MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2026

The Indian EXPRESS

NEW DELHI, LATE CITY, 18 PAGES

JOURNALISM of COURAGE

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THE INDIAN EXPRESS

The World

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2026

Iran and Qatar mediators hold third day of talks to end war

Reuters
November 1

IRANIAN NEGOTIATORS were in Doha on Sunday for a third consecutive day of talks with Qatari mediators aimed at pushing for a deal to end the US-Israeli war on Iran, an official briefed on the discussions told *Reuters*.

The talks come amid concerns that the conflict could escalate again after the November 3 US midterm elections. President Donald Trump has said the US will not launch new attacks on Iran before the vote and that talks with Tehran have been productive, though he has not ruled out military action afterwards.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Sunday that the purpose of the "ongoing and progressing" talks was to continue consultations with the Qatari mediators, adding Tehran is prepared for "both defence and diplomacy".

Speaking to state media, Araghchi said discussions on a "two-day proposal" were continuing, but that no final conclusion had been reached. Qatari broadcaster *Al Jazeera* quoted Araghchi as saying that Iranian and Qatari negotiators had developed a proposal to reopen the Strait within two days of a potential agreement with Washington.

POWER INFRASTRUCTURE IN 4 UKRAINIAN REGIONS STRUCK, SAYS ZELENSKYY

Ukraine, Russia trade drone strikes amid local ceasefire

Russian industrial site in Novgorod suffered 'significant damage': Governor

Reuters
November 1

RUSSIAN STRIKES left hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians without power on Sunday, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, while Russian authorities reported major damage to an industrial site following Ukrainian drone attacks on Nizhny Novgorod region.

Even as a six-day local ceasefire held on its final day around the Russian-controlled Ukrainian town of Oleshky, there was no letup in fighting elsewhere along the front line and both sides kept up long-range air attacks.

Zelenskyy said Russia had hit power infrastructure in four Ukrainian regions overnight, cutting electricity to hundreds of thousands of households.

"The intensity of the strikes is very high, and the Russians are seeking to maximally exploit the deficit of ballistic missile interceptors," he said.

He said Ukraine, meanwhile, had hit the Kamensky plant in Russia's Rostov region, which he said was involved in the manufacture of Russian missiles. Moscow did not comment on the reported attack in Rostov. In Nizhny Novgorod region, however, Governor Gleb Nikitin said a large-scale overnight Ukrainian drone attack caused "significant damage" to an industrial facility.

Overall, Russia's Defence Ministry said its forces had downed 235 Ukrainian drones over Russian regions overnight.

Ukraine's air force said it had shot down 371 of 433 long-range drones launched by Russia since Saturday evening.

In its morning update, the air force said dozens of Russian drones were still in the air as of Sunday morning. Six separate drone alerts had been issued in Kyiv since midnight.

Nizhny Novgorod's regional government also did not identify the facility that was struck, but it said it was taking steps to ensure gas stations were supplied with fuel, urging motorists to "buy fuel only as needed and avoid panic buying," *Interfax* reported.



Residents of Russia-occupied Oleshky cross the Belarus-Ukraine border in Chernihiv after being evacuated on Saturday. REUTERS

Minor detained over park attack threat after US tip-off, says FSB

Moscow: Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) said Sunday a Russian minor had been detained over a threat to carry out a terrorist attack in a Moscow park following a tip-off from the United States, news agency *Interfax* reported.

On Saturday, the FSB said it had received information from US through established partner channels about preparations for an attack in Moscow and was taking appropriate measures.

The minor had posted photographs of himself on TikTok wearing tactical clothing and a balaclava, holding an object that looked like an automatic weapon, as well as photographs taken at Moscow's Tsaritsyno Museum Reserve with the caption: "I found a place," *Interfax* cited the FSB as saying. "We are grateful to the American side for providing the information," the security service said. REUTERS

Binance hack: Pregnant CEO on 3 am crisis call with 100 others as billions got drained

David Yaffe-Bellany
November 1

AT 4:20 PM THURSDAY, unusual transactions raised alarms at Binance as billions in digital coins poured from its accounts.

Executives set up a war room on Wea, Binance's internal messaging system. About 100 tracers and security staff joined a conference call in English and Chinese. Co-CEO He Yi, seven months pregnant, worked overnight from Abu Dhabi, joining at 3 am.

A North Korean hacking group had breached the exchange and stolen more than $6 billion, in what was described as the largest cryptocurrency heist ever. Binance halted deposits and withdrawals and promised to cover losses.

The crisis unfolded publicly through founder Changpeng Zhao, who updated his 12.9 million X followers, posted prayer-hand emojis and sparred with Elon Musk. He insisted that "user funds are SAFU", crypto slang meant to reassure customers their deposits would not disappear. "It hurts, but we will survive," Zhao wrote.

The attack sent shock waves through the crypto industry, prompting recovery efforts and law enforcement inquiries. The account is based on interviews, forensic analyses and documents reviewed by *The New York Times*.

Founded in 2017, Binance became the world's largest crypto exchange. In 2023, it pleaded guilty to anti-money-laundering violations that allowed criminals to move money and agreed to pay US regulators $4.3 billion. Zhao was sentenced to four months in prison.

Binance remained popular with investors. Though its main platform is banned in the United States, the company last year forged a business relationship with World Liberty Financial, the Trump family's crypto venture. President Donald Trump pardoned Zhao last October, clearing a path for Binance to expand in the US market.

In February 2025, North Korean hackers stole $1.5 billion from rival exchange Bybit after its chief executive approved a transaction giving attackers access to its internal system.

It remains unclear how hackers breached Binance's defences. The company initially pointed to a compromised laptop, but later said it had found "additional points of breach".

Public blockchains allowed analysts to track funds leaving Binance in real time. Jonathan Levin, chief executive of analytics firm Chainalysis, was on a video call with a former US official on Thursday when he saw the alerts.

"I looked at my phone and was like, 'Oh, this doesn't look good,'" he said.

Chainalysis employees gathered in a New York conference room named "Silk Road" and worked into Friday morning, analysing transactions. The firm and rival TRM Labs attributed the attack to Trader-Traitor, an elite North Korean hacking group. The FBI confirmed their findings. Western officials say North Korea has long targeted crypto companies, using stolen funds to support its nuclear programme.

Chainalysis said the attackers used "laundering patterns we have not seen before", moving funds through thousands of transactions in a short period, probably with automation.

Other companies rushed to stop stolen assets moving further. Tether and Circle, two stablecoin issuers, said they had frozen more than $2 billion in their own tokens seized from Binance. Binance is seeking access to those funds. About $2.4 billion in cryptocurrency is already "beyond any issuer's reach", according to TRM Labs. Binance said it had set aside $6.34 billion to cover losses.

World Liberty Financial, issuer of the USD1 stablecoin, also offered help. Its chief executive, Zach Witkoff, son of a senior Trump adviser, said it had frozen $27 million in USD1 "associated with the Binance hack".

"We stand by our industry partners," he wrote.

"Thank you!" Zhao replied, followed by three prayer-hand emojis. NYT





He Yi, Binance co-CEO (top); Changpeng Zhao, the billionaire founder of Binance. NYT

Binance restores crypto withdrawals

BINANCE, THE world's biggest cryptocurrency exchange, resumed bitcoin, ether and some stablecoin withdrawals on Sunday and said others would follow in phases, after it covered 95% of the $6.3 billion in tokens stolen from its platform.

Binance said the first phase of withdrawals would cover 15 crypto assets including bitcoin, ether, XRP and dogecoin. Bitcoin withdrawals resumed shortly after 0600 GMT, while ether, BNB and some USDT and USDC stablecoin withdrawals were also restored. REUTERS

Israeli strikes kill eight in Gaza, including 5 police officers

Reuters
Cairo, November 1

ISRAELI STRIKES killed at least eight Palestinians, including five police officers, in the Gaza Strip in two separate attacks on Sunday, according to medics and the Hamas-run interior ministry.

Medics said three people were killed in an Israeli airstrike in Gaza City. The interior ministry said the five police officers were killed in another strike in western Khan Younis, in the south of the enclave.

The Israeli military said it struck several militants in Khan Younis, without giving further information. It did not comment on the Gaza City strike.

Israel, which says the Hamas militant group has been rearming and launching attacks in violation of a year-old ceasefire, has stepped up strikes on the group in recent weeks.

Hamas has denied trying to carry out attacks or rebuild its arsenal and accuses Israel of undermining the Gaza peace deal. Last year's US-brokered ceasefire calls for eventual reconstruction of the territory.

But little progress has been made as negotiators have failed to agree terms for Hamas to disarm or Israel to withdraw its troops, who control about two-thirds of the territory where they have ordered residents out.

Nearly all of the more than 2 million residents live in the remaining third of the enclave, mostly in makeshift tents and damaged buildings, still under effective control of Hamas.

At least 1,500 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli attacks in Gaza since the ceasefire, according to the territory's health officials, while Israel says four soldiers have been killed.

Palestinian authorities say more than 74,000 people have been killed in Israel's assault on Gaza, launched after Hamas-led fighters killed 1,200 people in southern Israel on October 7, 2023.



A child searches for toys in the rubble of his home after an Israeli airstrike in central Gaza's Bureij refugee camp. AP

German govt vows tough response as Frankfurt sees rioting and looting

Reuters
Frankfurt, November 1

GERMAN MINISTERS threatened tough penalties for looters and rioters who damaged stores and injured over 100 police officers in Frankfurt, while praising security forces for preventing wider violence.

Frankfurt emerged as the main flashpoint on Saturday after tens of thousands of people rallied in dozens of German cities to demand better education and lower living costs in protests organised by campaign group "Gen Z regelt" — "Gen Z takes charge".

In the financial hub Frankfurt, hooded rioters damaged 17 stores, of which five were looted, Roman Poseck, interior minister of the state of Hesse said on Sunday. He said police deployed 1,300 officers, with more than 100 injured in clashes. Police arrested 54 people aged between 13 and 29.

"I am shocked by what I have seen, and there is no point in sugar-coating it. Let me make this very clear: Things cannot go on like this," Poseck said.

Poseck said most of those arrested were German nationals, adding many of those involved in disturbances were of an immigrant background, citing information from the police. "Police currently estimate they are dealing with between 1,000 and 1,500 violent troublemakers, predominantly from an immigrant background," he added.

Frankfurt police reported violent disturbances including windows being smashed and petrol bombs, rocks and bottles being thrown at the emergency services. German Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt said perpetrators would be identified and held to account.





Trump's Halloween Party

(Clockwise from the top) Guests attend a Halloween party at US President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida, on Saturday; Vice President JD Vance dressed as Hogwarts headmaster Albus Dumbledore, while his son appears as Dobby, the house elf from the Harry Potter series; Trump speaks to mediapersons as he arrives at the Halloween party at his Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach. Asked about his costume, Trump joked, "I came as Donald Trump," saying he had only 10 minutes to get ready, compared with guests who spent hours preparing their outfits. AP, @JDVANCE, REUTERS



BRIEFLY

UNITED STATES

Director Michael Mann sustains 'superficial injury' at gun range



Michael Mann

FILMMAKER MICHAEL Mann was injured at a gun range on Saturday in Los Angeles. He was taken to a hospital where he was treated and was being released his representative told *The Associated Press* Sunday. Mann sustained what his representative described as a superficial injury after a weapon accidentally discharged while holstered. The 83-year-old filmmaker behind crime classics like *Heat*, *Collateral* and *Thief* has apparently been an experienced target shooter and the accident happened at a sanctioned gun range. Mann continues to be quite active in Hollywood in his 80s. AP

Dutch coast guard saves 38 adrift at sea

DOZENS OF people adrift at sea in a rubber boat were rescued early Saturday off the coast of the southern Netherlands, in one of the first such interceptions in the country. The Marechaussee military police and Netherlands coast guard rescued the boat with 38 onboard early morning and towed it to shore. AP

4 dead, 15 injured in shootings in Dallas

POLICE IN Dallas say four people are dead and 15 are injured following separate shootings in Dallas. Police Chief Daniel Comeaux said police are still trying to determine if shootings were related. Comeaux said that three separate shootings occurred and it wasn't known why they started. AP

MICHIGAN SENATE RACE

Haley stuns Democrats, backs Republican Rogers

Associated Press
Detroit, November 1



Stevens backed Rogers after attending a Detroit church service with him. AP

MICHIGAN DEMOCRAT Abdul El-Sayed's former opponent in the US Senate primary, Haley Stevens, stunned party officials Sunday by endorsing Republican Mike Rogers after Democratic tensions boiled over days before the election that could determine the balance of power on Capitol Hill.

