MAY 21): The full Moon is in your sign, The Moon is at odds with Pluto and Mars. "Our options are limited, Captain. We cannot fire and we cannot flee." Sit this one out. Tonight: You're in charge.

GEMINI (MAY 22 - JUNE 21): Arguments and disputes are classic today because a number of planets are at odds with each other. This means don't go looking for trouble, because it will easily find you. Your work might be hampered by delays and mistakes. Tonight: Seek privacy.

CANCER (JUNE 22 - JULY 23): You will feel the energy of today's full Moon. Today's Moon is at odds with both Pluto and Mars, encouraging competition, confrontations, even jealousy. Quarrels about money and possessions might take place. Tonight: Be friendly.

LEO (JULY 24 - AUG 23): This is a challenging day as the full Moon is at odds with your sign, possibly triggering irritation and annoyance with others. One upside is that secrets could be revealed, which might be a good thing. Tonight: Be modest.

VIRGO (AUG 24 - SEP 23): You might be quick to make a retort to someone today. You will notice that others are a bit touchy too. Today's full Moon is supportive to you. Be patient with others. Tonight: Learn something.

LIBRA (SEP 24 - OCT 23): Although many of you can debate eloquently, as a rule, avoid confrontations. Confrontations about money, possessions, social occasions and issues related to organisations are likely. Keep your head down. Tonight: Check your finances.

SCORPIO (OCT 24 - NOV 23): Cut yourself some slack today, because the vibes are challenging. Relations with authority figures and family members are potentially contentious. Tread carefully. Tonight: Listen and cooperate.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV 24 - DEC 22): Avoid controversial subjects today, as it's easy to fall into an argument or dispute with someone. Discussions with relatives and neighbours will be dicey. Today's full Moon can create problems with work colleagues. Take it easy. Tonight: Get organised.

CAPRICORN (DEC 23 - JAN 20): This is a popular time for you, especially because friends and contacts from the past are back in your world. Be patient with your kids today and avoid disputes about shared property and money. Keep things light. Tonight: Socialise.

AQUARIUS (JAN 21 - FEB 19): Your dealings with parents and authority figures will be challenged today. This is not the day to ask for approval. Relations with spouses and close friends are also on thin ice. Patience and diplomacy are your best friends today. Tonight: Relax at home.

PISCES (FEB 20 - MAR 20): Avoid touchy subjects like politics, religion and racial issues today. Don't be demanding with co-workers, because arguments can quickly flare up. Give yourself an easy schedule. Avoid difficult people for your own peace of mind. Tonight: Listen to someone.

Couple found dead on rly track in Jharkhand after Instagram video

Shubham Tigga
Ranchi, October 25

THE BODIES of a young inter-faith couple were found on a railway track in Jharkhand's Jamtara district on Saturday morning. The circumstances surrounding their deaths remain under investigation.

The deceased were identified as Rocky Kumar Mandal, 20, and Nazia Khatoon, 18, residents of Ringochingo village under Karmatand police station limits. Police said their bodies were found near the local railway water tank.

Karmatand police station in-charge Alakh Nath Chaubey said the couple, who had reportedly been in a relationship for a few years, had left their homes on Friday evening to visit a fair.

According to the officer, the two later visited a temple. A video purportedly posted on Instagram and attributed to Rocky shows the couple with one hand each tied together with a blue cloth. The post carries a message, "I'm telling all the villagers one thing: do not separate this bond of ours. Wherever you bury us or whatever you do, do it together, the message accompanying the post reads," he said.

Odisha mobilises personnel, orders evacuations, braces for very severe cyclone

Sujit Bisoyi
Bhubaneswar, October 25

AS ODISHA braces for a very severe cyclonic storm that is expected to cross the Andhra Pradesh coast on October 28, the state government on Sunday stepped up preparations, mobilising personnel and equipment in vulnerable areas.

In its latest bulletin, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said a depression over the Bay of Bengal is likely to cross the Andhra Pradesh coast between Bapatla and Visakhapatnam as a very severe cyclonic storm, with maximum sustained winds of 115-125 kmph and gusts up to 140 kmph. The depression over east-central and adjoining southeast Bay of Bengal remained practically stationary during the past three hours and lay centred at 0830 hours IST on October 25, 2026, over the same region, the bulletin said.

It said: "Moving west-northwestwards, it is very likely to intensify further into a cyclonic storm over the east-central and adjoining west-central Bay of Bengal by the morning of October 26, and into severe cyclonic storm over the west-central Bay of Bengal around the morning of October 27. Thereafter, it is very likely to move northwestwards, intensify further into a very severe cyclonic storm and reach the west-central Bay of Bengal near the Andhra Pradesh coast around morning of October 28."

Terror as statecraft unacceptable, not all show zero tolerance: EAM

Divya A
New Delhi, October 25

WITHOUT NAMING Pakistan, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday said that the use of terrorism as an instrument of statecraft was unacceptable, calling for a strong global resolve to counter terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

While speaking at an event in New Delhi, he called out countries for allowing "political calculations" to take precedence over displaying zero tolerance towards terror-sponsoring states. "Terrorism is another deadly threat to peace. Its usage as an instrument of statecraft is simply unacceptable. It can never be justified. It can never be rationalised. Yet, it continues because not all states really display zero tolerance," he said.

A few weeks ago, speaking at a conversation hosted by the Asia Society in New York, Jaishankar said that terrorism emanating from its neighbour is one of India's primary concerns, and if this is not fully appreciated by New Delhi's partners, it affects bilateral ties, alluding to India-US relations amid an upswing in Washington-Islamabad ties.

Jaishankar then said terrorism remained one of India's primary concerns, particularly because of what he described as "decades" of attacks originating from Pakistan. He said, "If something which matters so deeply to us, there isn't enough understanding or appreciation or empathy of that, I think that creates a problem too."

On Sunday, while speaking at the Chinmaya Amrit Mahotsav Global Sammelan on Non-Dualism for World Understanding on the occasion of UN Day, Jaishankar said, "Despite history holding so many lessons, some still allow political calculations to take precedence. The world must therefore develop sharper awareness about this common threat, and it must come together with stronger resolve and counter-terrorism in all its forms and manifestations."

A day earlier, India condemned the attack on a church in Jordan's Karak, which claimed seven lives and left 34 injured. In an official statement released by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), New Delhi termed the strike a "heinous" and "cowardly" act, while also reiterating its commitment to



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar addresses 75th Chinmaya Amrit Mahotsav Global Sammelan in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

combating terrorism globally.

Jaishankar pointed to the two major wars—in Ukraine and in West Asia saying, "There are today two major conflicts going on in the world: in Ukraine and in West Asia... Societies and economies, peoples far away, who have little say in the matter, are actually paying the cost. We cannot remain helpless spectators," he said.

Jaishankar said "India expresses global sentiment when we urge that dialogue and diplomacy are the only solution. We

are making efforts ourselves and are open to working with other partners to that end".

The minister highlighted the link between peace, economic progress, and shared prosperity and that they are "the flip side of conflict and violence, and they too are equally indivisible. The world cannot advance half prosperous and half denied in an era of intricate supply chains, of globalised markets, and of common resources. This is simply a prescription for continuous instability".

Ray institute students call for protests nationwide, varsity defends its actions

Tanusree Bose
Kolkata, October 25

THE STUDENTS of Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute (SRFTI), Kolkata called for a nationwide campus protest on October 27 against what they called "saffronisation of educational institutions", as their agitation entered 28th day.

Addressing a press conference on Sunday, they called upon student unions, universities and colleges across the country to join them in protest against "growing suppression of dissent".

Shubham Waydande, who has been rusticated and holds the position of vice president of the SRFTI students union said, "While we are holding this press conference, my fellow students at SRFTI are being threatened of disciplinary action by the vice chancellor. He has already rusticated six students and said there will be complaints filed against the protesting students. He has closed down the institute. We have been told to vacate the hostels till November 13 and power supply to the classrooms have been cut. The water filters are not being maintained. We refuse to be intimidated."

Aaron P Joy, another student, said, "It is evident what they're trying to do. They are trying to dismantle the spaces of opposition and criticism, the core principles of our Constitution. If they're able to crack down on these pieces, then a generation would grow without knowing the constitution. They are trying to create a generation that



Students distribute food as the canteen remained closed amid protest at SRFTI campus. EXPRESS

is easy to tackle and manipulate. We will not let them do that. We have a vice-chancellor who is spreading fake narratives against students. We see a similar pattern in Jamia Milia Islamia, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Jadavpur University, SRFTI..." The students union have put forward several demands to stop the "saffronisation of campus spaces".

"Stop the appointment of Sangh Parivar/RSS-affiliated officials to positions of authority in educational institutions where such appointments are used to suppress dissent and undermine democratic campus life. Revoke the rustication of students across the country who have faced punitive action for expressing dissent. Conduct student union elections on all campuses where elections have not been held for successive terms. Enact the Rohith Vemula Act to

address caste discrimination and institutional discrimination in educational institutions. Withdraw the Vksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025. Withdraw the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Stop militarisation and surveillance of campuses. Stop privatization of educational institutions," the students union statement said.

Meanwhile, registrar Deepak Kumar, in a statement, said that Waydande "has been rusticated for three semesters and, under the applicable rules, is not eligible to be part of the students' body during this period. Therefore, his statements, or those of other individuals who are no longer eligible to represent the union, should not automatically be taken as reflecting the views or wishes of the entire student community," the statement said.

The institute, in a press statement, has clarified that the dis-

During his address, he spoke on the need for reforms in the United Nations, emphasising that the shortcomings and limitations of the global body must be recognised and addressed, and that the case for reformed multilateralism was becoming stronger by the day.

"Large parts of the world cannot be left out from decision-making. The UN must show leadership, not be a spectator to global crises," he said. Calling for a renewed commitment to collective action, Jaishankar said the international community must continue to work towards long-awaited changes in the global multilateral system.

Jaishankar said that the international community cannot remain helpless as bystanders and populations bear the cascading economic brunt of raging wars in Ukraine and West Asia.

Emphasising that global governance structures established eight decades ago under Article 1 of the UN Charter were meant to act as a centre for harmonising international actions, he noted that current institutional gridlocks leave far-removed populations suffering from conflicts they had no role in starting.

57-yr-old man dies as judge's minor son driving car rams 2-wheeler in Keralam

Express News Service
Thiruvananthapuram, October 25

AN ADDITIONAL district judge's minor son drove his father's car into a two-wheeler, leading to the death of the 56-year-old rider in Kerala's Ernakulam district early on Sunday.

Police booked the 17-year-old for a bailable offence and let him go home initially, but was later forced to slap culpable homicide not amounting to murder charges following intervention of state Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala.

The victim, Jayabalakrishnan, was returning home after closing his small eatery when the accident took place at Cheranallor around 2.30 am under Kochi city police limits. The judge's son tried to escape from the spot with the partially damaged car. But local people stopped him and handed him over to police.

Jayalakshmi, a relative of the victim, alleged that the judge, who reached the police station after the accident, threatened the family when they questioned him. "When I asked the judge whether he was aware of the law prohibiting minors from driving cars, he became agitated and told us not to teach him the law. He said, 'Don't question him'. Police also removed the car immediately from the spot to destroy evidence. We will fight the case as the incident shows the arrogance of a person holding a judicial post," she told reporters.

Initially, police registered a case under BNS Sections 106(1) and 281, relating to causing death by negligence and rash driving, respectively. Without producing the minor before the Juvenile Justice Board or the

The judge will face a case under Section 199A of the Motor Vehicle Act, which deals with offences committed by juveniles driving motor vehicles

court, police allowed him to go home. This evoked widespread protest, forcing Chennithala to step in.

Following his intervention, police slapped non-bailable BNS section 105 against the minor. "The boy will be taken to custody again as he was booked for culpable homicide and will be produced before the court. Besides, his father will also face a case as per the law. Direction in this regard has been given to the police," said an official in the Home Minister's office.

Police said they were examining whether the teenager was driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. "The doctor who examined him has reported that the minor was not under the influence of alcohol. Yet we have collected his blood samples for detailed examination," said police.

The judge will face a case under Section 199A of the Motor Vehicle Act, which deals with offences committed by juveniles driving motor vehicles. In 2024, the Kerala High Court held that the guardian of a minor or the owner of a vehicle driven by a minor could be prosecuted under this section.

The provision prescribes imprisonment of up to three years and a fine of Rs 25,000 for the guardian or vehicle owner, subject to statutory conditions.

BRIEFLY



CM Yumnam Khemchand Singh during an inspection of Sinai Camp in Manipur's Kangpokpi district on Sunday. PTI

MANIPUR

State cannot achieve lasting peace as long as gun culture exists: CM

MANIPUR CHIEF Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Sunday visited Sinai Camp, a designated camp for militants under Suspension of Operations agreement in Kangpokpi district on Sunday. The CRPF took over the camp following joint operations involving its CoBRA unit, police and other security forces in aftermath of the killing of three firewood collectors near Imphal's Nongshum. Khemchand inspected the camp premises and was briefed by CRPF and Assam Rifles officers on recent operations. Interacting with senior security officers and personnel, the CM commended CRPF's CoBRA Battalion for its leading role in the operation. "Manipur cannot progress or achieve lasting peace as long as a gun culture exists," the CM said, appealing to the people to shun violence, surrender illegal arms and work collectively towards restoring peace and harmony in the state. ENS

Drug seizure case accused escapes Rajasthan lock-up

AN ACCUSED arrested in connection with seizure of narcotics worth around Rs 1.30 crore escaped from a police lock-up in Rajasthan's Dholpur district after breaking a window on Sunday, officials said. The accused, Srinivasan T (45), a Andhra Pradesh resident, was on police remand at Deholi police station, police said. The escape came to light early Sunday when constable Manoj checked the lock-up and found Srinivasan missing. He immediately informed SHO Shaitan Singh. Dholpur Superintendent of Police Vikas Sangwan suspended constables Vishnu and Jogesh for alleged negligence in duty following the escape. PTI

One dead, three injured in Moga shooting

ONE PERSON died, and three others were injured after multiple gunshots were fired in the Mohalla Angadpura of Punjab's Moga town late on Sunday, police said. The Moga police said, prima facie, the assailants arrived in a black Scorpio and opened fire at members of an extended family who were sitting outside their homes. Inspector Varun Kumar, the SHO, Moga City South police station said, "The injured were rushed to hospital. One of the injured persons is on ventilator support... Prima facie, it is a case of personal enmity and the family has named some suspects. We are registering an FIR after recording the statement of a family member." ENS

Bengal's controversial 1972 election: why BJP is citing it

Atri Mitra
Kolkata, October 25

MORE THAN five decades after one of West Bengal's most controversial Assembly elections, the 1972 polls are back in the spotlight. BJP MP Nishikant Dubey recently invoked the election to target Congress, drawing on allegations made by CPI(M) at the time that the party had used state power, intimidation and electoral malpractice to secure a sweeping victory.