Stevens endorsed Rogers after attending a Detroit church service with him.

The remarkable show of support for President Donald Trump's backed candidate in the tightly contested race comes after she was uninvited to a joint event the same day with El-Sayed, who defeated the congresswoman by a slim margin in the August primary.

"Our Democratic nominee for Senate said I was no longer welcome in his campaign and that I should stay away," Stevens said in a video announcing the endorsement.

"And he's right. And that's why I am endorsing Mike Rogers for the United States Senate today," Stevens said.

HEAT AND DROUGHT DURING SUMMER THREATEN THE FUNGUS, WHICH NEEDS COOL, MOIST SOIL AND TREE ROOTS

From Italy to Croatia, a warming climate threatens prized white truffles

Associated Press
Alba (Italy), November 1

GUIDED BY a flashlight, Tino Marolo follows his dog Stella through a Piedmont woodland, searching for the prized white truffle.

In the hills around Alba, hunters known as "trifolau" begin their season on October 1. Increasingly, they face climate change. Heat and drought during summer threaten the fungus, which depends on cool, moist soil and tree roots.

"October was affected by the lack of rain in July and August and high temperatures, resulting in poor production and poor truffle shelf life," said Antonio Degiacomi, president of Italy's National Centre for Truffle Studies. Dry, compacted soil has also produced smaller truffles.

The difficult harvest coincides with Alba's International White Truffle Fair, which runs until December 6. Fair president Axel Iberti said the season began slowly, but recent rains have helped larger truffles appear. Prices are 20% to 30% higher than last year.

Hotter summers and erratic rainfall have marked a trend for five or six years, Degiacomi said. Similar concerns are emerging across Europe. In Croatia, hunter Petar Alebic says drought has made truffles smaller and scarcer.



White truffels displayed during the International White Truffle Fair in Alba region in Italy. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

"Each year for the past seven or eight years has been worse than the last," he said. He estimates this year's harvest is 30% below normal and supplements his income with truffle-hunting tours.

Croatia has about a dozen truffle species, said mycologist Armin Mesic of the Rudjer Boskovic Institute. White truffles can fetch up to $4,500 per kilogram. Drought, low rainfall and high temperatures are reducing their quantity, quality and growing range, Mesic said.

Piedmont experts reject the idea white truffles are doomed. "I don't think we're facing extinction; we're facing a challenge," Degiacomi said. Researchers are studying forest management and experimental irrigation during prolonged droughts.

In Alba, efforts focus on restoring and protecting forests. Iberti has broadened the fair's focus to environmental education and conservation. Communities are creating public truffle grounds and planting trees that could support truffle growth.

"The forest is an act of love and faith for the next two or three generations," Iberti said. Reforestation can cool soil, retain moisture and reduce erosion, but new trees may take more than a decade to become suitable hosts. As autumn progresses, the harvest's size and effect on prices and supplies will become clearer.

For now, the partnership between hunters, dogs and forests endures. One evening, Stella stops and digs. She has found a truffle. Whether future generations will share such moments may depend on science, conservation and adaptation to a warmer climate.

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Happening today

PM NARENDRA MODI will inaugurate the Bharat Renewable Energy Summit & Expo 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. The summit will attract participants from over 130 countries.

RSS WILL BEGIN its 3-day national meeting in Indore. This comes after a series of programmes across the country to mark the Sangh's centenary year concluded recently.

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Day after 3 killed in gunfight, two Kuki men found dead in Manipur

Jimmy Leivon
Imphal, November 1

SECURITY FORCES Sunday recovered the bodies of two missing Kuki youths in the Senapati district of Manipur — a day after three men from the ethnic community were killed in an exchange of fire with armed miscreants in the state's Noney district.

The dead were identified as Paoginlal Hangsing and Tinginlun Chongloi, both 20, who went missing from the Taphou Kuki village on October 28.

Their bodies were taken to Kangpokpi, where tensions remained high, prompting the police to shift the bodies to the office of the Superintendent of Police (SP).

"The situation is tense at the moment. For now, the security forces have managed to repel a group of protesters trying to storm the SP's office. We are on high alert," said a senior police officer posted at Kangpokpi police station on Sunday evening.

Following the disappearance of the two men, the Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU), Sadar Hills, had called a 48-hour total shutdown in the Kuki-Zo dominated district, demanding their immediate and safe release. The shutdown remained in force on Sunday with CoTU extending it by

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

AKHILESH FLAGS HINDU DELETIONS IN U.P., MAMATA VOWS TO FIGHT BACK IN BENGAL

Opposition united front at Ramlila: CEC will be sent to jail, says Rahul

Modi, Shah can't go anywhere, says LoP on his 'vote chori' allegation

Asad Rehman
New Delhi, November 1

STEPPING UP his attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi said Sunday that the CEC would be jailed for "treason" in the future over his role in "vote chori", and that Modi and Shah would face legal action.

Addressing the Opposition INDIA bloc's rally at Delhi's Ramlila Maidan, Gandhi said, "Amit Shah said Narendra Modi is not going anywhere. I am telling you Narendra Modi cannot go anywhere. Even if he wants to go, we will not let him. Narendra Modi ji and Amit Shah ji, understand this: after Gyanesh Kumar, we will stand against you and don't forget that for the vote chori you have done, there will be legal action against you and Narendra Modi."

The rally, which saw Opposition parties mobilise workers from other states, was organised to demand the CEC's resignation and protest against the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

Gandhi said removing Kumar as the CEC would be "the first step to getting the country on the right track". He alleged that "without Gyanesh Kumar, Narendra Modi wouldn't have become PM and Amit Shah wouldn't be Home Minister".

"In 2024, there was a 3% difference between NDA and us. It was an illegal election, a stolen election. I am not saying this, the Election Commission is. They removed 13.3 crore voters from the list. That is one in every seven Indians, 15 per cent of India's electorate. What I say comes true. I said something about Covid and it came true. I am saying Gyanesh Kumar will

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Opposition INDIA bloc leaders at a rally at Ramlila Maidan, New Delhi, Sunday. ABHINAV SAHA

EXPLAINED

In countdown to state elections

Sunday's rally and the mock Parliament Saturday are the latest in a series of attacks by the Opposition against the Government and the Election Commission's SIR. These come as two key states, UP and Punjab, head to Assembly elections early next year.



Business as Usual
By EP UNNY



INSIDE PAGE 3

S.I.R. COST MANY... FIGHT JUST STARTED, SAY PROTESTERS

DELHI CM'S SWIPE: 'POLITICAL DRAMA'

Rahul chose 1984 riot day for rally, rubbed salt in wounds of victims: Shah

Hina Rohtaki
Chandigarh, November 1

AS THE BJP sought to counter the INDIA bloc rally at the Ramlila Maidan in Delhi Sunday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah accused Leader of Opposition and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi of "deliberately choosing" the anniversary of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots to hold its protest.

Speaking in Chandigarh after launching a slew of projects, Shah said, "In 1984, Rajiv Gandhi (who became Prime Minister after the assassination of Indira Gandhi that triggered the anti-Sikh riots) made a statement that when a big tree falls, the ground shakes. Today, his son Rahul Gandhi has organised a major rally in Delhi on the very same day to rub salt into the wounds of the riot victims."

BJP president Nitin Nabin

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Chandigarh, Sunday. PTI

EXPRESS special

Declared, but not disclosed: What top bureaucrats leave out of property filings

Their annual declarations show 219 residential, three commercial and 22 agricultural land parcels

KEY NUMBERS

- 244 Self-acquired properties of officials whose immovable asset declarations were reviewed
- 115 Self-acquired properties without details of dimensions
- 44 Officials with three or more self-acquired properties
- 115 Self-acquired properties without details of current value
- 10 Officials with zero self-acquired properties

Shyamlal Yadav
New Delhi, November 1

EVERY YEAR, bureaucrats across the country are required to declare the immovable assets they own — a guardrail in force since 2011 to deter corruption and keep those who run the government accountable in the public eye. But their latest asset declarations show how loose this safeguard actually is, a review by *The Indian Express* shows.

Of the 131 top-ranking Secretary-level officials, in this category, the newspaper was able to access the declarations of 102 under the latest mandatory filings posted on official portals in the public domain on March 31, 2026. They show that of the 244 self-acquired properties declared, 115 do not include details of area or dimensions, and 115 do not have their current value. Ten officials among the 102 have declared "nil" self-acquired properties.

Consider some of the other key takeaways from the filings of the 102 officials mandated to declare details of their immovable assets, and those of their spouses and dependents:

- The 244 self-acquired properties in declarations reviewed by this newspaper include 219 residential, three commercial and 22 agricultural

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

IDEA EXCHANGE

'Coaches gave us freedom... it was our turn to give them a return gift'
SAVITA PUNIA, GOALKEEPER, INDIAN WOMEN HOCKEY

'A defensive structure is good and that is what will bring us titles'
SJOERD MARIJNE, COACH, INDIAN WOMEN HOCKEY

PAGE 13



Sidda sting op phone was taken to Kumaraswamy's home, say police

State govt, officers can't touch me, it will boomerang: Union Minister

Express News Service
Bengaluru, November 1





Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy; Karnataka ex-CM Siddaramaiah

THE MOBILE phone allegedly used in the sting operation targeting former Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah was purchased in New Delhi and changed hands at the official residence of Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy, Bengaluru Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh said on Sunday.

The Union Minister rejected the allegations, saying that neither the state government nor its officers can touch him.

Citing arrested accused Ritesh Pandey's statement, the police commissioner said that the handover of the mobile phone took place on the instructions of one Prajwal Prasad, who was

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EC suspends two officials over Pilibhit voter roll irregularities, orders FIRs

Express News Service
New Delhi, Lucknow, November 1

THE ELECTION Commission on Saturday ordered the suspension of two electoral registration officers (EROs) over alleged irregularities in the electoral roll of the Pilibhit Assembly constituency in UP while also instructing the state's chief electoral officer (CEO) to file FIRs against them with charges pertaining to public servants disobeying the law.

In a letter to UP CEO Navdeep Rinwa, the EC said it had examined the CEO's report on the matter and decided to order the suspension of Mayank Goswami and Hemant Chaudhary.

In its order, the EC said: "The two Electoral Registration Officers of 127-Pilibhit Assembly Constituency, namely Shri Mayank Goswami and Shri Hemant Chaudhary, may be placed under suspension with immediate effect. Their chargesheets may be furnished to the

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

INSIDE PAGES 4, 7



ON DAY 1 OF BS-VI CHECKS IN DELHI, VEHICLES TURNED BACK, IMPOUNDED

EIGHT TREKKERS GO MISSING IN UTTARAKHAND, SEARCH OPS ON

Rs 6,000-cr betting scam: Mahadev app promoter extradited from Oman

Mahender Singh Manral
New Delhi, November 1



Saurabh Chandrakar (centre) in CBI custody after he was extradited, Sunday. PTI

INDIAN AGENCIES have extradited Saurabh Chandrakar, promoter of the Mahadev Online Book betting syndicate and a key accused in the Rs 6,000-crore illegal gambling and money laundering scam, from Oman, officials said. He was brought back to India by a specially deputed CBI team on Sunday evening.