The BJP, which has repeatedly faced accusations from Opposition parties of undermining democratic institutions and electoral processes, is now citing the Left's account to turn the tables on the Opposition.

The episode revisits a defining moment in West Bengal's political history, when allegations of large-scale rigging, violence against political workers and suppression of electoral competition dealt a blow to the credibility of democratic process. The results of the March 1972 Assembly election came as a surprise to many observers. Al-

though a Congress victory was anticipated, given political climate and 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War backdrop, the scale of success was unexpected.

The Congress won 216 of the 280 seats, while its ally, the CPI, secured 35. The CPI(M), which had won 113 seats in the 1971 Assembly election, was reduced to just 14. The Left had contested election in an alliance with several parties, making its electoral rout all the more striking.

Yet, the tally concealed a more complicated picture of popular support. In an article published in the *Economic and Political Weekly* on April 15, 1972, CPI(M) leader Biplab Dasgupta argued that the result bore little relation to its share of the vote. "The number of seats bagged by that party (Congress) in the recent election is misleading and unfair as a measure of its popular support," he wrote.

The CPI(M) had secured about 28% of the vote, he noted. "Had its seats reflected this vote share proportionately, it would have won around 78 seats instead of 14. The party's vote

share, moreover, was only marginally below the Congress's 29% in the 1971 election," he argued.

Dasgupta pointed to absence of a uniform swing against the CPI(M). While the party had lost in many constituencies, it had gained in others. The CPI(M)-led front, he said, had secured about 36% of votes but only 20 seats.

For the Left, the disparity between votes and seats became a central argument in challenging the legitimacy of the result.

Rabin Dev, now a CPI(M) central committee member, was 23 at the time. "Congress goons attacked our office. I ran away and got into a tram. They chased and beat me and threw me out," he said, adding that local residents took him to hospital with severe injuries.

Dev recalled hearing in hospital that Jyoti Basu, the CPI(M)'s senior leader and candidate from Baranagar, had withdrawn his candidature after witnessing "large-scale rigging".

Ramala Chakraborty, then associated with the students' movement and later a leader of the All India Democratic



Siddhartha Shankar Ray— the last Congress CM of West Bengal. EXPRESS ARCHIVE

Women's Association, recalled the violence. She said her family had been forced to leave its residence and movie. Recounting an incident in the Purba Sinhi area, Chakraborty said a CPI(M) party meeting on March 5, 1972—six days before polling—was attacked by police and Congress workers. Five comrades were killed, she recalled.

The account of the 1972 election by the Election Commission (EC) recorded disturbances at

several polling stations, particularly in and around Kolkata, as well as tension among political parties, workers and supporters.

Opposition parties then alleged large-scale rigging in many constituencies. The poll panel, however, recorded only a few number of formal complaints from voters who claimed they had been prevented from voting.

The CPI(M) denounced the result and stayed away from the legislature for much of Assembly's term, challenging the legitimacy of the Congress government, terming it a "semi-fascist takeover". The party characterised the outcome as a betrayal of democratic norms, and the election became a defining grievance in its political narrative.

The 1972 election followed years of political instability, changes of governments and escalating violence.

The Congress had dominated the state after Independence, but divisions within the party and the emergence of competing political formations weakened its position during the 1960s. The Bangla Congress

emerged from a split in the Congress, while the Communist movement divided in 1964 into the CPI and the CPI(M).

The state witnessed an assembly election in 1967, another in 1969, followed by mid-term polls in 1971 and 1972. At the same time, West Bengal was experiencing rise of the Naxalite movement. By 1971, the situation had deteriorated.

The 1972 election brought Siddhartha Shankar Ray to power, the last Congress CM to hold the post. His government's most consequential actions included a severe crackdown on the Naxalite movement.

Thousands of young people were arrested during the period, while allegations of custodial abuse, extrajudicial killings and police excesses became part of the record of state repression. Ray's political significance extended beyond West Bengal. He was an important adviser to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi before the Emergency was declared in June 1975.

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

{ WEEKLY CAPSULE }

Fish oil fails brain health test

MILLIONS TAKE fish oil supplements in hopes of protecting their memory and keeping their brains healthy as they age. Now a two-year clinical trial found that fish oil supplements successfully delivered Omega-3s to the brain but failed to improve memory or protect against Alzheimer's-related brain shrinkage. Despite the increase in DHA, an Omega 3 fatty acid, those taking fish oil performed no better on the cognitive tests than participants receiving the placebo. Researchers at the University of Southern California suspect that getting these nutrients through a healthy diet may offer more benefits.



Why statins cause muscle pain

SCIENTISTS HAVE uncovered a surprising reason why statins, the widely prescribed cholesterol-lowering drugs that help prevent heart attacks and strokes, can cause muscle pain, weakness and even severe muscle damage. Using advanced imaging technology, researchers at the University of British Columbia discovered that statins can attach to a crucial protein in muscle cells and force open a channel that normally controls calcium flow. This causes calcium to leak continuously, potentially damaging muscle tissue. The discovery could help researchers design treatments that are easier to tolerate.



Reversing 60 years of ageing

SCIENTISTS IN Germany have found a way to dramatically reverse the molecular age of human cells, transforming blood cells from an 80-year-old person into stem cells with an age signature of less than 20 years. Researchers at the University Hospital of Bonn achieved this transformation by reprogramming immature red blood cells into neural stem cells, which can eventually develop into brain cells. Molecular markers associated with ageing were effectively reset, making the cells more than 60 years younger at the molecular level. The study tracked how cellular reprogramming reversed molecular ageing.



Vitamin C and cancer link

A SURPRISING clinical trial at the Van Andel Research Institute suggests that taking vitamin C daily could improve survival in people with precancerous blood disorders and early-stage blood cancers. Patients receiving the supplement had fewer adverse events and showed a promising survival advantage, raising hopes that a common vitamin could help protect against leukemia-related complications. One of the most important discoveries concerns an enzyme that helps prevent cancerous growth by controlling whether particular genes are switched "on" or "off." Vitamin C supports the activity of this enzyme.



Coffee calories jump to 40%

YOUR MORNING coffee may be packing more calories than you realise, and sugar isn't the biggest reason. A study of 30,000 Americans by Tufts University has found that non-dairy creamer has overtaken sugar and milk as the leading source of added coffee calories, helping drive a nearly 40% increase between 2003 and 2018. On average, non-dairy creamers contributed 18.5 calories per day, compared with 16 calories from sugar and 11 calories from dairy milk. Non-dairy creamers can be high in saturated fat, which is calorie-dense. This could explain the increased calories resulting from use of non-dairy creamers.



POLICY MATTERS

CK MISHRA

FORMER HEALTH SECRETARY, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Cancer drug price cap: Why India needs a bigger plan

Lasting reform must balance affordable drugs with reliable supplies, quality care

THE DECISION to regulate trade margins on non-scheduled cancer medicines is a welcome step. It responds to a genuine concern. In a welfare state, the government has a responsibility to ensure that healthcare is both accessible and affordable, while creating an environment in which quality care can be delivered sustainably. When the difference between the price at which a product enters the supply chain and what a patient ultimately pays becomes difficult to justify, the government cannot remain a passive observer.

But a good first step should not be mistaken for a complete solution. The present debate raises three questions. Is the exercise comprehensive enough? Is it based on adequate evidence? And can it be implemented effectively across a healthcare market as large and varied as India's?

The Centre has informed the Supreme Court that trade margins on specified cancer drugs will be capped at 30 per cent. An expert committee will identify the medicines to be covered, after which the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority will examine its recommendations. The court has also asked why similar scrutiny should not extend to other medicines and medical products.

That is a legitimate question. If excessive trade margins are the problem, India should examine the issue comprehensively rather than regulate one category at a time. A fragmented approach can shift distortions from one part of the market to another, create uncertainty and make enforcement needlessly difficult. But evidence must come before the prescription. The same medicine or medical product may cost different amounts to administer at two hospitals within the same city. The difference can arise from the patient's condition, the complexity of the treatment, the expertise of the clinical team, the infrastructure available, infection-control requirements, the level of monitoring involved and the emergency support that must remain available. A routine medicine administered in an outpatient setting cannot be equated with a complex therapy delivered under specialist supervision.

The procurement price of a medicine or device, therefore, tells us only one part of the story. A robust framework must distinguish between the trade margin on a product and the legitimate cost of storing, handling and administering it safely. It should also consider the infrastructure required to maintain quality and patient safety, and the possible effect of regulation on availability and access. Without this distinction, regulation intended to address excessive margins could inadvertently affect the delivery and quality of healthcare.

The government's own experience supports this approach. The 2019 trade-margin rationalisation pilot covered 42 selected non-scheduled anti-cancer medicines. Since then, consultations have raised concerns about production costs, the viability of smaller manufacturers and the cost of maintaining supplies in remote areas. The answers to these can help determine how future intervention should be designed.

India should now consider a comprehensive examination of trade margins across medicines, medical devices and consumables. This does not mean imposing the same formula on every product. It means using a common and scientifically credible method to identify where intervention is required and what form it should take. Meaningful stakeholder consultation must form part of this exercise. Manufacturers, distributors, hospitals, clinicians, insurers, patient groups and state governments each hold important evidence on how healthcare products are manufactured, supplied, priced and used. Drawing on their experience will help the government design a framework that is both effective and workable. It can ensure that unjustified margins are addressed while recognising legitimate differences in clinical settings, infrastructure, safety requirements, geographical reach and the cost of delivering quality care.

Success cannot be measured merely by the number of products brought under control. The more meaningful test is whether patients pay fairer prices without experiencing shortages, reduced access or any compromise in the quality and safety of care.

India needs continued investment in healthcare as its disease burden increases and demand for quality care grows. Hospitals must expand infrastructure, adopt newer technologies, strengthen clinical capabilities and improve access across the country. Blanket controls that do not recognise legitimate differences in cost and complexity could discourage precisely this investment. They could also make it harder for hospitals to maintain quality and safety standards or adopt medical advances that can improve patient outcomes. This is not an argument against price regulation. It is an argument for getting it right.

When genes raise cholesterol, diet may make a difference



GETTYIMAGES

A Chennai study has found that people with a higher genetic risk had higher levels of bad cholesterol when they followed a poor-quality diet, highlighting the role of everyday food choices in metabolic health

Purnima Sah

WHITE RICE polished to a shine, a maida parotta slick with oil, vegetables cooked in coconut oil and an extra spoonful of ghee: familiar staples on many Indian plates could add up to a diet that works against healthy cholesterol levels, particularly when fruits, vegetables and fibre take a back seat. Now, a study of 1,020 adults in Chennai suggests that for Indians genetically predisposed to high levels of bad cholesterol or LDL, the quality of their everyday diet could make a crucial difference in their blood markers. Those who ate a medium- or high-quality diet could completely offset the genetic risk of high LDL and total cholesterol. Those who ate poorly ended up being susceptible to higher levels of both.

The findings offer an important message for people who believe that high cholesterol is an inevitable consequence of their genes: inherited susceptibility need not be the whole story. "While genes can influence a person's risk of metabolic disorders, dietary habits may modify how that risk manifests. Even if you are born with the tendency to high cholesterol and diabetes, you can still keep your cholesterol levels down by following a healthy diet," says Dr V Mohan, chairman of Dr Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre and the Madras Diabetes Research Foundation (MDRF), and one of the authors of the paper.

The study, titled "Low diet quality increases the genetic risk of high blood cholesterol levels in Asian Indian adults [CURES-165]", was published in PLOS ONE. It draws on data from the Chennai Urban Rural Epidemiology Study (CURES), a long-running research programme.

What did the study find?

The researchers studied 1,020 adults aged between 25 and 80, including 452 men and 568 women. They examined three genetic variants — TCF7L2 rs7903146, FTO rs8050136 and rs1588413 — and combined them into a genetic risk score. Diet quality was assessed using an Indian Diet Quality Score covering eight food groups: pulses and legumes, fruits and vegetables, milk products, white rice, edible fats and oils, added sugar, added salt, poultry and eggs.

The researchers found that a higher genetic risk score was associated with a significantly higher total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol among participants in the low diet-quality group. The differences were not statistically significant among those in the medium- and high-quality diet groups. The interaction between genetic risk and diet quality was statistically significant for total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol.

The study also found associations between the genetic risk score and higher fasting blood glucose as well as glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c), a measure of average blood sugar over the preceding two to three months. "What we showed in this study is that those who have a certain genetic vari-

Food swaps for a healthier lipid profile

From the everyday dal-chawal meal to evening chai and namkeen, small changes to familiar foods can help improve cholesterol and triglyceride levels without giving up traditional favourites

1. Junk polished white rice for hand-pounded rice or a rice-dal combination



IF RICE is a staple at every meal, try hand-pounded or less-polished rice more often, or replace part of the rice serving with dal, rajma, chole or vegetables. Whole grains and pulses provide fibre, which can help improve cholesterol levels. Keeping portions of refined carbohydrates in check can also help manage high triglycerides.

2. Substitute maida parottas, luchis and bhaturas with whole-wheat rotis

REPLACE SOME refined-flour staples with whole-wheat phulkas, rotis or vegetable-stuffed whole-wheat parathas prepared with limited oil. Oats, dalia and millet-based dishes are other options. Reducing refined carbohydrates, especially when consumed in excess, can help lower elevated triglycerides.

3. Replace ghee, butter and coconut oil with unsaturated oils

USE LESS ghee, butter, vanaspati and coconut or palm oil, replacing some of these with moderate amounts of mustard, groundnut, sesame

or rice bran oil. These oils contain more unsaturated fats, and replacing saturated fats with unsaturated fats can help lower LDL ("bad") cholesterol. Avoid repeatedly reheating or reusing frying oil.

4. Samosas, pakoras and namkeen can be changed to roasted chana or nuts

Instead of making deep-fried snacks a daily habit, try roasted chana, unsalted peanuts, a small handful of nuts or steamed sundal made with chickpeas or other legumes. These provide protein and other nutrients while nuts supply unsaturated fats. Keep portions moderate, particularly for calorie-dense nuts and peanuts.

5. Give up sweetened chai, sherbet and packaged juice for whole fruit



GRADUALLY REDUCE the sugar added to chai and coffee, and replace regular soft drinks, sweetened sherbets and packaged fruit drinks with water or unsweetened beverages. Choose a whole guava, orange, apple or other seasonal fruit instead of juice. Cutting excess added sugar can help lower high triglyceride levels, while whole fruit provides fibre.

or Delhi, has people from several communities, including Telugu-speaking residents, Marwaris, Jains, Bengalis, people from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and the Northeast," Dr Mohan says.

He also refers to the nationwide ICMR-INDIAB study, which examined diet and health indicators across states and Union Territories. That study, too, found similar patterns in the relationship between carbohydrate consumption and diabetes across different parts of India, despite regional differences in the choice of staple foods.