Chandrakar is wanted in two CBI cases where chargesheets have been filed, and in an Enforcement Directorate (ED) case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in which a prosecution complaint has been lodged. Following his extradition, he was medically examined and taken to Raipur after a transit remand was obtained, and will be produced before a CBI Special Court there, an official said.

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

• CLOSE TO 75 PER CENT OF RESIDENTS IN PRAYAG CHIKHALI HAVE TAKEN SPECIAL NUMBERS

In this Kolhapur village, a fancy vehicle number serves as a family signature

Sunanda Mehta & Pavan Khengre
Kolhapur, November 1

SHIVTEJ SHANKAR Yadav, his brother and father own eight vehicles, including six motorcycles, one scooter and one car. But what really catches the eye is not the number of vehicles but the number on each of them: 0554. "That's our family number. We chose this because the initials of all three of us are SSY and 554 if written in a certain manner looks like SSY," says Yadav (27), whose family runs a furniture workshop.

PAGE 1 anchor

His neighbour across the road, Sajrao Salunke, owns a hair cutting salon. Three two-wheelers stand outside his home, each bearing the number 1314. "It adds up to 9, and 9 is our lucky number," says Salunke.

A line of vehicles is parked outside the double-storeyed home of the Sampatrao Dalvi family, which is into farming. Twenty-five people in this joint household ride 11 vehicles, including a car and an EV scooter, all with the number 8282. "It was chosen for the rhythm, *'tyanshee tyanshee'* (82 in Marathi)," says Sampatrao, the 72-year-old patriarch.

Welcome to Prayag Chikhali, a village in Maharashtra's Kolhapur district, where a fancy number plate is not an exception but a must. For over three decades, a majority of the 1,900-odd households in this village of about 10,000 have ensured a special registration number for their vehicles.

"When we see someone on a two-wheeler or in a car, we look at the number plate and know to which family he or she belongs. If the number plate is 8282, it's the Dalvi family, if it's 5151 then it's Rajput, or if it's 7777 it's the family of Pandurang Yadav," says Baburao Patil (45), who owns a jaggery business and whose four two-wheelers bear the number 7000. Why? "Lucky 7, of course," he says.



Shivtej Shankar Yadav shows his bikes and a scooty — the number plate of each reads 0554. PAVAN KHENGRE

According to local residents, the trend was started by Pandurang Yadav, a local farmer and politician, and neighbour of singer Suresh Wadkar who also hails from Chikhali. Yadav took the number 7777 for his first vehicle in 1990, and did the same for every vehicle he owned. Soon neighbours followed suit, and today "close to 75 per cent" of the residents have adopted the trend, says sarpanch Rohit Patil.

"Our village is now known for its special numbers," says Patil (33), who calls these "branded numbers" and whose three vehicles all bear 3500. "My grandfather chose this number 30 years ago, my father followed and now I do. It's our family's identity and lucky number," says Patil, who works as a clerk at Kolhapur's famous Gokul Dairy.

"The practice here now is to first book the desired number with the RTO and only once that is obtained is the vehicle bought and brought home. The village probably has close to 3,000-4,000 vehicles," he says.

Special or "VIP" numbers are usually a luxury given the extra fee. At Chikhali, residents seem willing to bear the expense however modest their means. "People here spend anything from Rs 5,000 to Rs 50,000 to get the number of their choice. It's an expense they factor in while going in for a new vehicle," says Patil, the sarpanch.

The Kolhapur Regional Transport Office regularly holds auctions for special numbers given the deluge of applications. "We opened a new series for cars yesterday and on the first day itself received some 345 applications for special numbers. For two-wheelers, the applications are much more. We do not have data only for Prayag Chikhali, but we are aware of the practice there," says Manoj Gajannan Otari, Deputy Regional Transport Officer (RTO).

Many numbers from 1 to 90 have more than one applicant, says Otari. When that happens, the transport office invites Demand Drafts, allotting the number to the highest bidder. "We open the DD envelope in

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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Opp rally

be removed as CEC. He will go to jail," he said.

"This is not a regular chori. It is a theft of the voice of every person. In legal parlance, it is called the rarest of rare cases. It is called treason," he said.

Referring to the turnout at Ramlila Maidan, Gandhi said, "This is not the voice of a political party or leaders but the voice of youth, farmers, labourers, and it is declaring that 'we will not let democracy and Constitution be destroyed in India'."

Targeting the RSS, he claimed it had "captured all institutions". The Opposition, he said, would not perpetrate violence against the Sangh or the BJP. "Be it Modi, Shah or Gyanesh Kumar, we will not perpetrate violence against them. We will not attack the RSS or BJP people. We will not spread hatred, we will work with love, but we will not let them destroy the Constitution," he said.

Before the LoP spoke, leaders of other Opposition parties took to the stage to target the BJP and the government. After Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge alleged that the PM "selects voters" instead of voters electing him, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav echoed him, alleging that "BJP wants only its members to be voters and citizens of India".

Yadav said the Ramlila Maidan had turned into the "Haldighati of democracy" – referring to the 1576 battle in which Akbar's forces faced off against Maharana Pratap – and said those who had come to power at the Centre through Uttar Pradesh would also exit from there.

"UP wallahs (people), who are good at welcoming, are better at giving send-offs," said the SP president, taking a swipe at Modi whose constituency is Varanasi.

Referring to the voter deletions in UP, he said, "As this public meeting was being organised, the BJP stated that votes of 1.27 crore Hindu brethren in Uttar Pradesh had been deleted, which translates to a reduction of 31,000 votes in every Assembly constituency. It is because of the INDIA bloc that BJP is now realising that their votes are also being cut."

Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee alleged that West Bengal was a "victim of the circumstances created by SIR" and urged the Cockroach Janta Party and the youth to join forces with the Opposition.

"I am expressing solidarity with the CJP leadership and Gen Z, for their solidarity, support and fighting spirit," Banerjee said.

"We will not spare them. We will fight with our lives. They looted Bengal, but we will save democracy and bring it back," she said, describing SIR as "Special Intensive Relief to a party like the BJP".

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said the Ramlila Maidan was known for hosting Ramlila performances marking Ram's win over Ravan which is retold in the Ramayana. "But today, we are doing Mahabharat here. When Shakuni rolled the dice, he rigged it. If Shakuni is playing his game today, then we have to make this Kurukshetra," he said.

The Left was represented on the stage by CPI(M) general secretary M A Baby and CPI(M-L) Liberation general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya.

While Baby said the battle against alleged vote theft was the "second Independence struggle", Bhattacharya alleged that the BJP had turned the country into a police state.

National Conference president Farooq Abdullah questioned the claim that many voters deleted during the SIR were infiltrators, asking whether Hindu voters allegedly removed from the rolls in Uttar Pradesh were also "Pakistanis".

PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti questioned the BJP's claims of championing Hindutva, targeting it over the alleged donation theft at the Ram temple in Ayodhya. "They have stolen donations from the Ram temple. What can be a bigger shame?" she said.

Shah

too slammed the Congress over the INDIA bloc rally.

Addressing a 'Loktantra Bachao, Arajakta Hatao Padyatra' in Haryana's Rohtak, Nabin said, "The Congress should have sought atonement and offered an apology for the acts committed against the Sikh brethren. Instead, it has come out to stage a protest."

He said because the Congress did not receive the mandate, it is "disappointed" and "frustrated" and is "blaming the constitutional institutions for this".

He dared the Congress leaders to "first put an end to the "rajtantra" (monarchy) "centred around Rahul Gandhi" and establish democracy within their party.

In Chandigarh, Shah told a gathering that the BJP had initially assumed that Rahul Gandhi might not have been aware of November 1's historical significance, given his age at the time of the 1984 riots and "lack of interest in history".

But the Congress, Shah said, insisted on holding the rally on November 1 despite the appeals to reschedule it.

He said the BJP had publicly urged the Congress to avoid November 1, 2 and 3, citing the sentiments of the Sikh community. "Thousands of Sikhs were burnt alive. Many were forced to leave their homes, children were orphaned, women widowed and houses burnt," he said, adding that the country and Punjab would never forget the violence.

Invoking Gandhi's slogan of "*mohabbat ki dukaan*", Shah said the Congress, by choosing November 1 as its rally date, had only hatred to offer, not affection.

"If the Congress wishes to hold a grand rally on the dark days of the massacre, then Rahuljii, nothing except hatred can be taken away from your 'mohabbat ki dukaan'," he said.

Reminding the gathering that the Narendra Modi government reopened cases related to the 1984 riots after coming to power in 2014, Shah said, "India had never witnessed, and would never witness again, riots of such a nature instigated by a political party."

He also accused the Congress of disregarding the concerns of Delhi's traders, who, he said, had repeatedly appealed to Gandhi to postpone the rally because this was peak Diwali shopping season.

He said traders had written letters and held press conferences seeking a change of date, saying that the rally could disrupt business during one of the most important trading periods of the year.

Property filings

land parcels.

- In all, 44 of the 102 officials and/or their spouses own three or more self-acquired properties. Seven officials own five such properties each, 13 own four each and 24 hold three each.
- Topping the list is a Secretary-rank IAS officer who has declared eight self-acquired properties, including seven in Kerala and one in Meghalaya.
- At the second spot is another Secretary-rank IAS officer with six self-acquired properties in Maharashtra, UP and Delhi. These include three properties in Mumbai and a DDA flat in New Delhi.

The officials include 95 Secretaries of departments under the Central Government, including those attached to the President's Secretariat, Prime Minister's Office, NITI Aayog and the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser, as well as Chief Secretaries of 28 states and eight Union Territories.

The Indian Express tracked only immovable assets declared as self-acquired, not ancestral properties. The latest filings of the 102 officials show:

- Of the 244 properties, the "present value" column is filled in for only 129 properties. For the rest, officials wrote "not known", "value not determined", "as per circle rate", "not valuated", "not assessed", "not ascertained" or "no assessment made".
- Of the ten officials who have declared no self-acquired property in the latest filings, an IAS officer from the J&K cadre has declared "nil" every year since 2011. The other nine declared assets in some of their earlier declarations but not in the latest filing.
- Residential properties with declared measurements range from 617 square feet to 23,925 square feet. Agricultural land ranges from small plots to 39 acres.
- Most properties are in the Delhi-NCR region and state capitals. Many are allotted in cooperative societies such as the Kendriya Vihar projects of the Central Government Employees Welfare Housing Organisation.

The 131 Secretaries/Chief Secretaries and other officials include nine scientists, five from the Indian Foreign Service and three from the IPS. One official heading two departments is from the Indian Legal Service, another is from the Indian Postal Service, and the rest are IAS officers — most belong to the 1989 to 1998 batches.

Secretaries head their departments and rank next only to the Cabinet Secretary. Chief Secretaries head the bureaucracy in states and Union Territories. In effect, these officials run administrations under the political leadership at the Centre and in the states.

Every bureaucrat under the conduct rules of their respective services must update the immovable assets of himself or herself, spouse and dependents by January 31 each year. The returns are to be placed in the public domain by March 31. Such public disclosure began in 2011, following RTI petitions, demands for a Lokpal and an anti-corruption movement.

Section 44 of the Lokpal Act required every official to declare all movable and immovable assets, as electoral candidates, MPs and ministers do. The provision was amended in December 2016 to say the rules would be notified "in due course" to prescribe the form, manner and timelines for filing declarations of assets and liabilities by public servants. Those rules are still awaited.