"Just because you eat pav or chapatis in Mumbai and we eat white rice here doesn't mean the readings will be different. It's the overall carbohydrate overload that's the deciding factor," he says, referring to the broader dietary findings from the INDIAB study. "When we eat more carbohydrates than what the body needs for energy, the excess is converted into fat in the liver. This fat is released into the bloodstream as triglycerides. When triglyceride levels rise, the liver releases more triglyceride-rich particles into the bloodstream. As these particles are broken down, they exchange fats with LDL and HDL (good) cholesterol, changing their composition. This can lead to the formation of smaller, denser LDL particles, which are more likely to contribute to plaque build-up in artery walls. However, high triglycerides do not always mean that total LDL cholesterol will rise; they can also make LDL particles more harmful even when LDL levels appear normal. They simultaneously reduce the protective HDL."

Excess carbohydrate intake can contribute to weight gain and insulin resistance, further affecting how the body processes fats. However, carbohydrates do not uniformly raise LDL cholesterol; the effect depends on the type and quantity consumed, the overall dietary pattern and individual metabolic factors. Replacing some refined grains with whole grains, pulses, vegetables and other fibre-rich foods can help improve overall lipid health.

What should you watch out for

Dr Mohan identifies refined carbohydrates as a key dietary concern. For example, he suggests unpolished brown rice as a healthier choice than polished white rice, while whole-grain wheat is preferable to refined wheat flour such as maida. "Saturated fats, including those found in coconut oil, palm oil, ghee and butter, can increase cholesterol. Go for unsaturated ones. Groundnut, mustard and sesame (gingelly) oils are sources of mono-unsaturated fat while sunflower oil contains polyunsaturated fat," he says.

It is the overall diet, not one food

The researchers assessed overall diet quality and did not establish that any one oil, grain or individual food caused the

cholesterol differences. Dr R M Anjana, managing director of Dr Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre and a co-author of the paper, says, "People don't eat one specific food. Everything contributes to how your body behaves and reacts."

However, she singles out highly refined carbohydrates, sweets and sugary drinks as the fastest triggers of an unhealthy dietary pattern. "Excess refined carbohydrates can be metabolised into sugar, while excess energy intake can contribute to fat accumulation. Foods high in saturated and trans fats can adversely affect lipid levels. But if you have a bit of carbohydrate and add protein to it, the risk comes down. If you have something that's a little high in fat, just increase the fibre content with it to negate the side effects. Your plate should be about balancing the equation, not eliminating food groups," she says.

What should a healthy Indian plate look like?

Dr Anjana recommends a simple plate-based approach: half the plate should comprise fruits and vegetables, including green leafy vegetables. The remaining half should be divided into two quarters: one for protein and the other for non-starchy carbohydrates. Water and dairy foods such as milk and curd can be included alongside the meal. The proportions may need to be adapted to a person's body mass index (BMI), blood sugar status and other nutritional needs.

She also advises choosing less-processed foods wherever possible. Whole fruit is preferable to fruit juice or packaged fruit drinks. Vegetables that can be eaten raw, such as carrots, cucumbers and tomatoes, should be washed thoroughly; other vegetables can be cooked minimally. "Try to avoid anything that comes out of a packet," she says, acknowledging that this can be difficult in busy modern lives.

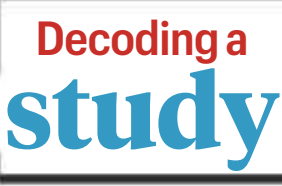
How diet lowers LDL cholesterol

While dietary changes can improve cholesterol levels, the extent of improvement varies between individuals, says Dr Anjana. "Dietary changes may have a particularly significant effect on triglycerides, while LDL cholesterol can also have a familial tendency. What we do know is that a healthy food choice will improve all of the cholesterol parameters."

However, cholesterol-lowering medication may be necessary when lifestyle changes do not produce a significant improvement. "Someone with only mildly elevated LDL may see an improvement with diet and exercise but people with substantially elevated levels may need drugs. Don't delay treatment if cholesterol remains well above the required target," he advises.



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• CLIMATE

Why Loss & Damage Fund for Nepal matters beyond it



AMITABH SINHA

A MONTH after it raised a request, Nepal has been promised a sum of \$20 million (around Rs 190 crore) to help it recover from the devastating flash floods in August this year. Though the amount is extremely small compared to an estimated need of about \$4.75 billion (around Rs 44,600 crore) in recovery and reconstruction costs, it marks the beginning of the implementation of a new international regime on loss and damage. This system seeks to provide financial assistance to developing countries affected by climate events.

The allocation is a first from the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), a new international financing instrument created in 2022 to address a long-pending demand from developing nations, particularly those small and vulnerable countries that face the maximum risk from climate events. These countries have contributed negligibly to creating the problem of climate change because of their extremely low emissions footprint, and yet, they disproportionately suffer its consequences. For instance, Nepal's contribution to historical global emissions of greenhouse gases is a tiny 0.01%.

Developing countries also have fewer resources and happen to be among those least equipped to deal with major climate-related disasters.

The allocation for Nepal, which still has to undergo some procedural formalities before being released, is by no means commensurate with the extent of damage inflicted by an event assessed to be triggered by climate change. But its importance lies in acknowledging the need for quickly mobilising financial resources. The decision to earmark \$20 million for Nepal was taken at an emergency board meeting of the FRLD, following requests from Nepal and several other countries that supported it.

Emergency allocation

The money for Nepal is an out-of-turn allocation by the FRLD, and essentially its first decision on applications made by countries. Operationalised in 2023 after receiving the first round of contributions from



The devastated structure around Betrawati Rasuwa border in Nepal following the flash floods on August 31. FILE

donor countries, the FRLD made its first call for applications during the annual climate conference in Brazil last year (COP30). By the time the window for applications closed on June 15 this year, 119 countries had submitted 176 funding requests.

The total amount requested by countries added up to \$2.8 billion — over three times the fund's existing corpus. The fund has so far received only \$822 million from donors, and much of it is currently only at the commitment stage, with the actual amount yet to be delivered. Clearly, the fund has no capacity to accept every request even after capping each request at \$20 million.

As a result, the fund will have to prioritise these requests. A decision on these requests is scheduled for December, although Nepal's case is a separate one. The flooding incident, in which more than over 1,300 people were killed and over 5,000 continue to be missing, happened in August, and an extraordinary request was made in September. Its acceptance underlines the need to provide emergency financial assistance to countries following a large-scale climate disaster.

The success in disbursing funds to Nepal quickly, even though the amount is nominal, is likely to become a template for many such requests in future. Countries struck by a disaster would insist on immediate consideration of their request and quick access to money, which is how this mechanism was envisaged to work.

Huge demand, limited supply

Most of the current requests made to the fund are of a slightly different nature when compared to Nepal's case. They pertain to both economic and non-economic loss and damage arising out of climate-induced extreme weather events or slow-onset events like glacial melt, sea-level rise, biodiversity loss and desertification.

Reconstruction of damaged infrastructure and restoration of essential services like health, transport, energy and education services are a small part of expenditures for which money is being sought.

The countries' demands are generally associated with building resilience, setting up early warning systems, institutional strengthening, including the capability to assess the contribution of climate change in causing an event, livelihood restoration, and providing psychosocial support to affected populations. India, too, has made three requests to FRLD, totalling over \$52 million.

The range of financial needs presented by the countries before the FRLD highlights the inadequacy of climate finance available to developing countries. Under the global climate change architecture governed by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the 2015 Paris Agreement, developed countries are mandated to provide financial assistance to developing countries to help fight climate change. But just as they have been lacking in meeting their greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, developed countries have

not fulfilled their financial obligations either.

Between 2020 and 2025, they had offered to mobilise \$100 billion every year, but could never deliver on it. In 2024, the developing countries presented their requirements for climate finance, which added up to \$1.3 trillion every year. Still, developed nations agreed to increase their commitment to only \$300 billion a year, and that too from 2035 onwards.

Important beginning

This reluctance of developed nations to put money on the table has affected the loss and damage fund as well. These countries had stalled the creation of the fund for years, before giving in to sustained pressure.

But the actual contributions to the fund have been minuscule. Consider the fact that a total of 27 donor countries have together pledged \$822 million. Of them, only three countries — Italy, France and the United Arab Emirates — have made a commitment of over \$100 million each. The FRLD does not have any target — countries are encouraged to contribute voluntarily.

Nepal's case is a small but important beginning. It opens up the possibility that immediate financial assistance could be provided to resource-scarce countries to respond to a major climate disaster. But over the long term, as such disasters become more frequent, the effectiveness of FRLD would remain severely constrained unless developed nations put more money into the fund.

• ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

As AI solves complex maths problems, proof lies in the proving

Nameera Anjum
New Delhi, October 25

THE GROWING ability of artificial intelligence (AI) to solve mathematical problems is prompting researchers to rethink what constitutes progress in the field. In a lecture at Caltech on October 9, Fields Medallist Terence Tao argued that solving problems, historically one of the most visible goals of mathematical research, is only a means to broader ends. "Further blind optimisation of problem-solving alone is now actively harmful to the long-term health of mathematics," he said.

The debate comes as research institutions move to develop AI for mathematical discovery. For researchers, the challenge is not simply whether AI can generate proofs, but whether those results can be verified, understood and used to advance mathematical knowledge.

Vamsi Pritham Pingali, professor of mathematics at IISc Bengaluru, told *The Indian Express* that OpenAI's internal model

had already "solved entire research programmes", affecting young researchers who had little time to adapt. He warned that if a model capable of work at the level of a Fields Medallist became available for \$100 a month, "the journal economy will collapse".

Vaishnavi Sundararajan, assistant professor of computer science and engineering at IIT Delhi, urged caution against both "celebration" and "doomerism".

"Companies like OpenAI are expending millions of dollars' worth of compute and energy to produce these proofs," she told *The Indian Express*, raising questions about whether ordinary academics would have access to comparable systems.

What are proofs in research mathematics?

In mathematics, it is not enough to find an answer. Researchers must also prove it.

Take two even numbers: their sum will always be even. Trying this with a few numbers illustrates the pattern, but a proof

A shared repository

● Lean, a functional programming language and interactive theorem prover developed in 2013, can be used to formalise mathematics and verify software.

● Mathematicians subsequently adopted it, building a shared digital library of definitions, theorems and proofs that others can reuse rather than start from scratch.

explains why it must hold every time. Such proofs are the foundation on which mathematicians build new results. An error in one can undermine the work that follows.

Yet, checking a proof can be surprisingly difficult. In his book *The Proof in the Code*, author Kevin Hartnett recounts how mathematician Tom Hales faced this challenge while proving the Kepler conjecture, which concerns the most efficient way to pack spheres together.

Hales's proof involved hundreds of pages of mathematical reasoning and extensive computer calculations. After years of review, referees at *Annals of Mathematics* were unable to certify the proof as a whole, prompting Hales to look for a way to have a computer check it.

One such tool is Lean. But translating a proof into a form a computer understands can itself be a monumental task.

AI is beginning to ease this bottleneck through autoformalisation — the process of translating mathematical arguments from papers into formal code that a proof assistant can check. Hales wrote that it has now become "a practical reality".

Why does this matter now?

On October 6, OpenAI released 722 AI-generated mathematical manuscripts on GitHub, grouped into 372 families of results. The repository now lists 719 after three manuscripts were withdrawn on October 7. OpenAI's repository says 300 of the 719 top-line results have been formalised in Lean.

For Sundararajan, a mathematical result's contribution lies not just in the statement itself, but in the intuition it offers, the techniques used to obtain it and the perspectives it opens up for other researchers. An AI model may generate a sequence of mathematical steps, but not every step is necessarily valid, Sundararajan said. She added that Lean can help distinguish valid from invalid steps by checking formalised versions of the arguments.

Even this process, however, has limits. Sundararajan pointed to examples of "junk" theorems that can be proved in Lean, underscoring that passing a formal check does not, by itself, establish a result's mathematical significance.

• LAW

Gujarat 'gifts' plot to ex-cricketer Yusuf Pathan: What law says



Aditi Raja
Vadodara, October 25

THE STANDING COMMITTEE of the Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) on Friday unanimously approved the allotment of a plot to Yusuf Pathan, the same land over which it had served the MP and former India cricketer an encroachment notice two years ago. The proposal will now be placed before the VMC's General Board, its top decision-making body, for ratification.

The proposal explicitly states that it is an exception that must not become a precedent. The question of precedent, already been raised by a group opposing the decision, is a concern that the Gujarat government has moved proactively to address even before the transfer is completed.

VMC's proposal

The proposal concerns 978 square metres of land in Vadodara, adjacent to the bungalow owned by Pathan, the former India all-rounder who entered Lok Sabha on a Trinamool Congress ticket in 2024, but left the party after Trinamool supremo Mamata Banerjee lost power in West Bengal this May. Under the proposal, 500 sq m would be given to Pathan as "gift", while the remaining 478 sq m would be offered at a concessional rate.

The framework for disposing of land and other properties by urban and area development authorities are laid down in the Urban/Area Development Authorities (Disposal of Land and Other Properties) Regulations, 2002.

Regulation 3(1), under the heading "Manner of Disposal", identifies three modes of disposal: (i) sale, (ii) a lease for a term not exceeding 99 years against premium or rent or both, and (iii) the grant of development rights. Government officials told *The Indian Express* that following some amendments to the Regulations, lands are now disposed of as sale instead of the 99-year lease option.

Also, Regulation 3(2) provides for specified disposal procedures, including public auction, tenders through public advertisement, certain offers to or from government and public bodies, and applications invited through public advertisement under prescribed conditions.

The 2002 Rules do not provide for the "gifting" of public land under Regulation 3(i). They also do not list free transfer of land to an individual as a mode of disposal. This is why, officials said, the "gift" is an exception that "cannot be used as precedent", adding that the transfer has been done using the "discretionary power" of the state.

Past rejection

Regulation 13, titled "Allotment of Land/ Site/ Development Rights for Special Cases", contemplates proposals from institutions, charitable trusts, educational and research institutions, societies and religious trusts for development that would benefit the public and society at large. It specifically refers to facilities for people with disabilities, sports complexes, and similar public-benefit projects.

The authority is to seek government permission, accompanied by a recommendation for allotment to a particular organisation, and the government's decision will be final.

In this case, the VMC had sought government permission to allot the land to Pathan in 2012. The government had rejected the proposal in 2014.

• GLOBAL

Vivek Ramaswamy's attack ad revives a long tradition of US political mudslinging

Anagha Jayakumar
New Delhi, October 25

DAYS BEFORE the US midterm elections, an attack advertisement for the Ohio gubernatorial race has kicked up a storm.

The ad, produced by Republican candidate Vivek Ramaswamy's campaign, features Donna Arthur, the estranged mother of his Democratic opponent, Amy Acton. Arthur calls her daughter "a liar" and suggests she has mental health problems.