The Indian Express confirmed that the officers whose declarations were scrutinised were in their respective positions as on October 1, 2026.

The Cabinet Secretariat and the Department of Personnel and Training did not respond to emailed questions from *The Indian Express* on whether any mechanism exists to verify the declarations, whether action was taken against officials who left out required details in their 2025 filings, and what became of the rules promised under Section 44 of the Lokpal Act.

Officials report additions to their movable assets to the government above a certain value, but these are not made public. Ministers' details are on the PMO website, electoral candidates' movable and immovable assets are in the public domain, and the assets and liabilities of Supreme Court judges were made public last year.

Pilibhit

Commission for further vetting. The erring officers shall not be reinstated without the prior approval of the Commission."

It further directed the CEO to have BNS Section 198, which pertains to a public servant disobeying the law, added to the FIRs against the two officials and a computer operator Anil Kumar.

The EC also sought a report within one week about the scrutiny of electoral rolls of Pilibhit. "All the DEOs/EROs in the State may be directed to thoroughly re-examine the electoral rolls under their jurisdiction, especially data feeding of the addition, deletion or modifications done through Forms 6, 7 or 8," the EC said.

Also on Saturday, the UP CEO ordered the deactivation of passwords for computer operators at ERO offices in the state following allegations of misuse.

Complaints about tampering in the Pilibhit constituency surfaced after several voters whose names had figured in the final roll published on April 10, after the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), said their names had been replaced with others against their EPIC numbers.

Congress and Samajwadi Party leaders claimed the discrepancies were widespread. They also alleged that many changes were made late at night, on Sundays and on public holidays, when the EC was not carrying out any revision.

Following the complaints, UP's CEO ordered an inquiry, which found that 13,779 Form 8 applications seeking corrections were filed between May 31 and August 29, and that 10,470 of them were approved without physical forms or supporting documents. The probe flagged irregularities in all 10,470 approved entries. Subsequently, departmental proceedings were initiated against Goswami and Chaudhary, and the computer assistant was sacked.

Manipur

another 24 hours on Saturday.

According to the Manipur Police control room, multiple search operations were launched following the disappearance of the two youths. Initial searches involved joint teams of Manipur Police, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), and Assam Rifles.

On Sunday, a joint team comprising Manipur Police, the Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA), CRPF, Assam Rifles and the Rapid Action Force (RAF) conducted an extensive search operation in the general area east of National Highway-2 along the Senapati Phaibung Road.

The police said search and combing operations would continue to identify and apprehend those responsible for the killings.

The circumstances surrounding the deaths and the identities of those responsible for them remain under investigation.

The recovery of the bodies triggered widespread protests in Kangpokpi, with residents taking to the streets after the bodies were brought to the District Hospital.

With the situation becoming more tense, police shifted the bodies to the Kangpokpi SP's office. Security personnel fired several rounds of tear gas shells to disperse protesters gathered in large numbers in front of the SP office.

Meanwhile, the CoTU refused to claim the bodies of the two youths until the government fulfilled its charter of demands.

CoTU spokesperson Ng, Lun Kipgen outlined a five-point charter of demands, including the immediate removal of Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dikho for his alleged failure to secure the safe release of the abducted youths.

The other demands include the immediate transfer of the case to the National Investigation Agency (NIA); rectification of police jurisdiction by transferring Taphou Kuki village from Senapati police jurisdiction to Kangpokpi; removal of the NSCN-IM's Huthrong Brigade from its Oklong Camp in Senapati district; and the immediate arrest of those involved in the abduction and killing of the two youths.

Mahadev betting scam

The scam relates to alleged money-laundering totalling an estimated Rs 6,000 crore by the Mahadev app's promoters through "illegal acts of online betting" on various social media platforms.

Sources said Indian authorities had been trying to trace Chandrakar, who hails from Bhilai in Chhattisgarh, since 2023. Recently, the ED found that he was in Oman, after which the central agencies began coordinating with the authorities there to secure his extradition.

"He was located and detained by the Royal Oman Police on the basis of a Red Corner Notice issued against him, following which the CBI and the ED sent formal extradition proposals to the Sultanate of Oman along with the evidence gathered against him. Upon his extradition being granted, a CBI team travelled to Muscat and escorted him back to India," a CBI spokesperson said.

The CBI took up investigation of the Mahadev app case on the request of the Chhattisgarh government. "The investigation revealed that the syndicate was one of the largest illegal online betting operations in the country and was run from outside India, offering illegal betting on cricket, football, card games and other events through a network of franchised panels and branches across India that enrolled users and collected stakes from them," the spokesperson said.

"The proceeds of betting were routed through a large number of mule bank accounts, layered through multiple transactions and moved abroad through hawala channels. The investigation further revealed that part of the proceeds was used to pay protection money to public servants so that the syndicate could operate without hindrance," the spokesperson said.

The chargesheets in the scam have been filed under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, and IPC provisions relating to criminal conspiracy, cheating and forgery, along with the Chhattisgarh Gambling (Prohibition) Act. The total value of properties attached, seized or frozen in the case registered under the PMLA stands at around Rs 4,336 crore.

The Raipur Zonal Office of the ED issued a Provisional Attachment Order (PAO) on March 24 this year and attached 20 immovable properties worth Rs 1,700 crore, including 18 in Dubai and two in New Delhi. The agency alleged that the properties belong to Chandrakar, are held in the names of entities controlled by him and his associates, and were acquired from proceeds of crime generated through illegal online betting operations linked to the Mahadev platform and other similar applications.

The assets included luxury villas and high-end apartments in some of Dubai's most premium locations, including the Burj Khalifa. In 2023, his lavish Rs 200-crore wedding in Dubai, where family members arrived in private jets and the guest list included Bollywood celebrities, made headlines.

Other key accused in the case, believed to be based abroad, are Vikas Chapria, Ravi Shankar Dibrewal, Amit Agrawal and Ravi Uppal. "We are trying to get Chandrakar, Uppal and Chapria declared as fugitive economic offenders under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act. The application is pending consideration in the Raipur special court," ED counsel Saurabh Kumar Pandey had said earlier.

According to agencies, Chandrakar, a former clothes salesman in Bhilai who also ran a juice centre, teamed up with another key accused, Ravi Uppal, to create the betting platform in 2018. Apart from an Indian passport, Chandrakar holds a passport of the Republic of Vanuatu in the South Pacific Ocean. So far, 13 accused have been arrested in the case by the ED. Police sources said the Mahadev betting app racket is still operational but under different names.

The ED initiated investigations on the basis of multiple FIRs registered by the Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal Police. "These attachments are part of its broader crackdown on the multi-state online betting syndicate that functioned through websites such as Tiger Exchange, Gold365 and Laser247. The operation followed a franchise-like "panel/ branch" model managed by local operators, while alleged masterminds Chandrakar and Ravi Uppal controlled the network from Dubai," an official said.

Kolhapur

front of all of them for the sake of transparency," he says, adding that auctions are more frequent during Dussehra and Diwali as more series are announced.

"Sometimes, we get as many as 12,000 applications for two-wheeler numbers in new series and auctions can go up to three hours... Since registrations in Kolhapur start with MH09, numbers that have 9 or add up to 9 are very popular here," he says, recounting an incident where a bidder paid Rs 1.5 lakh for the number 1008 for a motorcycle that cost far less.

Sanjeev Bhor, RTO, says that "in cities, people opt for special numbers like 1 or 1000". "In Pune, I know of an incident when four people wanted 1212 that follows the Pune series MH12 even though it was priced at Rs 3 lakh. But here, it's the family number that the residents opt for. It's like following a tradition that has now also become a trend and even a status symbol," he says.

The residents of Prayag Chikhali have now moved a step further. All those with special vehicle numbers have also started taking mobile numbers ending with the same four digits. "My vehicles have the number 3500, so my mobile also ends with 3500 now," says Patil, the sarpanch.

Sting op

present at the Union Minister's residence. Last week, the Central Crime Branch (CCB) had arrested Pandey from Delhi and brought him to Bengaluru. Eventually, Pandey secured bail but the police had recorded his statement.

Singh said, "The investigating teams are doing different investigations from various angles... Ritesh Pandey, one of the accused from Delhi, has disclosed in his statement that he, on the instructions of one Prajwal Prasad, had gone along with Vinod Sharma to a mobile shop in Karol Bagh in Delhi and purchased a mobile."

"After the purchase, both Ritesh Pandey and Vinod Sharma returned to Kushak Road in New Delhi – to the residence of Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy – and handed over the particular mobile to Prajwal Prasad, who was inside. This is as per the statement of Pandey, who was working on the instructions of Prasad. All these three people are supposedly working for the social media team of that office," the Police Commissioner added.

Sharing more details of the investigation, Singh said, "As of now, we have issued notices to Vinod Sharma and Prajwal Prasad. Both of them have not replied to the notices and they are absconding, and they have, as per our information, applied for anticipatory bail. Further investigation in this will only be possible once we interrogate these two persons. We have got technical evidence which may be in terms of CCTV, in terms of other technical details, and financial transactions between Prajwal Prasad and Ritesh Pandey. So, whatever the statement as of now given by Ritesh Pandey regarding the mobile phone... he has repeatedly said the name of Prajwal Prasad and that he had gone along with Vinod Sharma. These are being verified."

Asked whether Kumaraswamy had been issued any notice or whether his direct involvement in the alleged sting operation had been established, Singh said that investigation is underway and it is too early to draw conclusions.

On Sunday, addressing the media at Kalaburagi, Karnataka Home Minister Priyank Kharge said, "The police have collected technical evidence and it has indicated the residence of Kumaraswamy and his associates. What I am saying is not circumstantial evidence, but hard, technical and irrefutable evidence that a Union Minister is indulging in dirty politics to malign senior leaders like Siddaramaiah, DK Shivakumar and Mallikarjun Kharge." He added: "This is just the trailer; the movie is yet to come."

Kharge's statement comes at a time when Siddaramaiah is in New Delhi and is expected to meet Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

Responding to the police commissioner's statement, Kumaraswamy on Sunday evening said, "I will give full details on Monday. I will tell you who this sting operation will boomerang on. Who is this police commissioner? Is he a police commissioner? He has given a statement worse than that of a head clerk. Whose obligation is he working under?"

He added: "I know what the commissioner is doing to save his post. I will tell you what is going on inside the department... I know which direction the investigation into the sting operation is taking and how far it is going. I will tell you how this government is functioning. This government and these officers cannot touch Kumaraswamy. They cannot take on Kumaraswamy so easily."

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

INDO-TIBETAN BORDER POLICE(ITBP)



Assistant Commandant Ashok Kumar Rana

ITBP salutes its braveheart Assistant Commandant Ashok Kumar Rana of 19th Battalion, who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty on this day in Jammu & Kashmir in 1998.

BORDER SECURITY FORCE



SH R S RATHORE, DC 30 BN BSF 22.02.1948 – 02.11.1990



NAIK KARTAR CHAND 30 BN BSF 02.11.1951 – 02.11.1990



CT JAMIR HUSSAIN 30 BN BSF 05.12.1970 – 02.11.1990



CT VEER SINGH 30 BN BSF 10.10.1970 – 02.11.1990



CT RAJBIR SINGH YADAV 30 BN BSF 10.08.1965 – 02.11.1990



CT RAJ KUMAR 30 BN BSF 20.07.1969 – 02.11.1990

Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant officer Sh. R S Rathore, Deputy Commandant and Jawans Naik Kartar Chand, Constables Jamir Hussain, Veer Singh, Rajbir Singh Yadav & Rajkumar on their Balidan Diwas. On this day, they sustained fatal bullet injuries while fighting militants in Moreh area, Manipur and made ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.



CONSTABLE DILBAG SINGH 35 BN BSF 01.01.1968 – 02.11.1998

Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Constable Dilbag Singh on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he sustained fatal bullet injuries in Counterpart firing in area of BOP Londi, Samba, Jammu and later succumbed to his injuries at 171 MH hospital, Samba, Jammu.



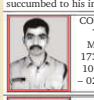
CONSTABLE SOLANKI CHHANA BHAI 106 BN BSF 01.06.1966 – 02.11.2000

Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Constable Solanki Chhana Bhai on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he sustained fatal bullet injuries in Counterpart firing in area of FDL LP-III, Naugam (J&K) and made ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.



SUB INSPECTOR H S SRINIWASAN 112 BN BSF 10.06.1954 – 02.11.2005

Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Subordinate officer Sub Inspector H S Sriniwasan on his Balidan Diwas. On 26th Oct 2005, he sustained fatal injuries in an IED blast triggered by militants on Srinagar-Baramulla Highway and later succumbed to his injuries at 92 Base hospital on 2nd Nov 2005.



CONSTABLE TAPAN MANDAL 173 BN BSF 10.05.1992 – 02.11.2017

Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Constable Tapan Mandal on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he sustained fatal bullet injuries in Counterpart firing in area of BOP Mangushak, Jammu and made ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.



HEAD CONSTABLE ASHRAF K 143 BN BSF 15.11.1967 – 02.11.2006

Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Head Constable Ashraf K on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he sustained fatal bullet injuries in a fierce encounter with militants in Srinagar area, J&K and made ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE FORCE

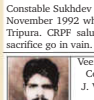


Veer Balidani Naik S. Sivadasan 64 Bn 10-4-1951 To 2-11-1992



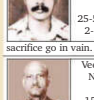
Veer Balidani Constable Sukhdev Singh 64 Bn 4-1-1971 To 2-11-1992

DG and all Ranks of #CRPF pay solemn tribute to Naik S. Sivadasan and Constable Sukhdev Singh of 64 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice on 2 November 1992 while valiantly countering an ambush by insurgents in Tripura. CRPF salutes the bravehearts and pledges never to let their sacrifice go in vain.



Veer Balidani Constable J. Valasalan 77 Bn 25-5-1969 To 2-11-1997

DG and all Ranks of #CRPF pay solemn tribute to Constable J. Valasalan of 77 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice on 2 November 1997 while valiantly leading a counter-attack against insurgents during an ambush in Manipur. CRPF salutes the bravehearts and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.



Veer Balidani SI Navin Chand 50 BN 15-12-1953 To 2-11-2007



Veer Balidani Head Constable/Fitter P. N. Tiwari 50 BN 5-10-1972 To 2-11-2007



Veer Balidani Head Constable A. D. Barma 50 BN 10-6-1969 To 2-11-2007



Veer Balidani Head Constable/Driver Anil Kumar Rai 50 BN 25-1-1967 To 2-11-2007



Veer Balidani Constable Sahadev Chandra Roy 50 BN 16-5-1973 To 2-11-2007



Veer Balidani Constable Prashantha Bora 50 BN 1-7-1988 To 2-11-2007

DG and all Ranks of #CRPF pay solemn tribute to six bravehearts of 50 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice on 2 November 2007 while countering an ambush by insurgents in Assam. CRPF salutes the bravehearts and pledges never to let their sacrifice go in vain.

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Last date for tender submission November 30, 2026

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एसबीपी – 90, शास्त्री नगर, गाजियाबाद – 201002
ई–मेल: cdspmunit31@gmail.com
प्रधान कार्यालय : टी0सी0–38वी0, विभूति खण्ड, इण्डियन ऑयल के पास, गोमती नगर, लखनऊ–226010

निविदा सूचना सं0: 1976/Vividh-12/341
दिनांक : 31.10.2026

ई–निविदा सूचना

उत्तर प्रदेश जल निगम की ओर से अधोहस्ताक्षरी द्वारा **Construction of Digital Study Centre at Nagar Panchayat Narora, Distt-Bulandshahr,** अनुमानित लागत रू0 **106.74** लाख (जी0एस0टी0 रहित एवं लेबर सेस सहित) हेतु सी0एण्ड0 डी0एस0 में यथोचित श्रेणी में भवन कार्य हेतु पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से दिनांक **30.11.2026** के अपराह्न **16:00** बजे तक अल्पकालीन ई–निविदाएं आमन्त्रित की जाती हैं। उक्त कार्य हेतु ई–निविदा प्रपत्र दिनांक **02.11.2026** से दिनांक **30.11.2026** के मध्य उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार की e-procurement वेबसाइट **https://etender.up.nic.in** से डाउनलोड किये जा सकते हैं तथा ई–निविदा दिनांक **01.12.2026** को पूर्वान्ह **14:30** बजे सी0एण्ड0 डी0एस0, यूनिट–31, उ0प्र0 जल निगम, गाजियाबाद में निविदा खोली जायेंगी। ई–निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य रू0 **10,000.00+GST(18%)** अतिरिक्त देय होगा। निविदा से सम्बन्धित विस्तृत विवरण विभाग की वेबसाइट **www.cdsupjn.org** एवं प्रोक्योरमेन्ट पोर्टल **https://etender.up.nic.in** पर उपलब्ध है। समस्त शुद्धिपत्र (Corrigendum) **https://etender.up.nic.in** पर ही अपलोड किये जायेंगे, इनका पृथक से कोई प्रकाशन नहीं किया जायेगा। निविदादाताओं को सलाह दी जाती है कि वे उक्त वेबसाईट का समय–समय पर अवलोकन करते रहें।

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L-G to meet cops amid protest call against transfers

Sakshi Chand
New Delhi, November 1

AS DELHI Police personnel plan a protest against the transfer of two officers, LG Taranjit Singh Sandhu is scheduled to interact with officers at Utsav Sadan, Kingsway Camp, on Tuesday.

According to a Delhi Police circular, district and unit heads have been directed to nominate personnel for the interaction.

Assistant Commissioner of Police Manasvi Vashistha, who was posted in Gandhi Nagar subdivision, and Inspector Arun Kumar, station house officer, Shahdara police station, were transferred after an advocate allegedly sustained a serious injury in a scuffle at on October 23. The incident led to an indefinite strike by district court lawyers, who demanded action against the officers. They called off the strike after the transfer orders were issued on October 28.

Messages reportedly began circulating in Delhi Police WhatsApp groups, asking personnel to gather outside the headquarters at 8 am on Monday to seek restoration of the previous postings of the officers.

In a video that circulated on October 31, ACP Vashistha thanked his colleagues for their support and said he would join the proposed gathering. However, he suggested that personnel should instead seek an open discussion with the Police Commissioner. He also sought the option of joining the interaction via videoconferencing for those unable to attend in person.

The police circular directs all districts and traffic wings to nominate 20 personnel each. The Crime Branch and Anti-Narcotics Task Force should detail 15 personnel each. The Special Branch, Special Cell, Vigilance, Delhi Police Academy, SPUWAC, SPUNER, Security, FRRO, and IFSO have been told to nominate 10 personnel each. The nominated officers will have to report at Utsav Sadan Tuesday. Officers of North West District and Delhi Armed Police battalions have also been told to attend the programme.

OPPOSITION PROTESTS AGAINST 'IRREGULARITIES' IN SIR

'SIR cost many their votes... fight has just begun': Praise, support for Rahul-led rally

Pragynesh
New Delhi, November 1

"I HAD come here to join the march. It was grand. I haven't seen anything of this scale yet ... That's how a party organises a protest ... so many people," Priyank Rawat, an IT professional from Gurugram, said on Sunday.

He was a participant of the 'Chalo Dilli' march, led by Congress MP and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi to demand the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar. It began from the Minto Road-Connaught Place junction and ended at Ramlila Maidan, where a rally of the INDIA bloc was scheduled. Rahul, along with other leaders of the INDIA bloc, travelled in an open-top vehicle to Ramlila Maidan.

Rawat, who claims to have taken part in "every anti-SIR protest in Delhi held so far", said he did not go to Ramlila Maidan. "That's more like a rally. We were here, at the march. I am going home now," he said.



At Ramlila Maidan on Sunday. ABHINAV SAHA

Young protesters at march

The groups of young protesters who just came to be part of the march, could not be seen carrying flags of any political outfit unlike the people who later assembled at Ramlila Maidan and who belonged to the INDIA bloc parties.

Traffic snarls

Traffic had come to a standstill during the march, with Minto Road and other stretches having witnessed long snarls.

Buses ferrying supporters were also stopped near Rani Jhansi Road, following which several of them walked for over two kms to attend the rally at the ground.

By 3:30 pm, however, just when Rahul finished his speech, the ground was left with multiple empty chairs — with many even stuck in mud.

As other INDIA bloc leaders, including RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, SP's Akhilesh Yadav, took to the stage, cheers from supporters still filled the air.

Protesters subsequently started streaming out of the ground. Workers of various parties, who had arrived in the Capital from other states to join the rally, were headed home.

A Telangana Congress worker, Laxman, clad in a white kurta-pyjama, said around 15,000 people had come from Telangana and Hyderabad.

"We arrived in the morning by train to show our support. We won't leave the city unless Rahul Gandhi asks us to. The SIR process cost so many people their votes. The fight has just started," he says.

Another contingent led by one Binoi Shah, arrived from Keralam. Shah said thousands of people arrived from the south-Indian state.

"We reached Delhi by train around 6 am. We were at the Kerala Bhavan... then joined Rahul Gandhi's march. He talked about 10 lakh people. We can bring 15 lakh," he said, slowly losing his voice.

Another 1,000-odd Congress workers travelled from Punjab and Haryana through the Dwarka Expressway, in buses on Sunday, a supporter said. Some of them, along with supporters from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, stood holding a giant roll of paper bearing details of many of the 13 crore voters whose names were allegedly struck off the electoral rolls during the SIR exercise.

It was after the leaders and supporters left that traffic eased in Connaught Place and shops started to open.

'You chose political drama, politics of anarchy': CM jabs Rahul Gandhi

Alok Singh
New Delhi, November 1



CM Rekha Gupta, Union Minister Hardeep Puri and others during the march in New Delhi on Sunday. X/@GUPTA_REKHA

AS CONGRESS leader Rahul Gandhi and other INDIA bloc leaders held a protest at Ramlila Maidan on Sunday alleging irregularities in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and other senior BJP leaders in the Capital took part in a march and attacked him for organising the demonstration on the anniversary of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

The march, organised from Hari Nagar Depot to Tilak Nagar Metro Station, was also attended by Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Delhi BJP president Harsh Malhotra and Delhi ministers Manjinder Singh Sirsa and Ashish Sood, besides members of the Sikh community.

Gupta questioned the Congress's claims of upholding democracy and asked, "Was what happened in November 1984 not the murder of democracy?" Thousands of Sikh families, she said, had lost their loved ones and continue to wait for justice even after 42 years.

She added, "Rahul Gandhi *ji*, merely carrying a copy of the Constitution means little if its values are not upheld. Today was a day to express remorse, apologise to the victims' families and acknowledge the horrors of 1984. Instead, you chose political drama, a politics of anarchy and a desperate pursuit of power over remorse and accountability for Congress's bloodstained legacy of 1984."

Targeting the Congress and the Gandhi family, she said they could not evade responsibility. Drawing a parallel with the Emergency imposed in 1975, she said those who spoke about democratic values must also answer for their past.

Puri said: "Our Gurdwara Sahibs were attacked, properties and homes of Sikhs were burnt to the ground. The streets were littered with bodies of murdered Sikhs."

He said those who now talk of "*mohabbat*" are the original founding fathers of "Hate Against Sikhs." They should be ashamed and repentant. Yet they shamelessly sheltered and protected several perpetrators and facilitators in their party and helped them evade justice.