Acton has been estranged from her mother since she was 12, when Arthur lost custody of her children after Acton's stepfather was indicted for raping her.

The ad drew criticism from both Republicans and Democrats. President Donald Trump, however, called the ad "very powerful", while Vice President JD Vance praised Ramaswamy's "audacity to run a TV commercial which calls it out like it is."

Negative campaigning

The Wesleyan Media Project, which

tracks US political advertising, distinguishes positive ads promoting a candidate from attack ads targeting an opponent and contrast ads doing both.

Negative campaigning, however, is not necessarily the same as "dirty tricks". In their 2019 book *Dirty Tricks in the Digital Age*, political scientists Elaine Kamarck and Darrell West distinguish attack ads grounded in actual events from "dirty tricks" involving fabrication, deception or electoral interference. An attack can be offensive, or even misleading, without being entirely fabricated.

Yet negative campaigning need not involve deception. In his 2006 book, *In Defense of Negativity: Attack Ads in Presidential Campaigns*, politics professor John G Geer argues that criticism of a candidate can serve voters, even when it is uncivil.

"The real issue should be whether or not candidates present the information in campaigns that is useful to voters. The tone of that information should be a secondary issue, at best," he wrote.



Ramaswamy is Republican gubernatorial candidate for Ohio. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Political advertising in the US

Long before television existed, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams traded scathing attacks through partisan newspapers dur-

ing the 1800 election. Jefferson's supporters called Adams a monarchist, while Adams' supporters called Jefferson an atheist, both scandalous claims in the early years of the US.

With the advent of television, political attacks were no longer confined to print. The infamous 1964 Daisy ad, which aired only once, showed a child plucking daisy petals before a countdown and nuclear blast. Lyndon B Johnson was then heard saying: "These are the stakes—to make a world in which all of God's children can live or to go into the dark. We must either love each other or we must die."

Johnson's Republican opponent, Barry Goldwater, condemned the advertisement for suggesting that his election could lead to nuclear war.

More than two decades later, the infamous 1988 Willie Horton ad directly attacked a candidate's record. It was also widely condemned as racist for playing on fears and stereotypes about Black men and crime.

A group supporting Republican presidential candidate George HW Bush linked Horton, a convicted murderer who committed further violent crimes while on furlough from prison, to his Democratic rival Michael Dukakis. The ad portrayed Dukakis as "soft on crime" for a prison furlough programme that operated during his governorship.

Social media has given fabricated allegations associated with "dirty tricks" an unprecedented reach. The 2016 presidential campaign notably saw "Pizzagate", a conspiracy theory falsely alleging that senior Democrats operated a child sex ring from a Washington DC pizzeria.

Following the 2020 election, Donald Trump's campaign released television advertisements falsely alleging widespread electoral fraud, including one titled "STOP THE STEAL!" In 2024, baseless allegations that Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, were abducting and eating neighbourhood pets circulated widely online and appeared on billboards commissioned

by the Arizona Republican Party.

By 2026, artificial intelligence (AI) has enabled campaigns to generate convincing but fabricated depictions of candidates. According to research by the Wesleyan Media Project, reported by *The New York Times*, more than \$137 million was spent promoting over 220 AI-generated political advertisements during the midterm campaigns. Nearly 70% did not disclose the use of AI.

Do negative political ads work?

A 1999 meta-analysis by political scientists Richard Lau, Lee Sigelman and colleagues found little evidence that negative ads were more effective than positive ones, or that they significantly discouraged political participation.

However, a 2016 study by Jared Barton, Marco Castillo and Ragan Petrie found that negative campaign letters increased turnout among supporters compared with positive letters in two local elections.

FULL VERSION ON
[INDIANEXPRESS.COM/EXPLAINED](https://www.indianexpress.com/explained)

HOUTHIS SAY AIRPORT REMAINS A TARGET, URGES TRAVELLERS TO STAY AWAY

Saudi says Riyadh airport partly reopened despite Houthi threat

Missile shrapnel injure two, damage buildings & vehicles

Reuters
October 25

SAUDI ARABIA said its main airport resumed operations at two terminals on Sunday even as Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis vowed to keep striking the facility, saying it remained a "military target".

King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh had halted operations on October 10 following an attack claimed by the Houthis that killed 13 people, the deadliest in the kingdom in more than a decade. Saudi Arabia intercepted another wave of missiles and drones on Sunday as fighting with the militant group continued unabated.

The conflict has become an increasingly destabilising element in the US-Israeli offensive against Iran, turning US ally Saudi Arabia into a pressure point in the wider war.

After Saudi authorities announced the partial resumption of operations, Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree



Officials inspect debris from ballistic missile interceptions in Ar Rashidiyyah, near Mecca, on Saturday. REUTERS

vowed facility would "never be safe" and urged airlines, airport staff and travellers not to use it.

Late on Saturday, the airport said Terminal 1 would be designated for domestic flights and Terminal 2 for international flights operated by national carriers starting Sunday. Despite the announcement, flight tracking data from Flightradar24 showed little traffic at the airport Sunday.

The Saudi-led coalition said earlier this month the Houthis had carried out 20 attacks on the airport between October 1 and 11.

Saudi civil defences said Sunday shrapnel from the interception of two ballistic missiles

launched by the Houthis over Khamis Mushait and Ahad Rafidah injured two people and damaged residential buildings and vehicles. Civil defence authorities earlier issued emergency alerts for Riyadh and the cities of Abha, Khamis Mushait, Jazan and Najran on Sunday, before saying minutes later that the danger had passed.

The coalition said two drones and a ballistic missile were launched towards Riyadh, and a cruise missile towards the southern city of Khamis Mushait.

The Houthis said they attacked the airport and Saudi oil facilities on Saturday.

With Iran, Trump weighs harder strikes or a deal

Associated Press
Washington, October 25

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump bristled when asked how far he was from a possible attack on Iran. He recently said on social media he would not hit Iran again before the November 3 midterm elections.

"Do you really think I'm going to tell you if I'm going to do it?" Trump told reporters here on Saturday.

"And there's a possibility I will. There's also a possibility we'll have a nice, big, beautiful agreement," he said.

Trump repeated his assertion that Iran wants to make a deal, "but the problem is, will they hold the deal?" Meanwhile, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian accused Washington of disrupting negotiations to end the war but said he still believes "we have to go and finish it".

In comments aired on state television, he said Iran's supreme leader had instructed Iranian officials to "go and finish it (the deal)," but "these scoundrels broke the rules of the game. We were holding talks, and they disrupted them".

Pak reopens key border with Iran

Islamabad: Pakistan has reopened a key border crossing with Iran to resume bilateral trade and cross-border movement after a week-long suspension that stranded freight vehicles and disrupted supplies.

Mir Naveed Jan Kalmati, president of the Gwadar

Chamber of Commerce and Industry, confirmed that the crossing has reopened.

"Pakistan has opened the border with Iran at Gabd-Rimdan... and allowed trucks and other vehicles to move toward Iran and Pakistan with import and export goods," he said. PTI

ELECTION SEASON

Polls in Israel test Netanyahu's grip on his once-loyal supporters

Reuters
Dimona, October 25

IN THE remote Negev Desert town of Dimona, long a bastion of Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party, disenchanted voters are going door-to-door campaigning for his top rival, hoping to bring down the veteran PM in Israel's election on Tuesday.

The ballot is Israel's first since Hamas' October 7, 2023, surprise attack that shook the country and plunged the region into turmoil, as Israel went to war on the militant group in Gaza and its allies in Lebanon and Iran.

The October 7 security breach saw Likud's popularity plummet. Opinion polls for months have predicted Netanyahu's coalition of right-wing, far-right and ultra-Orthodox parties losing its majority. But his top rival, centrist Gadi Eisenkot, has no clear path to power either, and the race has become tighter as the election nears.

Dimona, where an Iranian missile wounded dozens in

March, has become a political battleground. "We must have change. Bibi has to go," said Yossi Assayag, 74, who says he has supported Likud most his life. "Bibi has brought disaster to Israel."

Assayag is part of a cohort of town residents trying to convince their community to vote for Eisenkot's party Yashar, which is neck-and-neck with Likud in the polls.

It's a tough task in Dimona, where half the voters in the previous 2022 election cast a ballot for Likud. "I will never betray Likud," said Ruti Ohana, a pensioner, who says she has voted Likud ever since immigrating to Israel from North Africa more than 60 years ago.

Right-wing Likud long ago formed a core voter base among Jews of West Asian and North African descent, known as Mizrahis, who felt neglected by the European-influenced centre-left Labor Party that dominated Israel for generations.

Labor has since dwindled to a rump as Israeli politics have

shifted rightwards, and there are now around half a dozen other parties courting Likud voters, from the centre to the far right. But the link to the party among its past supporters remains strong.

While Netanyahu has a hard core of supporters that can't be won over, the prize is undecided voters who "understand that we are in a state of crisis" and are open to persuasion, said Michal Elmaleh Abu, elected as a member of the city council from Likud and now leading Eisenkot's Dimona campaign.

Some 13% of Israeli voters have yet to decide how they will vote, according to data collected by Viterbi Family Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research at Israel Democracy Institute.

Of those who voted for Likud in 2022, just 55% now say they will vote for the party again on Tuesday. Fifteen percent will support parties aligned against Netanyahu, including 8% for Yashar. Another 14% will vote for alternative right-wing parties, and 9% are undecided.

Lula, Bolsonaro face off in tight 2nd round of election in Brazil

Reuters
Sao Paulo, October 25

BRAZILIANS VOTED on Sunday in a tight runoff vote that could shift Latin America's largest nation sharply rightward, bringing it closer to the United States as part of a broader conservative shift across the region.

The runoff pits leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva against right-wing Senator Flavio Bolsonaro, the son of convicted former President Jair Bolsonaro. Flavio scored a major upset at the start of the month by defying pollsters to lead voting in the first round.

A victory for Bolsonaro, 45, would extend a wave of right-wing victories for Latin American candidates friendly to US President Donald Trump while a fourth mandate for Lula would be a disappointment in Washington, which has clashed with his government over trade and security.

Reuters on Saturday revealed a campaign within Trump's



Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (left), Flavio Bolsonaro

State Department to help get the Bolsonaros back in power.

Brazil's election race has been dominated by corruption scandals, economic anxiety and accusations of US meddling, which Washington denies. It has also been colored by fallout from Jair Bolsonaro's 2025 conviction for plotting a 2022 coup, with Flavio pledging to free his father if elected.

Trump has called the case a "witch hunt" and imposed a 50% tariff on Brazil in 2025, in a decision explicitly linked to Jair Bolsonaro's trial.

While this was later watered down, Trump unleashed new levies against Brazil this year, citing unfair trade practices.

Opp leader Machado is back in Venezuela

Reuters
Caracas, October 25

VENEZUELAN OPPOSITION leader Maria Corina Machado has returned to the South American nation after nearly a year outside the country, she said on social media on Sunday.

"I'm here. With you all," the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Machado wrote on social media early Sunday.

Her return risks straining ties with the US Trump administration, which she has sought to cultivate as an ally since before it removed President Nicolas Maduro from power in January.

President Donald Trump has repeatedly expressed support for interim President Delcy Rodri-



Maria Corina Machado

guez, Maduro's former deputy, and hailed deals on oil production and other business ventures by US companies in the South American country.

Trump said in September it is too soon to consider democratic elections in Venezuela.

Machado was barred by Maduro's government from exiting Venezuela but secretly left in late 2025 to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, after spending more than a year living mostly in hiding.

U.S. MIDTERMS

Obama slams Trump: 'White House looking like Saddam opened a Cheesecake Factory'

Reuters
October 25

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump has been telling voters to view the midterm elections as if he were on the ballot, and on Saturday one of his Democratic predecessors did just that.

Ten days out from the elections that will determine control of the closely divided Congress, Barack Obama took to the campaign trail to accuse the Republican president of corruption, deride his strategy for Iran and skewer the gilded aesthetic he has applied to White House renovations.

Campaigning in Michigan for US Senate candidate Abdul El-Sayed, Obama framed the November 3 vote as a "circuit breaker" to "at least rein in some of the foolishness" of Trump's presidency. "We got to flip that circuit breaker, bring some accountability to this government," Obama said.

"We have never seen a president excel in straight-up grifting,

on your dime, like this," Obama said. "Never seen a president so intent on selling favors like this... Now the party seems to stand for corrupt government, or inept government, or no government."

Obama also ridiculed the administration's claims of victory against Iran. He argued that the war has given Iran more economic leverage because its threats to attack shipping in the Strait of Hormuz have unsettled oil exporters. "Iran now has veto power over the Strait of Hormuz, where oil goes through to get to the world," Obama said.

The former president also accused the Trump administration of emphasizing unimportant matters, sarcastically calling Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth someone "laser-focused on important matters like the jawline and testosterone levels of our troops" and ridiculing White House renovations as tacky.

"He's got the White House looking like Saddam Hussein opened a Cheesecake Factory," Obama said.



Former President Barack Obama with Democratic nominee for US Senate Abdul El-Sayed (left) at a campaign stop in Detroit, Saturday. AP



Kim Emerges

As social media was rife with rumors of his poor health and even his "demise", North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was seen accompanied by Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of China's Communist Party (second right), and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (third right) during a see-off ceremony at the new Yalu River Bridge that connects the two countries — after Kim's visit to Dandong, northeast China's Liaoning Province, on Saturday. XINHUA VIA AP

Kenya: Bus carrying funeral-goers rams into truck, 24 killed

Makueni: A bus collided with a truck on Kenya's main highway Sunday, killing at least 24 people, police said. Some 24 others were injured and were receiving treatment, according to Paul Kisinya, the medical superintendent at Mitto Andrei hospital.

The passengers were returning to Mombasa after attending the funeral of their church pastor in western Kenya when the accident occurred.

The circumstances remain unclear but a passenger, Spenza Mudave, said a truck hit the bus from behind, causing it to roll.

The National Transport Safety Authority had suspected that this was a case of "improper overtaking" due to the information gathered that the vehicles collided head-on. Reuters

Ukraine refutes Musk's claim of Starlink terms violation by army

Associated Press
Kyiv, October 25

UKRAINIAN OFFICIALS have disputed claims by SpaceX CEO Elon Musk that the country's military violated Starlink's terms of service by using the civilian satellite internet network for offensive drone strikes.

Serhii Beskrestnov, a defence technology adviser to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said long-standing restrictions on the civilian system in Ukraine made such offensive use impossible.

"It's very strange that Elon Musk doesn't know about the restrictions on Starlink's operation in Ukraine," he wrote in

an online post.

SpaceX's Starlink and its military-focused Starshield service are critical to Ukraine's wartime connectivity. Earlier this month, Ukrainian drones connected to Starshield lost connectivity at high speeds, disrupting air defences during daily Russian air attacks. Officials said the so-called speed caps were lifted on Saturday, and the service was restored.

Still, questions have persisted about who ordered the interruptions to satellite internet system that Kyiv relied on to counter Moscow's attacks.

Musk acknowledged on Saturday that SpaceX had throttled Starlink in Ukraine. "Using Starlink, a civilian

commercial service, for offensive drone strikes to kill people has never been allowed, nor should it be," Musk wrote.

"Ukraine military violated Starlink terms of service and used it for offensive drone strikes to kill people. That loophole was closed last week."

But he maintained that the US government controlled whatever changes happened with Starshield, the military-grade version of Starlink that is the backbone of Ukraine's drone operations and communication. US President Donald Trump has maintained that he didn't make that call, while Vice President JD Vance has hinted at White House coordination with Musk.



A chef prepares a chicken taouk sandwich at Glow Paradise restaurant in Beirut. REUTERS

those who could afford it.

Some questioned whether the dispute itself reflected misplaced priorities in a country

grappling with urgent crises, from Israel's occupation of large swaths of the country's south to the endemic electricity

and water crises.

Lebanon's 2019 financial collapse was prompted by decades of corruption and profligate spending by the ruling elite, and several rounds of conflict since then have worsened the country's economic outlook.

GDP has declined by nearly 40% since 2019 and inflation is expected to rise to 17.5% due to rising global energy and shipping prices eating away at people's purchasing power, according to the World Bank.

The figure is more than quadruple the global headline inflation rate flagged by the International Monetary Fund in July.

Four in five households in

Lebanon struggle to afford basic necessities, the UN children's agency said in September.

The country's middle class has "disappeared," Nader said, dismantled by a series of crises including the collapse of the financial system in 2019, the 2020 Beirut Port explosion and two wars in under two years.

Monthly bills from private generator operators, which provide electricity to many homes and businesses during outages on Lebanon's failing national grid, jumped by nearly 20% in August 2026 alone, bringing rates nearly 60% higher than they were in February of this year, according to the

kilowatt-hour prices set by Lebanon's energy ministry.

For many, that means paying for 24/7 electricity now costs several hundred dollars a month, in a country where the minimum wage is set at \$400.

"Everything has become expensive, and people can't keep up," said Fouad Fakhreddine, a 53-year-old restaurant worker from nearby Hamra. "We are now getting paid, then getting in debt over that just to get by."

The years of economic instability, he said, have produced "a class that is living, and a class that is not dead and waiting to die from the unbearable situation it is in." REUTERS

● OUTRAGED CRITICS ACCUSED THE RESTAURANT OF OVERCHARGING IN A COUNTRY WHERE MANY HOUSEHOLDS STRUGGLE TO AFFORD BASIC NECESSITIES, YET CUSTOMERS KEPT BUYING

In Beirut, a \$13 chicken sandwich becomes symbol of vanishing middle class

Nazih Osseiran, Raghed Waked & Emilie Madi
October 25

SEVEN YEARS after Lebanon's devastating financial meltdown, a debate over a chicken sandwich has exposed an increasingly stark divide between those who can still spend freely and those struggling to get by.

A trendy health restaurant wanted to offer its calorie-conscious customers a healthier take on the beloved Levantine wrap known as the shish taouk. So, The Glow Paradise launched the "Chic Taouk", pricing it at around \$13 — nearly double what an un-chic

chicken sandwich typically goes for in Beirut.

The pricy pun proved hard to swallow, with outraged critics accusing the restaurant of overcharging in a country where many households struggle to afford basic necessities.

Yet while the debate raged on social media, customers kept buying. The Glow Paradise sold more than 20,000 Chic Taouk sandwiches in just 11 days, according to managing partner Hrag Jeghalian, who described the online exchanges as "natural marketing".

The contrasting reactions touched a nerve in Lebanon, where years of financial tur-

moil, political dysfunction and conflict have reshaped the country's social landscape, hollowing out much of the middle class while leaving a smaller group of consumers able to sustain an affluent lifestyle.

Sami Nader, an economist at the Saint Joseph University of Beirut, said the throngs at The Glow Paradise belied another reality. "So you see people in the restaurant, but what you don't see is that 22 restaurants closed last month," Nader told Reuters.

Lebanon's Instagram-active community was split between those accusing the restaurant of theft and others saying the sandwich was intended for

‘REAPING THE DIVIDENDS OF DEMOGRAPHY REQUIRES ADDRESSING THE SKILL MISMATCH’

‘Rupee much more flexible now, FX rate should be first line of defence’

THERE HAS been “much more flexibility” in the rupee’s exchange rate after its ‘de facto’ arrangement was reclassified last year as ‘crawl-like’ from ‘stabilised’, **Krishna Srinivasan**, Director of the International Monetary Fund’s Asia and Pacific Department, said. While deferring to the Fund’s Article IV consultation team and its ‘mechanical’ exercise on the exchange rate, Srinivasan told **Siddharth Upasani** in an interview that allowing the exchange rate to move is “better”, with interventions by many Asian countries not providing “much by way of relief”. He also discussed the importance of labour reskilling and Asia’s demographics. Edited excerpts:

The APAC regional economic outlook warns that creating jobs through the export-led, manufacturing model is becoming harder. With youth unemployment in the region rather high, what should authorities do amid AI advancements?

Some of the work we have done says countries in Asia trade a lot with each other when it

comes to intermediate goods, because they’re part of global and regional supply chains. But when it comes to final goods, there’s very little intra-regional trade — it’s only 30% compared to 60% in the EU and North America. So, there’s potential there to have greater integration, which provides support for manufacturing-led exports and manufacturing activity, which will create jobs.

Our work on AI shows that since ChatGPT was launched, in sectors that are relatively more exposed to AI, labour demand has come down by 10% and stabilised — so it’s a reshaping of jobs rather than disappearance.

A lot of manufacturing now also involves services. And whether you focus on manufacturing or services, what’s important is bridging the skills gap. So, a lot of emphasis needs to be placed on what is required for the jobs of tomorrow and what is being produced in terms of people coming out of college. The skills mismatch needs to be addressed to make sure that the people joining the labour force get jobs. And for India, that number could be 150 million to 300 million between



KRISHNA SRINIVASAN
DIRECTOR, ASIA AND PACIFIC DEPARTMENT, IMF

now and 2050.

Is Asia’s demographic dividend window closing faster than perhaps median ages would suggest?

When it comes to demographics, there’s not one Asia, but three. The first is the early dividend countries, like Nepal and Philippines, where the labour force is young and growing. Then you have the late dividend countries, like India and Indonesia, and then the post-dividend countries like China and Japan. In an ideal world, labour could go from surplus to deficit countries. That’s not happening.

But it’s not just about how many people are there in the

workforce; it’s more about are they skilled enough for the new world. What we find is that for the young and educated population, unemployment is even higher. That tells you there is a skill mismatch.

The point which we would like to underscore is that we have to think more holistically about what we are producing in our universities. If you address that well, then you can have the dividends. If you don’t, it could be a drag.

The IMF and India haven’t always seen eye to eye on the exchange rate policy. Last year, it was changed to crawl-like. What do you make of the RBI’s recent regulatory measures to make hedging more expensive?

One has to study some of these measures deeper and see whether they’re having the right impact or not. Generally speaking, given the shock and the fact that India is an energy importer, we would like to see the exchange rate be the first line of defence. Our general advice is to not protect prices because they are the signalling

mechanism. You can also think of how to liberalise tariffs and non-tariff barriers so that there’s an offsetting force.

Of course, there are conditions where if the movement is very disorderly, then you can think of some kind of an intervention. But the way we see it at right now, the currency mismatches are not large, the market is reasonably deep. Many countries in Asia have intervened and it has not provided much by way of relief. So, allowing it to move is better and to keep your reserves as a buffer against future shocks.

So, the exchange rate does not fit the crawl-like arrangement definition.

They have allowed the exchange rate to move... There is definitely much more flexibility in the exchange rate, no question about that.

The IMF’s Article IV team will look at that (exchange rate classification). It’s a very mechanical exercise. But the point I want to make is that the exchange rate has been a lot (more) flexible since the time when that assessment was made.

FULL INTERVIEW ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Emirates seeks India growth through premiumisation

Sukalp Sharma
New Delhi, October 25

EMIRATES HAS stepped up its product premiumisation effort in the Indian market. From Sunday (October 25), the airline has expanded its premium economy offering to all flights to and from Delhi and Kolkata. It is also introducing its flagship Airbus A380 aircraft for the first time on one of its four daily frequencies from Delhi, making the capital the third Indian city to be served by the superjumbo. The remaining three daily flights will be upgraded to refurbished Boeing 777 aircraft, featuring a four-class cabin configuration — first, business, premium economy and economy — compared with the earlier three-class offering of first, business and economy.

In addition to Delhi, the premium economy cabin will also be available on all 12 of the airline’s weekly Kolkata-Dubai flights, up from the five a week at present. With this, the premium economy product will be available on flight to and from six of nine Indian cities that Emirates operates to, and will cover about half of its 168 weekly departures from India.

As per Essa Sulaiman Ahmad, Emirates’ senior vice president of commercial operations for West Asia and Indian Ocean, the Indian market — widely perceived as a price-sensitive market — has matured and there is “extremely high demand” for travel, including rising demand for premium cabin seats. Ahmad said that offering premium economy seats on a number of its India flights also works well from the perspective of passengers travelling with the airline beyond Dubai to markets like Europe and North America, where the cabin class is widely offered.

The carrier’s focus on premiumisation is evidently aimed at attracting flyers willing to pay more for better comfort and experience from a key geography for the Dubai-based mega carrier. Apart from reinforcing its



Emirates is expanding premium economy amid rising demand for premium travel. REUTERS

premium positioning and commanding higher fares than competition, offering more premium class seats is one way for Emirates to grow the revenue from its India flights, given that it can’t expand seat capacity to and from India, according to industry watchers.

Premiumisation gives the airline a way to extract more value from this connectivity. It also enables Emirates to compete for passengers who might otherwise choose a European airline, another Gulf carrier or a direct service operated by an Indian carrier, primarily Air India. India is among the world’s most important outbound aviation markets, with rising international travel demand, a growing pool of affluent consumers, and increasingly ambitious domestic airlines, making it one of the key focus markets for Emirates.

Premium economy bet

Premium economy offers passengers a middle ground between economy and business class, with a higher level of comfort at a more accessible price than business class.

A one-way fare for an Emirates flight from Delhi to Dubai in mid-December is currently priced at around Rs 38,000 for an economy class seat, and about Rs 51,000 for a premium economy seat, as per the carrier’s website. However, the gap between economy class fare

Insurance agents blame hospital, garage costs for rising premiums

George Mathew
Mumbai, October 25

SKYROCKETING HOSPITAL bills and inflated motor garage repair costs, rather than insurance agents’ commissions, are driving up general insurance claims and putting pressure on premiums, the Confederation of General Insurance Agents Associations of India (CGIAAI) has said, urging the government to tackle the root causes of rising costs instead of squeezing insurance distribution.

In a representation submitted to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the association, which claims it represents 1.6 million individual general insurance agents, has called for direct regulation and standardisation of hospital tariffs and automobile workshop repair bills. It has warned that proposed reforms by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), including tighter expense-of-

management (EOM) caps, risk weakening consumer protection while threatening the livelihoods of agents who help policyholders navigate claims during medical emergencies and accidents.

“The primary driver of rising premiums is the industry’s steep 84% to 87% incurred claims ratio, fuelled by systemic price inflation,” the association said, arguing that the focus of regulatory reform should be on the costs insurers incur when settling claims.

The association alleged that hospitals frequently charge insured patients substantially more than those paying cash for comparable treatment. It also claimed that automobile workshops significantly inflate repair estimates when bills are routed through insurance claims. These practices, it argued, increase insurers’ payouts and ultimately add to the financial burden on policyholders.

The representation did not

provide a detailed breakdown of the alleged hospital and garage overcharging or quantify their individual contribution to premium increases. However, the association demanded that the government and IRDAI directly address these costs instead of treating distribution expenses as the principal problem.

“The confederation emphasised that general insurance cannot be treated as an off-the-shelf consumer product,” it said, underlining the importance of assistance when policyholders face complex paperwork, disputed bills and claim settlements.

“When a family is stranded at a hospital billing counter or standing by a damaged vehicle on a highway, an automated chatbot or call centre algorithm cannot replace the local insurance agent who personally visits, advocates, and secures fair settlement,” the CGIAAI leadership said.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

AI revenue rises, but IT growth remains muted



The challenge for the IT industry is to generate enough new AI-led business to offset the revenue lost. REUTERS

Poulomi Chatterjee
Bengaluru, October 25

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) is emerging as a significant revenue stream for Indian IT services firms, but its rapid growth is yet to translate into a meaningful acceleration in overall revenue as automation threatens to erode the traditional services business.

The challenge for the industry is to generate enough new AI-led business to offset the revenue lost as clients demand greater productivity and lower costs.

Among the large-cap IT companies, HCLTech reported the highest sequential revenue growth in constant currency terms at 2.3% in the September quarter, followed by Infosys at 1.2%. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) grew 0.5%, while Wipro reported flat revenue growth. The modest performance came despite companies reporting strong growth in their AI-related businesses, highlighting the widening gap between the emerging opportunity and the pressures on their core operations.

Infosys said AI now accounts for 10.5% of its revenue, with the business growing 29% sequentially. TCS reported an annualised AI revenue run rate of \$3.1 billion, crossing

10% of total revenue for the first time. HCLTech’s Advanced AI revenue, which includes intellectual property and platform components, rose 28% sequentially and contributed 6% of total revenue. The business also contributed 32 basis points to HCLTech’s operating margin of 18.6%.

However, the expansion of AI-related business is not yet translating into comparable growth in overall revenue. According to Achyuta Ghosh, research and advisory lead for India at HFS Research, part of the explanation lies in clients’ increasing expectations of AI-led productivity gains. Companies are demanding measurable returns from technology spending while remaining cautious about discretionary expenditure, putting pressure on traditional contract values.

“Expectations for AI-led productivity commitments are increasing competitive intensity and reshaping commercial models,” Infosys CFO Jayesh Sanghrajka said during the company’s earnings call. The communications segment, he added, was facing a challenging demand environment, with clients maintaining tight control over discretionary spending and prioritising cost efficiency. FE

Govt extends deadlines for firms to file annual returns

New Delhi: The corporate affairs ministry has extended the deadline for companies to file their annual financial statements for the fiscal 2025-26 till December 31.

Besides, companies can submit their annual returns to the ministry till January 31, 2027, as per a circular.

The extension of deadlines follow representations from stakeholders as they were facing issues in submitting the annual statutory filings through the MCA 21 portal.

According to the circular dated October 24, the ministry said that in view of the representations received and to enable companies to complete their annual statutory filings, the deadlines have been extended without paying an additional fee.