"It took the firm resolve of PM Narendra Modi Ji who took strong measures to ensure that many perpetrators of the gruesome violence and massacre, who were protected, and even promoted by Congress Party were eventually brought to justice. But our Sangat will not rest till the last remaining perpetrator is punished by law," Puri said.

"Sirsa, meanwhile, questioned the Congress's decision to hold a rally on the anniversary, saying it had reopened the wounds of affected families.

The sharp comments came as Gandhi targeted Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi as he shared the stage with Opposition leaders.

"This (*vote chori*) is not regular *chori*. It is theft of the voice of every person," Gandhi said, claiming that over 13.5 crore people were removed from electoral rolls. He described it as a "rarest of rare" case and "treason", and that Kumar would "go to jail," while claiming that "without Gyanesh Kumar, Narendra Modi wouldn't have become PM and Amit Shah wouldn't be Home Minister." He claimed that INDIA bloc would protect the democracy in the country.

Strict BS-VI checks for rally supporters at Gurugram border, Noida goes easy

Drishti Jain and Pragynesh
New Delhi, November 1

EVEN AS large convoys of vehicles were headed to INDIA bloc's rally against alleged SIR irregularities at Ramlila Maidan in the Capital on Sunday, the enforcement of checks for non-BS-VI vehicles varied along Noida and Gurugram borders. While Gurugram saw stricter checks, many such non-compliant vehicles were allowed to enter the Capital from Uttar Pradesh.

Around noon, a cluster of seven buses, followed by some older ones, led by SUVs— including Scorpios and Fortuners — lined up at the Dwarka Expressway toll, ready to enter Delhi from Haryana.

Soon after, the Haryana Police officers started rounding the vehicles up. The brand-new SUVs were allowed to pass, but the old ragged buses — with 200 odd people, carrying Indian flags and Congress banners, aboard — were stopped. None of them were BS-VI compliant.

As the Congress supports came out of the buses, police personnel tried to stop them.

Some of them remove the plastic barricades, and start protesting. Slogans such as "*Vote chor, gaddi chor*" rent the air as commuters honked trying to get past a 2-km jam that ensued. "They have only left this small space open to let vehicles pass from here. They are just trying to slow us down," said Manish, a party worker, claiming that the checks were meant to stop protesters.

Some of the non-compliant buses were then rerouted via Udyog Vihar. "You think we are fools, where we will go from there. How will we reach," an elderly woman protestor told the policemen after coming out. Others hopped on to vehicles that were allowed to let go.

On the other hand, till 1 pm, buses carrying members of farmer unions and several Opposition parties entered the Capital via Chilla border connecting Delhi and Noida.

According to a Delhi Police officer, senior officers told them not to be very strict with checks on the vehicles carrying them.

"I stopped one private bus carrying around 40 people going to join the rally. It was not BS-VI compliant. The driver took a U-turn, asked the protestors to get down. They were then walking towards Delhi. But within 30 minutes, while I was checking another vehicle, I saw the same bus speeding and passing by. Soon an officer on a bike followed it and stopped it," he said.

However barring one such crackdown, the officers on duty said they mostly resorted to just noting down the number of such cars and buses crossing the border.

The police was maintaining a register carrying the details of the vehicles they were checking, with the number, name of the driver and violations being noted. On the same register, two columns were made, each had numbers of cars and buses crossing to join the rally. "By 1:30, at least 81 cars and 10 has passed," the officer said.

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TRAFFIC SNARLS IN AREAS NEAR CAPITAL'S BORDER AS ANTI-POLLUTION MEASURES COME INTO FORCE

DAY 1 OF BS-VI CHECKS

Non-compliant vehicles turned back from the border instead of imposition of fines; focus is on spreading awareness, say officials

714 vehicles turned back, 38 end-of-life vehicles impounded

Alok Singh, Drishti Jain & Pragynesh
New Delhi, November 1

ON SUNDAY, 40 enforcement teams comprising around 250 officials from the Delhi Transport Department and Delhi Police were deployed across the national capital to restrict the entry of non-BS-VI vehicles, as the Delhi government's winter pollution control measures came into force.

According to Delhi Police, 7,249 vehicles were checked, 714 were asked to go back and 38 end-of-life vehicles were impounded. "On the first day, very few vehicles were challaned as the main aim was to spread awareness about the new restrictions," a senior police officer said.

Teams were posted at key entry points along the Delhi border, including toll plazas, and at major pollution hotspots. The Transport Department also asked toll plazas fitted with automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras to stop vehicles below BS-VI standards from entering.



Traffic snarls ensued at Delhi-Gurugram border on Sunday as fresh rules were enforced. GAJENDRA YADAV

Day 1 of enforcement

On the first day, enforcement teams were seen largely sending non-BS-VI vehicles back from the border rather than penalising them, with officers saying the aim was to prevent such vehicles from entering the city and to advise motorists.

"In majority of cases, the registered outside Delhi were asked to return if they did not meet the BS-VI emission standards," a Transport Department sub-inspector at the Ghazipur crossing with Uttar Pradesh said. "However, non-BS-VI vehicles registered in Delhi without a valid PUC certificate, or with an expired one, were challaned."

The number of challans issued on the first day was small. At Anand Vihar ISBT, a pollution hotspot on the Uttar Pradesh border, a traffic police official said about 30 challans had been issued by 2 p.m., roughly half for PUC violations. "At Nand Nagri, about 40 challans had been issued by 3 p.m," an official posted at the border said.

At the Singhu border, officers turned back several four-wheelers and trucks, including a JCB crane arriving from Sonipat whose papers showed it met only BS-III standards. A head constable took the driver's licence and registration certificate and told him to make a U-turn under a flyover ahead. "Since it was the first day, our primary focus was on advising people," an officer at Singhu said, adding that general challans had been issued alongside the PUC fines.

Enforcement action also differed from border to border, depending on the kind of vehicles trying to enter.

At Ghazipur, teams mostly concentrated on penalising vehicles with expired PUC certificates. A senior traffic official said that from morning till 5 p.m., only a handful of non-BS-VI vehicles had arrived and had to be returned, as almost all were BS-VI. "Along with this drive, we're focusing on PUC certificates as well and on two-wheelers not wearing helmets," the officer said. Another officer said trucks that met the emission norms were being let through. "Only one such has been sent back since this morning."

At Kalindi Kunj, a banner on one of the police barricades said the entry of non-destination vehicles was also prohibited. "Goods vehicles whose destination is outside Delhi must use the Eastern or Western Peripheral Expressway or other alternative routes," it read. A traffic officer there said this was the bigger focus. "We have sent around 15 such trucks since morning who wanted to go to Faridabad and Gurgaon via Delhi," the officer said at 3 p.m., while directing a BS-VI truck driver who said he was headed to Sarita Vihar: "Ask your manager to send a receipt of your parcel."

Too few hands, some confusion

On the first day, along the Uttar Pradesh border, traffic officers described a day of thin staffing.

On the Delhi-Noida Direct Flyway, two traffic officers faced four open lanes of Delhi-bound traffic, their eyes fixed on trucks and loaders. About 30 metres before the toll, one ran diagonally across the road, whistling and signalling with his right hand.

"We're only two officers here, how will we stop each vehicle to check?" one said. "We're still trying our best.

But some drivers run past at very high speed." At each truck that did halt, the second officer asked the question he had learned that morning: "Show your registration card, licence and PUC."

At a few border points, personnel from the Uttar Pradesh and Haryana Police were also seen assisting Delhi Police in checking vehicles. Officials said one reason for the shortage was the Congress rally at Ramlila Maidan, which had pulled many traffic teams away from the borders. Some constables worked double shifts. "I came at 7 and will be here till 11 at night, till someone replaces us," one said.

AT A GLANCE

40
TOTAL ENFORCEMENT TEAMS DEPLOYED

- **Enforcement** on Day 1 focuses on border checks
- **Vehicles** without pollution under control certificates mostly face fines
- **Around 250** personnel from the Delhi Transport Department and Delhi Police were deployed across the Capital.
- **Around 48 lakh** non-BS-VI vehicles, including two-wheelers, cars, goods vehicles and buses, are registered in NCR districts adjoining Delhi
- **More** personnel set to be deployed today

At Anand Vihar ISBT, a pollution hotspot on the Uttar Pradesh border, a traffic police official said about 30 challans had been issued by 2 pm, roughly half for PUC violations

Skywatch

Forecast: November 2, 2026
Mainly clear sky, no rain
MAX: 28-31
.5°C below normal
MIN: 16-18
0.5°C above normal

- *Sunrise: 6:34 AM (November 3)*
- *Sunset: 5:36 PM (November 2)*
- *Moonrise: 12:41 AM (November 3)*
- *Moonset: 1:28 PM (November 2)*

AQI Tracker

JNU Very Poor AQI: 328	Bawana Very Poor AQI: 341
Anand Vihar Poor AQI: 215	ITO Very Poor AQI: 335

- Good (0-50)
- Satisfactory (51-100)
- Moderate (101-200)
- Poor (201-300)
- Very Poor (301-400)
- Severe (401-500)





Checks underway in Ghazipur in Delhi on Sunday. GAJENDRA YADAV

'Caught off guard, we didn't know,' say delivery drivers & many commuters

Drishti Jain & Pragynesh
New Delhi, November 1

ON THE first day of Delhi's ban on older vehicles, festival deliveries, anniversaries and breakfasts were all stopped at border police checkpoints and turned back.

Amit, 18, left his office in Gurgaon's Sector 102 on Sunday morning in a BS-III mini-truck, carrying household goods for two drop-offs in Noida, including one at Atta Market in Sector 18. Traffic police asked where he was headed as he entered Noida, then stopped him twice more inside the city. They fined him and his co-worker Rs 10,000, he said.

By the time he reached the DND Flyway, he was stranded again. "Now we have been stopped for the fourth time," he said. He had called his manager repeatedly to ask what to do. "I just don't understand these new rules," he said.

Until now, Delhi barred vehicles that do not meet the BS-VI emissions standard only when the air turned severe and the third stage of its pollution action plan, GRAP 3, was invoked. GRAP 3 was not in force on Sunday. This time, the Delhi government imposed the ban as a preventive measure, for the first time, ahead of the winter pollution season.

Many drivers said they had no idea it had begun, and weekend travelers and professional drivers alike were turned back at the border. In Noida, where GRAP 1 is in place, BS-III vehicles have been banned from entering the city.

Tarun, who left his home in Noida's Sector 9 around 11 a.m. for breakfast with friends at a Bikanerwala in Mayur Vihar, never made it across the Chilla border. A Delhi traffic officer waved him over and told him his diesel car was BS-IV and he would have to turn around.

Tarun knew about the GRAP 3 rule, like several others. "But I did not expect it to apply without GRAP 3 in place," he said.

"Restrictions like this keeps commuters like us out of Delhi until next year. This cannot be a long-term solution," he said. "'Till when will you stop every one of them?"

Vishnu Kumar, an IT professional in his mid-30s, had crossed from Delhi into Gurugram on the Dwarka Expressway on Saturday in his BS-IV Maruti Swift, headed to a farmhouse for a small anniversary party with his wife. On Sunday morning, traffic police stopped them at the Bijwasan toll plaza on the way back.

"But yesterday no one stopped me," Vishnu told a group of traffic officers. "Please, I crossed yesterday, let me go."

"It was imposed only today," one officer replied. "If we let you go, someone else will stop you." The officer advised a detour through Manesar and onto the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway, which, according to Google Maps, would stretch his 90-minute trip home to Greater Noida into at least three hours.