Now, the annual financial statements in e-forms AOC-4, AOC-4 (CFS), AOC-4 (XBRL), AOC-4 NBFC (Ind AS) and AOC-4 CFS NBFC (Ind AS) for the financial year 2025-26 can be filed up to December 31, 2026. PTI

• BRIEFLY

SBI cracks down on dormant accounts

Mumbai: State Bank of India (SBI) plans to close inoperative savings accounts with zero balances to curb cyber frauds and prevent their misuse as mule accounts for routing illicit funds. The move comes amid growing concerns over fraudsters using dormant bank accounts as mule accounts. SBI has informed customers that inoperative savings accounts carrying nil balances for more than a year will be closed after a month’s notice if their Know Your Customer details are not updated during the notice period. FE

Pulse imports surge 67% in April-August

New Delhi: Imports of pulses surged 67% to 2.06 million tonne in the April-August period of FY27, amid concerns over a dip in domestic output due to the

and business class fare is significantly wider, with a seat in the latter being offered by the airline for around Rs 1 lakh. First class seats are on offer for Rs 2.36 lakh apiece.

The significance lies in the scale of the premium economy capacity expansion by Emirates. The airline doesn’t see this cabin class as a niche offering anymore, and the premium economy product is becoming a more prominent component of Emirates’ India network, giving the airline more opportunities to sell a higher-priced seat to passengers who might otherwise have travelled in the economy class. And not just in India, this cabin class is also gaining prominence in the airline’s global fleet and network.

An analysis of airline capacity data from aviation analytics firm Cirium shows that the number of premium economy seats being offered by Emirates on its flights from India has shot up. In November, Emirates is offering 2,537 premium economy seats per week on its flights from India, up 80.2% over November of last year. As compared to September of this year, the November premium economy seat capacity is up 73.4%, the analysis shows. In November 2023, Emirates offered just 784 premium economy seats per week, while in November of 2022, the number was nil.

The data shows that the jump in Emirates’ premium economy seats has come at the cost of economy class seats, even as the latter continues to do the heavy lifting. In November, Emirates is offering 50,264 economy class seats on its flights from India, down 2.4% year-on-year and 2.2% from September levels. Since 2022, the number of economy seats on the airline’s flights from India has declined by almost 5%. Emirates is evidently trying to make its premium proposition more accessible without abandoning its mass-market economy class business in India.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Samudra Manthan: Govt to bear losses on dry oil wells, recover aid on viable finds

Saurav Anand
New Delhi, October 25

THE GOVERNMENT is offering oil and gas explorers a new financial arrangement to encourage drilling in India’s deep seas: it will pay up to half the cost of an exploratory well and bear its share of the loss if no commercially viable oil or gas is found. However, companies making profitable discoveries will have to repay the money, under the Centre’s Rs 84,084-crore Samudra Manthan scheme.

The move is aimed at tackling one of the biggest hurdles in offshore exploration: companies

must spend hundreds of crores searching for oil and gas without any guarantee of a discovery. Under the new arrangement, the government will share that financial risk, while companies will remain responsible for drilling operations and the remaining expenditure.

According to the petroleum ministry’s operational guidelines, the Centre will fund up to 50% of the actual drilling cost, subject to a ceiling of Rs 675 crore per well. If drilling fails to find oil or gas, or discovers reserves that cannot be commercially produced, the government will not recover its contribution.

For successful wells, repayment will begin after seven years of commercial production or when the company has recovered 50% of its exploration and development costs, whichever happens earlier. The money will be recovered through annual instalments from company revenue, without any adjustment for inflation or the time value of money.

Petroleum Secretary Neeraj Mittal called Samudra Manthan a “structural break in India’s approach to offshore exploration”, saying it addresses the financial difficulties that earlier policy reforms could not resolve. FE



Agri-photovoltaics involves installing solar panels on elevated structures over agricultural land. REUTERS

MNRE, had told the media that agri PV panels are installed at a height of around 3.5 to 4 metres above the ground to allow

farmers to carry out routine agricultural operations, including the movement of machinery, without interruption.

Agrivoltaics: Can India put solar panels on farms without hurting crop yields?

Pratyush Deep
New Delhi, October 25

THE GOVERNMENT this week announced plans to introduce agri-photovoltaics (PV) under the second phase of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyaan (PM-KUSUM), its flagship scheme to solarise irrigation. The approach combines solar power generation with crop cultivation on the same land, with the aim to allow farmers to continue growing crops while earning additional income from electricity generation.

Speaking at the Agrivoltaics World Conference 2026 -

‘Powering the Global South’ in New Delhi on Wednesday, Union New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) Minister Pralhad Joshi said the approach could help address the shortage of land for solar projects while allowing farming to continue beneath elevated panels. Citing estimates, Joshi said around 30% of India’s 160 million hectares of cropland could be suitable for agrivoltaic projects.

But how do agrivoltaics work, which crops can be grown under solar panels, and can the model be scaled up without affecting farm productivity or farmers’ incomes?

Not all crops suitable for agrivoltaics

Agri-photovoltaics (PV) involves installing solar panels on elevated structures over agricultural land, allowing farmers to continue cultivation underneath while generating electricity from the same plot. Technology-wise, photovoltaic is the same as that in conventional ground-mounted solar projects. The difference lies in the additional infrastructure required to elevate the panels and leave sufficient space for farming activities beneath them.

Earlier this week, Santosh Kumar Sarangi, Secretary at

However, the additional civil and structural infrastructure makes agri-photovoltaic projects around 25-30% more expensive than conventional ground-mounted solar projects, Sarangi said. According to him, the potential capacity for agri-photovoltaics in India is estimated at 1-2 terawatts (TW) or 1000-2000 gigawatts (GW).

He also said that deployment of agri-photovoltaics will mainly help states which have less non-agricultural land by allowing large scale deployment of solar without compromising on food security requirements.

However, the government’s initial assessment studies show that while deployment of agri-

photovoltaic is suitable for fruits and leafy vegetables, it has not been found suitable for crops such as rice and sugarcane.

Concerns over crop yields, farmers’ interest

With most of the agri-photovoltaic projects in India still at the pilot stage, the government faces the challenge of developing a policy framework that allows solar power generation to expand without compromising crop yields, soil health, or farmers’ livelihoods.

Speaking at the Agrivoltaics World Conference 2026 on Wednesday, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan flagged several issues that he

said would need to be addressed before the approach could be expanded.

Over 85% of India’s farmers are small and marginal farmers, while the average landholding in the country is 0.96 hectare. He stressed that the policy must be designed to benefit small farmers and protect agricultural production.

Chouhan said the model must ensure that farmers do not lose control of their agricultural land or suffer a decline in crop production. Since most projects are still at the pilot stage, their impact on farming must be assessed before they are taken to scale, he said.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

WHY JASPER WIECK

Newly-appointed German Ambassador Jasper Wieck is starting off his stint at a time when wars in Ukraine and West Asia are continuing, and Europe is facing challenges from the US. As someone who was at German embassies in Moscow, Baku and Berlin from 1995 to 2009, and later at NATO in Brussels, he has the vantage point of viewing the world from a strategic perspective. He comes to Delhi at a time when Germany is looking at India in defence and security domains, and his diplomatic task is to strengthen the strategic ties with Delhi

Shubhajit Roy: As you begin your stint in India, could you talk about the priorities you have outlined for yourself?

My first priority is to see the signing of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the European Union and India at the end of this year. The task is to tap into the potential of this FTA; we have to facilitate matchmaking between interested companies. The second priority will be to focus on the implantation of our Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement (MMPA), an agreement that helps Indians come to Germany, find jobs there and become part of our society. Each year, we issue roughly 60,000 long-term visas in India, this includes visas for students as well as their families. In my first term, when I came to India (2017), there were 17,000 Indian students enrolled in German universities, now we are at 70,000. My third priority is our defence and security partnership, in particular deepening our defence industrial cooperation.

Shubhajit Roy: In the mid-90s, you served in Moscow, in Baku, and then in Berlin. This was the time of post-reunification, the collapse of the Soviet Union. Could you give us a sense of that time?

It was a captivating time, both personally and politically, because in Europe we were full of enthusiasm to overcome the Cold War division of Europe and to create a pan-European security architecture that included Russia. We wanted to ensure that the security interests of all nations in Europe are respected. But already then, we had a sense that Russia was struggling with the new status quo. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, all the former Soviet republics, such as Ukraine and Belarus, became independent. We sensed the dissatisfaction in Russia about this development. Our idea was, that the best way to deal with this revisionism was to invite Russia to become part of pan-European security, economic and political structures. Hence, the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) and the NATO-Russia Council was created, also we turned G7 into G8. Still, we failed. Russia's inherent revisionism was stronger than its readiness to become part of a united Europe. This is a rather sad chapter of my career.

Shubhajit Roy: You didn't anticipate this change?

That Russia would invade Ukraine with over 100,000 soldiers was beyond our imagination. I think it happened because of a misjudgment on Russia's behalf. Russia thought that Europe is so weak and busy with its domestic issues that we would simply let Ukraine go. But that would have come with huge costs, since the ultimate goal of the Russian leadership is the restoration of Soviet-style hegemony in large parts of Europe. As sovereign countries in Europe we simply cannot allow that.

If Putin gets his way in Ukraine, Russia will feel encouraged to move on towards the west. Russian advancement may not necessarily happen with troops but certainly by putting pressure on sovereign governments so that policies shaped in Warsaw or Berlin would be to the liking of the Kremlin. That's why we Europeans work so hard, why we support Ukraine and why we have put all these sanctions in place. We are defending our own freedom and sovereignty.

Shubhajit Roy: To play the devil's advocate, the Russian view is that it was NATO which was threatening Russia. How do you respond to this framing?

I would simply invite everyone to look at the statistics. Germany spent hardly 1.1 per cent of its GDP on defence in 2015 — one year after Russia had annexed Crimea, when Russia, so they claim, felt threatened by NATO. In the decades after the end of the Cold War, NATO had no contingency plans, no meaningful joint exercises; in essence, NATO had become a paper tiger when it came to collective defence. After having spent tremendous amounts on defence during the Cold War, Europeans were simply exhausted. Therefore, my take is that it was not out of fear of possible NATO aggression that Russia attacked Ukraine but quite the opposite — a perception of European weakness and 'decadence', so from the Russian perspective: an opportunity to revise the territorial status quo in Europe.

Shubhajit Roy: What became the turning point? How did the needle move for the increase in defence budget?

For Germans in general, it was a huge shock to see pictures of Russian soldiers and tanks invading Ukraine. Until then, and despite of the annexation of Crimea and the ensuing proxy war in eastern Ukraine, Germans didn't think Russia would threaten our national security or the NATO alliance. The invasion was a turning point in public awareness, and therefore Chancellor Olaf Scholz seized the opportunity to announce a €100 billion investment into the armed forces. At the same time, we also understood that it's not wise to build capacities on a purely national level; you need a collective approach. Thus, we cooperate closely with our European partners in developing our capabilities together and in strengthening

ON RUSSIA'S REVISIONISM

If Putin gets his way in Ukraine, Russia will feel encouraged to move on towards the west. That's why we Europeans work so hard and why we have put sanctions in place. We are defending our own freedom and sovereignty

**ON CIVIC PROTESTS**

There was always a dialogue... That's what makes our societies different from authoritarian countries, where protests are suppressed. That can lead to grave mistakes by the ruling class because they don't accept criticism

tradition of people raising their voice, now it's Gen Z. That's what makes our societies different from authoritarian countries where protests are suppressed. I would not want to live in that kind of a society. It can lead to grave mistakes by the ruling class because they don't accept any criticism.

In Germany, you switch on (the radio station) Deutschlandfunk which by the way is funded by the State and even for someone like the Federal Chancellor, it's a perfect way of knowing how political or legislative initiatives by the government are discussed in society. It is important that we all engage in necessary political debate, but at the same time violence or exploitation of political issues has no place in democracies.

Vandita Mishra: But don't protests point to the inability of institutions to listen to the younger generation. What do you think governments should do when Gen Z takes to the street?

As the German ambassador to India, I'm not here to give recommendations. I assume that the voices of the younger generation are heard. When I compare Germany of the 1950s with the Germany of today, I think it has evolved tremendously socially, also because the civil society has brought up ever new initiatives. Political parties and non-governmental organisations have actively participated in shaping policy and that's what we need.

India too, has evolved over the decades. India today is a modern, digitalised country that at the same time has retained its traditions. It is an economic powerhouse, with a voice that is heard worldwide. All this doesn't come from nothing. It's people that have struggled, initiated and implemented reforms, that have taken to the street, if need be, held discussions and seminars to bring up new ideas continuously. So, what I am saying is you can trust your very vibrant and agile civil society, which, by the way, has worldwide renown for being animated and spirited.

Saptarshi Basak: Part of Germany's economic roles are being attributed to China's rise, because China has displaced Germany in manufacturing, engineering, electronics. Is there a regret retrospectively in German circles about this?

Well, it depends on who you ask in Germany, I would say that German companies have benefited from engaging with China. By producing in China, our supply chains have been cost effective and the consumer has benefitted as well. But we also had to learn our lessons and had to become more vocal with regard to reciprocity in investment opportunities and fairness in trade. Our economy had become too dependent on China. We now have investment screening mechanisms in place and encourage companies to diversify. This also explains the rising importance of India to German business and the FTA between India and the EU is, among other things, a manifestation of our approach to diversify.

Saptarshi Basak: In the case of Palestine, how does Germany see the requirements for a two-state solution?

One very essential requirement for sustainable peace in the Middle East is that there be a viable entity in Palestine. For the time being this is not the case. We spend a lot of money on humanitarian assistance, particularly to Palestinians in Gaza. Before any formal recognition of Palestine there are many questions to be looked at, and I think for the people in these areas it is much more important that we help them survive in there every day life than that we grant them any formal status which is for the time being just on paper. And, of course, Israel and the security of its people are an important part of the equation. We want to have Israel on board with any political solution. For historic reasons that are well known we have a very special relationship with Israel.

Shubhajit Roy: You talk about your special relationship with Israel, but critics argue that your commitment is to Israel and its people, not to the Netanyahu government. Do you agree with that perception?

Well, the German government is criticised from both sides, which is always a good sign. We are criticised that we are too pro-Israeli and the Israeli government criticises us for being too critical about what they are doing. So somehow, we are on middle ground. We are not blind on either side, we have both eyes open.

Devyani Onial: Given the history, do you now see a generational change, with the public speaking up more for Palestine?

When I was at university, we had similar debates among us students. The situation in West Asia is very complex, and it has always been a debated issue in our society, as in many other societies. So, I don't think that it has tremendously changed, perhaps those who stand up for the rights of Palestine or for the two-state solution have become more vocal, but at the same time we have strong defenders of Israel. Perhaps, the topic is more on our agenda than in the past but the debates are very much the same.

'It's important to engage in political debate but exploitation of political issues has no place in democracies'

German Ambassador Jasper Wieck on how to bring Russia to the table for talks, how Indian and Germany can strengthen their bilateral ties and why it's important to be cautious when doing business with China. The session was moderated by Shubhajit Roy, Diplomatic Editor, *The Indian Express*



German Ambassador Jasper Wieck (right) with Shubhajit Roy, Diplomatic Editor, *The Indian Express* RENUKA PURI

our collective defence.

Shubhajit Roy: Four-and-a-half years into the war, Russia is still standing, Ukraine is still there, and there is a stalemate. What is your prognosis of the war?

This war will not be decided on the battlefield. If you look at the frontline, the infantry has disappeared and been replaced by the use of drones and long-range weapons. We definitely need a sustainable political solution. Ukraine is ready for a ceasefire but Russia refuses to even engage in debate. The European approach is two-fold: on the one hand to increase military, humanitarian and material support to Ukraine, and, on the other hand to tighten the sanctions against Russia. This way, we try to contribute to bringing Russia to the negotiation table.

Shubhajit Roy: How do you view India's advocacy role?

We welcome the initiative by India. I can hardly think of a country better positioned than India to mediate this conflict because you have functioning channels of communication with Russia and with Ukraine. If we can be of any help to India in this regard, we, of course, stand ready, but we know that since we clearly support Ukraine, we cannot fulfil the role of mediator. We need countries like India to step in — and we need the commitment of the US also when it comes to monitor the implementation of a cease-fire agreement.

Shubhajit Roy: On defence and security cooperation, Germany has capabilities in drones and submarines. What are the other sectors where India and Germany can exchange knowledge transfer?

Airbus, for example, is building transport aircraft and light utility helicopters in India. We are cooperating on the Eurodrone recon-

naissance drone, where India is an observer and where a maritime variant for specific Indian needs can be developed. We are also cooperating on anti-submarine warfare related systems. German companies are also ready to partner with Indian companies, among others, in missile technology, sensor technology, communication technology, unmanned systems, signalling. There is an almost finalised submarine deal that will include comprehensive technology transfer; the final design will be developed jointly by German and Indian shipyards.

Shubhajit Roy: Through India-Germany economic relationship after the FTA, what is the market access India will get?

Normally when such a trade deal is signed, people look at the tangibles, like

cars, airplanes, refrigerators, but if you took a broader view and look at the entire supply chain, you realise you need a lot of components. For instance, India has developed an impressive car component subsidiary industry. If a European car manufacturer has components delivered from India because you produce them at a lower price, our cars in Europe get cheaper. And if car producers in India say this is a high-tech device that we would like to have from Germany and you don't have to pay the tariffs any longer, then your economy, the competitiveness of your companies and your consumers will all benefit as well.

It's also important to understand that big companies like BASF, Bayer, Siemens and Bosch need the FTA less because they go 'local for local'; they produce in India. But the famous German Mittel-

ON ISRAEL-PALESTINE

The German government is criticised from both sides, for being too pro-Israeli and the Israeli government criticises us for being too critical about what they are doing. We are not blind on either side, we have both eyes open



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Harmanpreet, Deepti power India to series win vs Zimbabwe



Harmanpreet hit 15 boundaries in her 126-run innings. CREIMAS
Press Trust of India
Vadodara, October 25

HARMANPREET KAUR was brutal and Deepti Sharma sublime as their twin centuries headlined India's commanding 121-run victory over minnows Zimbabwe in the second women's ODI on Sunday.

India thus took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series having won the first match by a comfortable nine-wicket margin. Having posted a formidable 328 for 6, the home team's spinners, led by Ivaishnavi Sharma (four wickets), bowled Zimbabwe out for a paltry 207 in 48.5 overs. After scoring her century, Deepti polished off the opposition tail with figures of 3 for 32.

Harmanpreet struck 126 off 121 balls laced with 15 well-timed boundaries. This was Harmanpreet's eighth WODI century after she hit a match-winning 91 in one of the WT20Is played earlier. She had an able companion in Deepti, who remained unbeaten on 106 off 86 balls with 15 hits to the fence.

BRIEF SCORES: India women 328/6 in 50 overs (Harmanpreet Kaur 126, Deepti Sharma 106 not out) beat Zimbabwe women 207 all out in 48.5 overs (Modester Mupachikwa 49; Vaishnavi Sharma 4/39, Deepti Sharma 3/32) by 121 runs.

FERGIE CONCOCTION

Gambhir's Dhir-Tilak-Nitish prongs to fill the Hardik gap

The trio doesn't weigh up to Pandya's gifts but together they could function substantially

Sandip G
New Delhi, October 25

TOWARDS THE end of his reign at Manchester United, Sir Alex Ferguson struggled to find an all-action midfielder of his ideals. Paul Scholes had aged; Owen Hargreaves was locked on the surgeon's table. A strategist rather than a tactician, he bypassed the flaw by stacking his side with a bunch of versatile forwards who dropped to the midfield like Wayne Rooney or Javier Hernandez, tracked and won the ball and functioned as auxiliary midfielder. He bowed out with a revenge and league crown.

The legendary manager is one of India head coach Gautam Gambhir's idols, and he is navigating a permutational hurdle by adapting to cricket a similar sum-of-the-parts-bigger-than-the-whole theory. He could not get a fully-fit Hardik Pandya, the perfect cricketer trapped in an imperfect body. He couldn't discover or manufacture one either. So he turned to three different men who could by and large perform one man's role. The three-man band of Naman Dhir, Tilak Varma and Nitish Reddy are putting the shifts for the one-man concert that was Pandya. Without distorting the team's equilibrium. They are fulfilling the Pandya acts—runs down the order; middle-overs shifts; finishing duties.

Like for like, they don't weigh



Tilak Varma (L), Nitish Reddy (C) and Naman Dhir are combining to fulfil Hardik Pandya's roles. AP/ANI

up to Pandya's veritable gifts. He frictionlessly performed difficult and different roles. He seamed the new ball at brisk pace; he stifled batsmen in the middle; he blitzed in death overs with his bat, he killed games with imperturbable rage, and if need arose, he anchored and accumulated. But he has a notoriously fragile body that has repressed gifts from fully blossoming. Gambhir cannot dwell forever on a what-could-have-been story. So he assembled three wheels that could function, substantially even though not entirely, like the one giant wheel.

Strides in Dhir with his explosive power, like Pandya. Few lower-order hitters had this capacity to mow the first ball he faced over the cow corner. Pandya did; so does Dhir. In the second T20 against New Zealand, he clubbed his third ball over fine-leg; in the first he waited



for the fourth legal ball for his first maximum, before hitting two more in the next 10.

Three of the six balls screamed over the fence in the T20I against West Indies. He is stockier in build and less elastic-limbed than Pandya although with a better reach that his long arms enable. But the bat-speed, power and enterprise were reminiscent of the latter. Like him, he favours the leg-side and the whole set-up is to accentuate this on-side hitting. "He is a power-packed player, he knows what is expected (of him) and he does exactly that, which is a great sign," batting coach Sitanshu Kotak praised him after the Christchurch game.

He bowls too, but off-breaks rather than Pandya's medium pace. If he could chime in with two-three overs consistently, he renders India more flexibility and confidence to squeeze

quite well, to give him quite a simple role in terms of what he needs to go and do for the team," bowling coach Morkel would say.

Waltz in Varma. He and Pandya are bound by similar traits, like the delicious balance when they move around the crease, or bend down by the crease. The moving body parts attain stillness when they contact the ball. Yet, fundamentally they are different. Varma has a wider range of strokes, especially through the off-side, he has different gears, and is better at rotating the strike. But he doesn't purchase the riveting power of Pandya; he takes his time before hitting the boundaries and is reliant more on fours than sixes, picking gaps rather than resorting to absolute power.

But thrust them into a crisis, they stand up, weather the storm and often win the match without fuss. They bat differently but think almost similarly, exuding a swagger that concedes the impression that they don't take defeats easily. And both love wild celebrations. Hardik keeps raving about him. "The kind of talent that Tilak has, he really does not need to worry about a lot... you've got to watch the ball and hit the ball irrespective of what it's doing," he once said.

Certainly, the plan is fallible. The careers of Naman and Nitish are still nascent; they could yet bloom or break. Nitish can't duplicate Pandya's death-over vigour with the ball, he doesn't possess his variations and has not developed his street smarts. Gambhir would prefer a full-fit Pandya. But managers can't brood over what they don't have. They have to mix the ingredients so that they find the desired result. Gambhir is displaying a Ferguson-like cleverness in manoeuvring a crisis.

• BRIEFLY



Pornanong Phatlum won her 4th Indian Open title. LADIES EUROPEAN TOUR

Pornanong pockets fourth Indian Open title, 3 Indians finish in top-10

THAILAND GOLFER Pornanong Phatlum lifted the Hero Women's Indian Open trophy for the fourth time after overcoming a spirited fight from India's Vani Kapoor on Sunday. The seasoned LPGA player's wins at the DLF Golf and Country Club in 2008, 2009 and 2012 had come at the adjoining Arnold Palmer Course, and Pornanong completed the sequence by conquering the Gary Player Course with a four-day score of 11-under 277. After posting rounds of 72, 71, 69, Pornanong left the best for the last by carding a flawless bogey-free 7-under 65 under pressure. In a bid to protect a sore wrist, defending champion Shannon Tan at 4-under 284 (68, 77, 67, 72) played far below her potential and finished sole third. She was followed by Czechia's Sara Kousskova at 3-under 285 (69, 72, 73, 71) along with Pranavi (70, 70, 73, 72) at T-4. PTI

Weightlifting Worlds to be held in Ahmedabad

INDIA HAS been awarded the hosting rights for the 2029 Weightlifting World Championships at the latest International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) executive board meeting. This is the first time India will host the global championship of weightlifting in Ahmedabad after hosting the Commonwealth Championship and Asian Championships earlier this year. The IWF meeting was held on the sidelines of the IWF World Championships in Ningbo, which starts on Tuesday. It is also set to be the first qualification tournament of the LA 2028 Olympics. ENS

India A to face Pak A in Asia Cup Rising Stars

INDIA A will face Pakistan on November 22 in the Asia Cup Rising Stars 50-over tournament, to be held in Doha from November 19. India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Afghanistan will field their A teams in the tournament while Nepal, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Hong Kong are likely to send their strongest sides. India A have been placed alongside Pakistan A, Nepal and UAE in Group B, while Sri Lanka A, Bangladesh A, Afghanistan A and Hong Kong have been clubbed in Group A. Indian begin their campaign against Nepal on November 20. PTI

Bhupathi, Sania file nominations for AITA polls

INDIAN TENNIS greats Mahesh Bhupathi and Sania Mirza have filed nominations for the AITA SOM elections, seeking representation in the General Body (GB) and Executive Committee (EC), while the country's most successful player Leander Paes surprisingly did not file his nomination for the November 7 polls. The absence of Paes from the nominations list means that now he can't run for AITA Presidency. Headed by Paes himself, the Bengal Tennis Association (BTA) had publicly backed his candidature for the post of AITA President. PTI

Women, men win in C'wealth Kabaddi C'ship

INDIA CONTINUED its impressive run at the Commonwealth Kabaddi Championship with the women's team defeating Uganda 41-18 and the men's team beating Malaysia 37-23 in Ahmedabad on Sunday. In the women's match, India women secured a 23-point win over Uganda, taking the contest 41-18. Captain Nidhi Sharma led the charge with nine points, while Sakshi and Anu contributed eight and seven points each respectively. India collected 25 raid points, 11 tackle points and four all-out points in the contest. PTI

Openers stumble again as Sai & Padikkal fight for Test spot

Express News Service
Chennai, October 25

INDIA WOULD hope openers Yashavi Jaiswal and KL Rahul would get acclimatised to the seam-friendly conditions by the time the two-Test series against New Zealand begins on November 19, after the two again had low returns on Sunday.

Like in the first innings, when Jaiswal made 17 and Rahul failed to get off the mark, the second essay painted another picture of struggle as they fell for 5 and 4 respectively. India A were placed 106/2 after New Zealand A put on board 317. When Day 2 ended, the visitors were still trailing by 98 runs.

Since winning the Test series in New Zealand in 2009/10, India's struggles there have largely been due to the batsmen's inability to get adjusted to the seaming conditions. With the two Tests being important for India's qualification hopes for the World Test Championship final, there was a reason why the selectors sent the Test specialists early and are even making the likes of Shubman Gill skip the last two ODIs to prepare for the five-day format.

Over the years, pitches in New Zealand have tended to favour bowlers at the start before flattening out. That has been the case at Lincoln as well where on the opening day, on a green top,



Devdutt Padikkal hit an unbeaten 56 off 89 balls. PTI

India's top order collapsed for 113. India A bowlers didn't have the best of starts either, but on Sunday provided some much-needed control. Seamers Anshul Kamboj and Auqib Nabi picked up three wickets each while Akash Deep had two to show as they hit the right channels.

After openers Rhys Mariu (76) and Curtis Heaphy (44), only Dean Foxcroft offered some resistance scoring 51 as the India A attack chipped away with wickets. If not for Kristian Clarke's 42 at No 9, the hosts could have ended way short of 317.

Batting again, Jaiswal and Rahul were troubled by movement and bounce early on. The

left-hander was the first to perish, unable to negotiate a rapidly climbing delivery, which he gloved to the wicketkeeper. Soon after, Rahul was out hit-wicket when he tried to stop the ball from rolling onto the stumps after dead-batting it.

Those two wickets brought together Devdutt Padikkal and B Sai Sudharsan. While the latter was sedate to start with, Padikkal was flashy at the start with three boundaries behind square on the off-side. On any other day, he could have been caught in the cordon.

But once he got his eye in, Padikkal reined himself in and preferred to play closer to the body. A couple of cover-drives stood

out en route to his unbeaten 56 off 89 balls. Sai, at the other end, was careful and grinded his way, waiting for loose deliveries to stay unbeaten on 39 off 104 as both continued to fight for a spot in the Test XI.

The challenge for India batsmen on the third day would be to spend enough time in the middle and hope that by the time the Test series begins, they know what shots will work and what to bin when the ball seams around.

BRIEF SCORES: India A 113 & 106/2 (Devdutt Padikkal 56 n.o) trail NZ A 317 (Dean Foxcroft 51, Kristian Clarke 42; Anshul Kamboj 3/52, Auqib Nabi 3/62) by 98 runs

• ONE FOR THE FUTURE

Impressive at 18: 'Traditional off-spinner' Hemchudeshan has already caught Kumble's eye for potential Test berth

Venkata Krishna B
Chennai, October 25

IT TOOK Anil Kumble one look at J Hemchudeshan at the Centre of Excellence to label him "a traditional off-spinner."

At 18, when he is still finding his feet in the India Under-19 set-up ahead of the next World Cup, he is already part of BCCI's targeted pool of spinners. At the CoE, the coaches believe, if he continues to evolve the way he has, Hemchudeshan won't take long to partner Manav Suthar in the Indian Test team.