For those who drive for a living, the ban hit harder. At another Delhi-Haryana toll plaza on the Dwarka Expressway, Hamza, a Porter delivery partner from Nizamuddin, stood beside his parked minitruck. He had entered Gurugram early that morning to deliver goods and was stopped on the way back for lacking BS-VI certification.

"I remember there was checking last year as well, but no one stopped me, so I couldn't have anticipated this," he said. "Now I don't know how to reach home." The scene repeated itself along the DND and at Kalindi Kunj, the other Uttar Pradesh crossings. One truck driver told an officer that his owner had given him no warning and kept his driving license, leaving him with only the registration and pollution certificates. "Get them on WhatsApp," the officer told hm.

Nearby, a man in his early 30s, who asked not to be named, ran across four lanes of traffic to ask two officers whether all BS-IV vehicles were barred from Delhi. They told him yes. His father, who runs a transport business in Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, had called him on Sunday morning after two of the family's trucks were stopped at the DND. "This is the festive season," he said. "How many trips can we make in just these four months? No contractor will pay us if we can't take his festival goods to Delhi. Where will we earn money during the pollution season?"

Metro, DTC may step up services, more boots on the ground expected on Day 2

Express News Service
New Delhi, November 1

THE DELHI Transport Department and the Traffic Police are planning to deploy additional personnel at the city's borders and pollution hotspots on Monday as the fresh anti-winter pollution measures, including those against non-BS-VI vehicles, enter the second day.

With traffic movement expected to increase on the first working day after the enforcement of the curbs, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) and the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) may also be asked to increase service frequency during peak office hours to accommodate commuters, said officials.

On Sunday, 40 enforcement teams, each led by an officer of the rank of sub-inspector, were deployed across the city. The teams have been tasked with preventing the entry of non-BS-VI vehicles and checking vehicles found violating pollution norms.



At the Gurugram border. GAJENDRA YADAV

A senior police official said the department was in regular coordination with the Transport department and that additional personnel would remain on standby on Monday. Their deployment would be increased depending on the situation.

"The government has already advised government and private offices to ensure that 50% of their employees work from home. Therefore, the situation may not be very problematic. However, we are prepared to enforce the restrictions while ensuring smooth traffic movement at the borders," the officer said.

The officer added that the authorities could ask the DMRC and bus operators to increase service frequency during peak hours to facilitate the movement of office-goers.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta had said the Winter Action Plan was being implemented through coordination among the Centre, the Delhi government, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), local bodies, Delhi Police, the DMRC and other agencies. She had also said public participation would be central to the campaign.

As part of measures to curb vehicular emissions and traffic congestion, the government has directed government and private offices to allow 50% of their employees to work from home from November 1. It has also revised office timings, with Municipal Corporation of Delhi offices scheduled to function from 8.30 am to 5 pm and Delhi government offices from 10 am to 6.30 pm.

Parking charges at authorised parking facilities have been doubled, excluding those at Metro stations, to discourage the use of private vehicles.

The government has also set a target of increasing daily ridership on the Delhi Metro to 72 lakh and on Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) buses to 42 lakh. Delhi currently has 6,840 buses, including 5,088 electric buses.

BY EVENING, VENDORS LINED UP ALONG A KEY STRETCH UP TO THE MCD TOLL BOOTH

A unique challenge for enforcement teams near Kapashera border — a weekend market

Large number of vehicles enter the Capital unchecked

Pragynesh
New Delhi, November 1

AS THE ban on the entry of non-BS-VI compliant vehicles in the Capital kicked off on Sunday, the enforcement teams saw a unique challenge at the Delhi-Gurugram border.

Hundreds of vendors occupied a key stretch near Kapashera, barricades became invisible, traffic police officers could not be seen, and vehicles passed by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) toll booth unchecked by evening — all because of the weekend market.

The main entry points from Gurugram to Delhi — the Rajokri border, the Dwarka Expressway toll, the Bijwasan border, and the Kapashera border — all had traffic police officers, Delhi Transport officials, and even Gurugram Police officers when the checking of vehicles started on Sunday morning.

By 2 pm, the Bijwasan area had already seen about 50 vehicles returning to Haryana from the border. At the Dwarka Expressway toll, buses and trucks were lined up on the side for checking, with both Gurugram Police and the Delhi Transport Department officials checking their pollution under check (PUC) certificates and other documents.

At Kapashera, two layers of barricades were placed between the police booth and the MCD toll plaza, on a single lane road, with police officers randomly stopping vehicles for inspection.

"They were checking them way ahead of the toll plaza. So most of them returned before coming to the toll booth," said an MCD official at the Kapashera toll booth.

However, by 5 pm, the weekly Sunday market had been set up at the border.

Vendors selling vegetables and clothes lined up the stretch till the toll plaza.

Hundreds of shoppers gathered and the single-lane road filled up with pedestrians.

There were hardly any police personnel, with trucks, tempos, old vehicles, bikes, all passing the barricades and customers on the single-lane road.

Most of the lanes of the toll plaza were also closed.

Only two were open, from where all vehicles from Gurugram were entering into the Capital, unchecked.

"We can't check these many vehicles. There were some police officers around an hour ago, but with the market, you can't stop anyone on the road. There would be hours-long commotion," said another MCD officer.

Meanwhile, a traffic police officer said, "Around 20 vehicles were returned from here by 2 pm for being below BS-6. Few PUC challans were also issued."



A large crowd turned up for the Sunday market. EXPRESS

Haryana's daughters have brought glory to nation: President Murmu

Express News Service
Chandigarh, November 1



President Droupadi Murmu being greeted by Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini during Diamond Jubilee celebrations on Haryana Day, in Kurukshetra on Sunday. EXPRESS

PRESIDENT DROUPADI Murmu on Sunday said Haryana's people have made significant contributions to the freedom struggle, social transformation, democracy, literature and science, during the Diamond Jubilee celebrations in Kurukshetra to mark 60 years of Haryana's formation.

On the occasion, she also unveiled the official Diamond Jubilee logo. Among those present were Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and state Governor Professor Asim Kumar Ghosh.

Murmu highlighted the contributions of Haryana's women to the country's political and scientific achievements. She said Sucheta Kripalani, born in Haryana, made history by becoming India's first woman Chief Minister. Shanno Devi, the first Speaker of the newly formed Haryana Legislative Assembly, had set an example of women's pioneering role in democratic institutions.

She also recalled the achievements of Kalpana Chawla, saying Haryana's daughter had reached the heights of space exploration and inspired countless girls. She pointed out that the national 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' campaign was launched from Panipat in January 2015 and had emerged as a significant initiative towards women's empowerment.

She also highlighted Haryana's contribution to sports. Murmu said the state's daughters had brought glory to the country on international platforms. She cited athletes, including Manu Bhaker, Sweety Boora and Jasmine Lamboria, as examples of women who had made Haryana proud.

Congratulating Haryana wrestler Manisha Bhanwala on winning gold at the ongoing World Wrestling Championships 2026 in Kazakhstan, the President said she created history by becoming the first Indian woman wrestler to win a gold medal at the championship.

Bengal: Kin of political violence victims since 2001 to get govt jobs

Ravik Bhattacharya
Kolkata, November 2



West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari offers prayers at Matua Thakur Mandir in North 24 Parganas on Sunday. ANI

SIX MONTHS after coming to power in West Bengal, the BJP government has launched a scheme to provide Group D jobs to one eligible family member of those killed in incidents of "political violence" in the state since January 1, 2001.

In a notification issued by the state Home and Hill Affairs Department on October 30, the government said additional Group D posts would be created for the scheme as a one-time exception for the victims of political violence.

"The state of West Bengal has witnessed numerous incidents of political violence, resulting in loss of human life and in many of those cases, those killed were the sole breadwinners of their families... In order to mitigate the economic hardship of the indigent families after the death of their breadwinner, and to extend dignified rehabilitative support to such families, the state government was actively considering providing government employment (Group D post) to one eligible family member of persons killed in political violence," the notification, signed by state Chief Secretary Manoj Agarwal, read.

As per the notification, only one dependent kin of a victim will be considered for appointment. The eligible dependents will include the spouse, son, daughter of the deceased or dependent unmarried siblings, the notification read.

"The claim that the death occurred due to political violence will have to be certified by a district-level screening committee based on the First Information Report, chargesheet and charges framed by a court," the notification read.

The application will go to the District Level Screening Committee, which will be headed by the District Magistrate as its chairperson. The State Level Committee, on the other hand, will be headed by the Additional Chief Secretary/Principal Secretary of the Home and Hill Affairs Department as chairperson.

The applicant must have attained 18 years of age as on January 1, 2026, and should not have crossed the maximum age limit prescribed for Group D recruitment on the date of application, it said. The scheme will come into force from the date of its publication in the gazette.

The first 11 years (2001-2011) of the past 25 years, West Bengal was under the CPI(M)-led Left Front rule. During this period, most of the political violence targeted members of the Opposition Congress and the Trinamool Congress, which was founded in 1998.

After TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee came to power in 2011, political violence against the Opposition – now the Left Front – increased.

Soon after coming to power earlier this year, the BJP government in West Bengal directed the state police to review all cases of political violence that took place in 2021 following the TMC's victory in the polls.

Rajasthan: Amid probe, IAS officer, IPS wife issued notice

Express News Service
New Delhi, November 1

THE RAJASTHAN government has issued show cause notices to senior IAS officer Shikhar Agrawal and his wife IPS officer Prashakha Mathur over allegations regarding their immovable assets.

In the notices issued by the Department of Personnel on October 30, both officers have been asked to furnish clarification within seven days.

"In the immovable property statements submitted by you online since 2021, no immovable property has been declared. However, various communications have been submitted to the State government — pursuant to the All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1986 — regarding transactions involving immovable properties by you, which took place after 2021... You are requested to provide clarification on this matter within 7 days," read the show cause notice.

Both officers have been put on Awaiting Posting Order for "administrative reasons".

CM: Will establish legal framework for Kannada flag display alongside Tricolour

Express News Service
Bengaluru, November 1



Karnataka CM D K Shivakumar hoists the Kannada flag alongside the Tricolour in Bengaluru on Sunday. ANI

KARNATAKA CHIEF Minister D K Shivakumar said Sunday that the government was considering granting official state flag status to the iconic red-and-yellow Kannada flag.

He said the government would initiate discussions on the proposal during the Belagavi Winter Session of the legislature in December.

The government is also considering making the hoisting of the Kannada flag mandatory at government offices and institutions receiving state support. Shivakumar also said an order encouraging private organisations to display the flag was under consideration.

Ahead of the 71st Kannada Rajyotsava (state formation day) celebrations, Shivakumar told reporters that the Congress government will establish a legal framework governing the Kannada flag's display alongside the Tricolour. The framework will provide detailed protocols, safeguards, and rules regarding the flag's use.

"I have just hoisted the Kannada flag alongside the national flag. We are taking steps to give it official status," he said, recalling that a previous Cabinet had passed a resolution and sent a proposal to the Centre seeking recognition, which is yet to receive approval.

The government is preparing legal and policy guidelines to ensure that the Kannada flag can be displayed with due dignity and in accordance with national regulations. Shivakumar said the issue would be opened for wider public and legislative debate during the Belagavi session.

Maoist-free Chhattisgarh tourism, investment hub now: Mandaviya

Press Trust of India
Raipur, November 1



Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Mansukh Mandaviya with Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai during the Rajyotsav-2026 function in Nava Raipur on Sunday. X

ONCE IDENTIFIED with Maoist violence, Chhattisgarh has been undergoing a transformation and emerging as a tourism hub and an attractive investment destination, Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said Sunday, addressing the inaugural ceremony of Rajyotsav-2026, Chhattisgarh's foundation day celebrations, in Nava Raipur.

He said Chhattisgarh has been contributing to India's journey towards becoming a developed nation.