He was drafted into the Tamil Nadu Ranji Trophy squad last season even before he was 18, making his debut against Jharkhand and has featured in three First-Class matches already.

The hype around Hemchudeshan isn't without reason. In 2023/24, he took a record 53 wickets in the Vijay Merchant Trophy. It was his first season after he had switched to bowling off-spin. In 2024/2025, he finished the Cooch Behar Trophy with 47 wickets in 15 innings at an average of 15.23, which brought him the MA Chidambaram Trophy

at the BCCI Naman Awards. At a time when India's off-spinning resources are thin, Hemchudeshan is offering plenty of hope.

Like R Ashwin, Hemchudeshan started primarily as a batsman who could bowl pace. Back home in Trichy, thanks to his fast-bowling exploits, he even earned the moniker "Malinga." But off-spin would invariably become his calling card.

"I was a batsman till I was 16. I started off-spinning when I was 14 or 16 because my coach Vinod Sir told me that with my height, I was better off being a spinner," he tells The Indian Express ahead of Tamil Nadu's third-round Ranji fixture against Railways. "Spin is an art. When I started playing state matches, I was able to spin very little. While playing in the north, I used to practise a lot with Wilkins (Victor) Sir. He taught me how to spin the ball on each surface. How to give revs on the ball, angles and trajectory. It took me some time to understand how off-spin works. "There is so much behind off-spin. That's when it hit me. Deceiving batsmen in the air



J Hemchudeshan has featured in three First-Class matches. TNCA

and getting them caught at bat-pad or LBW or even bowling them gave a lot of satisfaction and I got hooked on to off-spin."

From the time he started bowling off-spin, Hemchudeshan's biggest strength has been the flight he imparts and the turn and bounce he generates off the surface. In his earlier days, he bowled with a rope or a net tied mid-pitch, to ensure he bowled over them. "I used to be very short, so I did use nets, but the flat trajectory never came. I always flighted

From the time he started bowling off-spin, his biggest strength has been the flight he imparts and the turn and bounce he generates off the surface

concentrate on red-ball cricket at a crucial juncture of his career. So, two months were spent at the CoE in camps alongside Kumble and Sunil Joshi.

"When Kumble Sir told me 'you are traditional', it felt nice. We worked with him for two days. He told us the importance of visualising and how to prepare for each session and match. He taught me how to use angles. It is what I'm trying to do this season," Hemchudeshan said.

At 18, there was every reason for him to continue playing age-group cricket, but given the rapid strides he has been making, he has been picked in the Ranji squad to develop certain aspects that still remain a work in progress. For instance, when it comes to bowling long spells,

• Key matches	
Jharkhand vs Delhi	Ranchi
Kerala vs Bengal	Mangalapuram
Tamil Nadu vs Railways	Chennai
Mumbai vs Haryana	Mumbai

there are specifics that Joshi has told him to work on.

"He has told me to use my hip more so that my body is aligned perfectly. At CoE, I bowled on different surfaces, which would come handy during the Ranji season, but technically speaking, it is important for me to get the hip drive, release point and the non-bowling arm properly. Only when all of it falls in place, I would be able to bowl long spells."

The hype and expectations have reached his ears too, but all that Hemchudeshan offers is a smile. "Red ball is my priority and I've to focus on that. My dream is to play Test cricket for India and I have to practise a lot for that. Outside pressure is there, but all of it is immaterial if I don't fulfill my potential," he added.

Shadab's hundred sets up stunning Pakistan win

Associated Press
Lahore, October 25

SHADAB KHAN hit an epic ODI century and England suffered another extraordinary defeat as Pakistan snatched a one-wicket victory on Sunday to secure its place in the cricket tri-series final.

Pakistan's chase looked doomed at 154-9 before a defiant 89-run, last-wicket stand between Shadab and No. 11 Harris Rauf secured Pakistan a dazzling win. Shadab smashed his first one-day ton to take Pakistan to 243-9 in 47.1 overs. England, which scored 429 and still lost in its last game against Sri Lanka, was earlier all out for 241 in 46.4 overs.

Playing his first game in the tournament, Shadab scored 113 not out off 96 balls and farmed most of the strike. Rauf (7 not out in 19 balls) hit the winning boundary as Pakistan enjoyed its third successive win.

It was the biggest last-wicket partnership in a successful chase in ODIs.

Left-handed opener Ben Duckett scored 105 for England — his fifth ODI century and first against Pakistan — after Shaheen Shah Afridi won his first toss in the tournament and elected to field after successfully



Shadab Khan's (R) ton was at the heart of Pakistan's chase. AP

defending 300-plus scores in the first two games. It was England's third successive defeat in the tournament after losing to Pakistan by 87 runs and seeing Sri Lanka pull off the second-highest successful run chase in ODI history despite captain Harry Brook scoring a blistering 114-ball double century.

Pakistan will take on Sri Lanka in their last league game on Tuesday.

BRIEF SCORES: England 241 all out in 46.4 overs (Ben Duckett 105; Shaheen Afridi 4/46) lost to Pakistan 243/9 in 47.1 overs (Shadab Khan 113 not out; Jamie Overton 3/43) by one wicket.



PV Sindhu lost the final 21-16, 11-21, 12-21 against the reigning World champion. BADMINTON PHOTO/BWF

Sindhu fights but generational An Se-young's body smashes prevail

Shivani Naik
Mumbai, October 25

PV SINDHU could "rush" An Se-young, but not shush the Korean's greatness. There's an inevitability to badminton's most dominant shuttler of this era - across men, women, singles, doubles, and how after everything else pans out routinely or dramatically - she's the last woman standing. But the Indian No 1 tried her damndest to hassle the World No 1.

An Se-young's celebration - many fist pumps, roaring and crowning herself - showed what this win meant to her, and how much PV Sindhu had troubled her. Though finally the score read a regulation 21-16, 11-21, 12-21, it was probably the closest the Indian came to beating the invincible Korean - in a fantastic match at the French Open Super 750.

To answer the obvious question, what gave Se-young her 11th victory over Sindhu was her regal avenging resorting to the body smash - in a 1-2 combination. Playing the decider after sets were level, Se-young adopted the two consecutive smashes - one to Sindhu's left that forced a backhand torque, and slowed her response on the next - a body smash, to race to the win after a third set. But the 61 minutes needed to down the Indian, tells a story.

Nobody save Wang Zhi Yi at All England has beaten Se-young in 2026. But Sindhu did come close to putting a scare in her. The World No 1 was going for her 4th French crown - in itself a marvel given she's not yet 25. Sindhu trailed 10-0, but came with short-range-pistols blazing at the net in the opener. Or maybe, it was a knife fight - for the net got properly dangerous. Sindhu's game plan was perfect geometry. Make Se-young traverse the longest, most torturous distance on the court - the hypotenuse. It is the end of the season in which Se-young lost only once, the All England final. That ought to be punishing. Sindhu was proactive and made the world's best player labour along the diagonal.

"Sindhu is a very strong, aggressive player. So I focussed on my defense. In the first set she rushed me. In the second I tried not to rush," the Korean said later.

It was mastery over the front court from Sindhu. It helps that her reputation for striking blistering gunshells to the back, makes opponents stay ever-ready to track back. But Sindhu continually played acute angles at the net, the tight-spinning dribbles, tumbles, flicks and pop-shots played with threading needle precision, and picked early due to her arm reach.

Sindhu also used her drops to keep drawing Se-young to her forehand front court corner. It served dual purposes. If she lifted, Sindhu could smash it straight on the other end of the diagonal. If she engaged in net battles, Sindhu used her speed for a close-combat flurry, in that small space. A notable point however was when she reached 6-7. It was a straight smash that tasered past Se-young's racquet hand and a rare occasion when she was slow to react.

So quick were the net battles that one of Se-young's reflex returns struck Sindhu's side of the head at 8-8. But a sign that the World No 1's drops were bothering the Korean came while winning the 12th point to edge ahead at 12-11, when she popped up a drop to the fore-court and Se-Young fell short. It bugged her so much that she started making uncharacteristic errors. She even had a misjudgment on the backline. Sindhu erred twice - once long, once in net - to allow it to get to 15-13. But thereafter the 31-year-old was in cruise-mode changing direction of the Korean's cross flicks into straight hits onto open courts. It's a massive feat to challenge Se-young's footwork. But Sindhu was so aggressive on the net that she brought indecision into hesitant feet to take the opener 21-16.

Guided by two Korean legends Park Joo Bong and Lee Hyun Il, Se-young dug deep to counter this brilliant strategy by Coach Irwansyah. At one point she mirrored Sindhu's tactic of getting her opponent to the net and then make her scramble to the diagonal. Her smashes were aimed at the body, and at any rate, the Korean hit back by raising her alertness at the net.

It must be said though that Sindhu playing those doubles drives and that flat faster game, makes her strategies smash-proof. It's a great weapon, but she has options outside the power-ambit now. "When you play top athletes you have to be at 100 percent every single point. There were long rallies. There were no easy points. It was good but if I could've converted.....," Sindhu said.

Yet the Korean had been jolted out of thinking this was going to be a tough scrap, and she suitably brought her level up - brushing Sindhu's fight out of the way. In the decider, Se-young weathered the early storm from the unfavourable side where Sindhu had won from, fighting until 6-6, but then deployed the body smash strategy to disarm and neutralize Sindhu. "It was a fresh day. Anything could have happened," Sindhu told BWF later. "I fought for every point in the first game. In the second game, it was equal until 5-4 and then she took a lead. In the third set, I should've maintained the lead from 8-5 but unfortunately she converted to 11-9 and then she changed courts. So that's where the difference was," she said.

The Indian has come a long way in her second wind, but - like everyone else in the world - needs to get mentally much stronger to back good strategy, court movement, net magic and optimised attack with sturdiness of the mind, to beat the unbeatable queen who picks the crown and coronates herself. Carolina Marin was on the sidelines watching after her retirement and would be proud of Sindhu for putting up the promised fight. But the actual win eludes.

ASIAN CHAMPIONS TROPHY

Hockey returns to its cradle in Punjab

With more than half of the Indian team for the tournament hailing from the state, it is a chance for legends of the game to indulge in nostalgia about the past's great matches

Nitin Sharma
Chandigarh, October 25

BALBIR SINGH Kular, a 1968 Mexico Olympics bronze medalist, recalls the time he played against the Netherlands at Police Lines in Jalandhar in 1967. Kular, who hails from nearby Sansarpur village, one of the main nurseries of hockey, will be a guest at Tuesday's opening ceremony of the Asian Champions Trophy at the city's Olympian Surjit Singh Hockey Stadium. Mentioning that it will be the first time many of the members of the current Indian team will be playing in their home state, he believes better late than never.

Kular remembers youngsters from his village coming on bicycles to watch the Indian team play almost 60 years ago, and anticipates the same excitement for witnessing the likes of skipper Harmanpreet Singh in action.

More than half of the Indian squad for the tournament is made up of players from Punjab.

"Players from Sansarpur and across Punjab came to see the match. At that time too, more than half of the Indian team was from Punjab. We were motivated by the fact that we were playing in front of a home crowd. I have watched this batch for a long time and the fact that even players with two Olympic bronze medals have not played for India in Punjab was a bit unfortunate. These boys show why Punjab is the cradle of Indian hockey," Kular tells *The Indian Express*.

The Asian Champions Trophy has been on a nine-day tour across Punjab with Olympic medallists and former India captains in attendance. Posters of the tournament - which features India, China, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and Bangladesh - with the tagline in Punjabi, Jee Aayan Nu



Olympian Surjit Singh Hockey Stadium will host an international hockey match after a gap of 20 years. NITIN SHARMA

Hockey (Welcome hockey) - are seen across Jalandhar and Mohali, the two host cities. Pakistan has pulled out of the event in the wake of tense bilateral ties between the two countries.

Former India captain Gagan Ajit Singh, who is serving as the Senior Superintendent of Police in Fazilka, was the chief guest there while his former teammate Jugraj Singh attended the ceremony in Amritsar. "During my time, I did not get many chances

present during the trophy tour. Harcharan was also part of the organising committee during Pakistan's 2006 tour to India, when drag-flicker Sohail Abbas broke Dutch legend Paul Litjens's world record of 267 goals in Amritsar.

"Legendary Pakistani left-winger Samiullah had come as the team's manager. He wanted an Urdu copy of Jagji Sahib (Sikh prayer) and we arranged it. Watching Abbas in action, many youngsters in the crowd would have started to dream about becoming a drag-flicker like him," shares Harcharan.

He also recalls the Indian team playing against an Asian All-Star XI in exhibition matches in 1974 in Amritsar and Jalandhar, and the Punjab crowd applauding the likes of Samiullah, Manzoor Hussain, Munawar Zaman and Ismailuddin. "People watched matches from the stands as well as standing in the trees around the grounds. In Amritsar, we were given two kg of ghee as well as almonds. While we were intense rivals on the field, most of us spoke Punjabi and made sure that our rivals also enjoyed Punjabi hospitality," adds Harcharan.

Former India goalkeeper Baljit Singh Dhadwal was one of the

stand-out performers in the 2009 Punjab Gold Cup in Chandigarh, where they lost in the final to the Dutch. He describes that tournament as a significant marker in the team's development.

Last int'l action

"The Punjab Gold Cup had Olympic champions Germany as well as Holland and we were extra motivated to play on our home ground. We lost a close final. If I remember correctly, Rupinder Pal Singh was watching the matches as a young trainee," says Dhadwal.

He remembers travelling to Jalandhar to watch an India-Pakistan Test match in 1998. "I took a bus and watched Sohail Abbas play at his peak. I didn't know much about his tactics but later in my career, I made some saves against him. That memory remains special."

At the stadium which will see intense action from Tuesday, a few youngsters are talking about the chance to see Indian captain Harmanpreet. "We have not seen Surjit sir take penalty corners but we will see Harmanpreet paji taking drag-flicks for India for the first time," says one of the trainees.

Will the next Harmanpreet be watching from the stands?

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Vol XCIV- 300 Regd.No. DL-21046/03-05 R.N.I. No.506/1957. Printed and Published by Ramesh Chander Malhotra on behalf of The Indian Express (P) Limited and Printed at The Indian Express (P) Limited Press, A-8, Sector-7, Noida - 201301 and Published at The Indian Express (P) Limited, Mezzanine Floor, Express Building, 9 & 10, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editorial office: The Indian Express (P) Limited, Mezzanine Floor, Express Building, 9 & 10, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: 0120-6651500. Advertising office: The Indian Express (P) Ltd., Express Building, B1/B, Ramnath Goenka Marg, Sector 10, Noida-201301. Phone: 0120-6651291. Chairman of the Board: Viveck Goenka, Chief Editor: Raj Kamal Jha, Editor: Unni Rajen Shanker, Editor (Delhi): Monojit Majumdar ** **Responsible for selection of News under the PRP Act. Copyright: The Indian Express (P) Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any manner, electronic or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior written permission is prohibited. The Indian Express®

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