"There was a time when the mention of Chhattisgarh immediately brought Maoism to people's minds. Tourists did not visit this region. But today, as the state celebrates 'Rajyotsav', Chhattisgarh has been emerging as a tourism hub," Mandaviya said.

"Under the leadership of CM Vishnu Deo Sai, Chhattisgarh has been changing and aligning its development journey with the vision of a developed India," Mandaviya said. Vishnu Deo Sai was also present on the occasion.

Mandaviya said Bastar is now hosting tribal sports events and the Bastar Olympics, while tourists are also visiting the region. "Chhattisgarh is changing. Today, not just national companies but multinational companies are also looking at the state as an attractive destination for investment and business," the Union Minister said.

He said sportspersons from Chhattisgarh have been making their mark at the national and international levels, while the state is also providing successful political leadership.

Referring to PM Narendra Modi's vision of making India a developed nation by 2047, Mandaviya said, "...Modi ji did not say that he alone would make India a developed nation. He said that all 140 crore people must collectively resolve to achieve this goal."

Recalling former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee's role in the formation of Chhattisgarh, carved out of MP on November 1, 2000, Mandaviya said Vajpayee's dream is now taking shape as the state progressed on the path of development.

He said Chhattisgarh had faced poverty, lack of basic facilities and resource constraints in its earlier years, but had gradually advanced under different governments. After the BJP returned to power in 2023, a double-engine government was formed, Mandaviya said.

Bengaluru-Mumbai Vande Bharat Sleeper Express flagged off

Bengaluru: Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw Sunday flagged off the Bengaluru-Mumbai Vande Bharat Sleeper Express, which is expected to reduce the journey duration by five hours. The train will depart SMVT Bengaluru at 7.45 pm and reach Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, Mumbai, at 11.55 am the following day. In the return journey, it will depart CSMT at 8:10 pm and reach SMVT Bengaluru at noon the next day.

Vaishnaw said the next Vande Bharat Sleeper service for Karnataka would originate from Bengaluru, connect northern parts of the state and proceed towards Mumbai. ENS

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POST GRADUATE DENTAL ADMISSION COUNSELLING (PGDAC)-2026
for MDS in Govt./ Private Dental colleges of Bihar

Advt. No.- BCECEB(PGDAC)-2026/08 Dated : 01.11.2026

Notice regarding Extension of Round-3 Online Counselling

In continuation to Adv. No. BCECEB(PGDAC)-2026/06 & 2026/07 dated 23.10.2026, it is informed to all eligible & interested NEET(MDS)-2026 qualified candidates and all concerned that in view of the Technical reason and Candidate's interest, the counselling programme for Online Registration & Submission of Application-cum-Choice filling / Consent for PGDAC-2026 is hereby extended as follows;

Extended Important Dates for PGDAC-2026 Round-3 Counselling :

i. **Last date** of online Registration ..... : 04.11.2026 (10:00 pm)
ii. Last date of submission of Application-cum-Choice Filling with payment through (Debit Card / Credit Card / Net Banking / UPI) / Editing of Application Form data / Editing of Choices ..... : 04.11.2026 (11.59 pm)
iii. **Consent** for Round-3 with Payment (if any) through (Debit Card / Credit Card / Net Banking/ UPI/ Editing of Application Form data/ Choice Filling/ Editing of Choices from such candidates who have already duly submitted the Application Form earlier ..... : 04.11.2026 (11.59 pm)
iv. **Publication of Rank Card** ..... : 10.11.2026
v. Last date of Choice Filling / Editing of Choices & Locking ..... : 10.11.2026 (11.59 pm)
vi. **Round-3 Provisional Seat Allotment Result publication** ..... : 12.11.2026
vii. Downloading of Provisional seat Allotment order ..... : 12.11.2026 to 14.11.2026
viii. Documents Verification and Admission ..... : 13.11.2026 to 14.11.2026

2. Rest of the terms / conditions for Round-3 Counselling mentioned in **Adv. No. BCECEB(PGDAC)-2026/06 Dated 23.10.2026 & 2026/04 Dated 02.10.2026** will remain the same.

Controller of Examination

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
(See Section 82 Cr.PC)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **Surender, S/o Ganga Ram R/o B-60, Rajeev Nagar, Begumpur, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No.470/16 u/s 12/9/55 DPG Act, P.S. Begumpur, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Surender** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Surender** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Surender** of **FIR No.470/16 u/s 12/9/55 DPG Act, P.S. Begumpur, Delhi** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **04.12.2026.**

By Order,
Ms. Anuradha Jindal
Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, North-West
Court No.101, 1st Floor, Rohini Courts, Delhi
DP/15735/RD/2026

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
(See Section 82 Cr.PC)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **Shailesh Poddar @ Bittu, S/o Kamal Kishore Poddar R/o H.No.19/62, Sec-7, Rohini, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No.423/16 u/s 279/337 IPC, P.S. Begumpur, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Shailesh Poddar @ Bittu** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Shailesh Poddar @ Bittu** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Shailesh Poddar @ Bittu** of **FIR No.423/16 u/s 279/337 IPC, P.S. Begumpur, Delhi** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **01.12.2026.**

By Order,
Ms. Anuradha Jindal
Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, North-West
Court No.101, 1st Floor, Rohini Courts, Delhi
DP/15738/RD/2026

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	Associate Professor-06
	Assistant Professor-19
E&TC. Engg.	Assistant Professor-04 (Ph.D.candidates only)

Date: 31/10/2026 Principal, VPKBIET, Baramati



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



State Connect

CONGRESS RAJYA Sabha member Akhilesh Prasad Singh's bungalow in Delhi became the destination for most of his party workers and leaders from Bihar, who attended Sunday's rally at Ramlila Maidan. After the rally, the workers and leaders rushed to the bungalow at 11, Talkatora, where Singh, who is a member of the Upper House from Bihar, had made elaborate dinner arrangements. He had arranged a caterer to serve vegetarian and non-vegetarian meals for the tired workers. Several workers spent the night at the MP's bungalow before heading to Bihar on Monday.

The 'Centrepiece'

SWADESH SINGH, BJP national secretary, has penned a book, 'The Statue of Unity, the World's Tallest Statue', which he says is the "centrepiece of an extraordinary story of unity, vision and transformation". The book traces the journey from "Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's historic role in unifying India to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of transforming Kevadia into Ekta Nagar, India's first tourism district — a destination where tourism, infrastructure, employment and ecological consciousness converge".

Shinde: Murder case on finance firms if farmer dies by suicide

Nanded: Moneylenders, microfinance companies and banks will be booked for murder if any drought-hit farmer dies by suicide due to harassment, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said Sunday.

He was addressing a gathering during the inauguration of a 100-bed sub-district hospital at Wadi Budruk in Nanded district. Shinde said the government will stand firmly behind farmers and provide all possible assistance, urging them not to lose hope amid the agrarian crisis.

"Microfinance companies, banks and moneylenders should not harass the farmers who are in distress. If they do, they will not be spared. If any farmer dies by suicide due to harassment, murder cases will be registered," he said. PTI

Punjab: 2 AAP MLAs quit, slam Kejriwal, Mann govt

Kanchan Vasdev
Chandigarh, November 1



Harmeet Singh Pathanmajra and Chetan Singh Jouramajra (right) at a press conference in Chandigarh on Sunday. EXPRESS

PUNJAB AAP on Sunday faced its first major wave of internal rebellion, a day after the party released its first list of 40 candidates for the 2027 Assembly elections. Two MLAs, Chetan Singh Jouramajra from Samana and Harmeet Singh Pathanmajra from Sanaur, on Sunday resigned from the party's primary membership, and targeted AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal and the functioning of the Bhagwant Mann-led government in the state.

Neither Jouramajra nor Pathanmajra featured on the AAP's first list.

At a joint press conference in Chandigarh, Jouramajra and Pathanmajra targeted AAP national convener Kejriwal and his aide Bibhav Kumar, holding them responsible for the state of affairs in Punjab. Jouramajra said that the Punjab government was effectively being run through Kumar.

"When I was a minister, I saw that all files were routed through Bibhav Kumar. This is how the government was being run," he said, questioning the role of Delhi-based leaders in the state's administration.

The two MLAs said AAP had failed to fulfil its promise of making Punjab drug-free within three months of coming to power. Jouramajra said action was being taken against drug users rather than drug networks and those operating them.

Raising the killing of anti-drug activist Parvinder Singh Jhota in Mansa, he said the government had failed to take appropriate action and that neither a minister nor an MLA had visited the victim's family. He also criticised the government for failing to act on the directions of the Akal Takht, alleging that even the last Assembly session had passed without a meaningful discussion on the issue.

They both also listed unfulfilled promises on MSP for farmers, education and healthcare. Pathanmajra targeted the government over Punjab's mounting debt, claiming that the state's liabilities had reached Rs 4.83 lakh crore. He questioned the state's capacity to raise further loans and meet its future financial commitments, including salaries of employees.

Referring to cases registered against him after he raised the issue of water in his constituency, Pathanmajra alleged that his family members were also targeted. He denied firing at police personnel while escaping custody and claimed that his son had been offered a chairman's post in an attempt to persuade him to stay with the party.

Pathanmajra also claimed only two or three of the 40 candidates announced in the party's first list would win the 2027 Assembly polls. They said they will join a political party that had the welfare of the state in mind.

Meanwhile, AAP Punjab chief Aman Arora said, "They were both not aligned with the party ideology for a long time..."

AAP media in-charge Baltej Pannu wrote on X, "Two AAP MLAs resigned from the party today, but due to the actions of both of these, the party had sidelined them earlier. Now both of them will join that BJP which can't find candidates in Punjab. The BJP remains a party of the discarded, where only rejects from other parties go."

The resignations come as the AAP top leadership attempts to project its early announcement of candidates, making it the first political outfit in Punjab to declare names for the 2027 elections, as a tactical advantage. However, the move has brought underlying discontent within the party's ranks to the surface.

Pathanmajra had previously established himself as a prominent dissident voice after publicly criticising the party's Delhi leadership. He was later arrested in connection with a rape case and is currently out on bail.

Jouramajra was removed from his ministerial post after a public controversy involving renowned orthopaedic surgeon Dr Raj Bahadur, then V-C of Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, was made to lie on a dirty mattress at a government hospital during a ministerial inspection.

Day after assuming charge, new IAF chief outlines 'VAYU' vision to strengthen the Force

Amrita Nayak Dutta
New Delhi, November 1



Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Ashutosh Dixit greets Vice Chief of the Air Staff Air Marshal Inderpal Singh Walia and others after the Guard of Honour at Air Force Station in Delhi, Sunday. ANI

A DAY after he assumed charge as the 29th Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Ashutosh Dixit outlined his top priorities to strengthen and modernise the Force. They are: Restoring the IAF's sanctioned combat strength, boosting self-reliance, adopting the latest technologies and procedures, and strengthening synergy between the three services.

He summed up these priorities in a word synonymous with the IAF — 'VAYU'. The 'V' stands for vigilance and readiness. Every squadron, radar, air defence unit and air warrior must be ready to respond at a moment's notice, the Air Chief Marshal said. "Restoring our combat strength towards the sanctioned level will also be my foremost task."

The IAF's fighter strength is well below its sanctioned 42 squadrons. Several MiG-21 squadrons have been phased out in recent years, other fighter squadrons are scheduled to be phased out by the end of 2029-30, and the induction of the LCA Tejas has been delayed.

The 'A' in VAYU stands for Aatmanirbharta, or self-reliance, Air Chief Marshal Dixit said. Priorities centre on the Tejas Mk1 and Mk1A, the next-generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft, alongside Indian-made weapons and sensors.

The IAF will fight with Indian solutions, fielded in adequate numbers to meet sustained operational demands. "Our responsibility is to fight and win, but most importantly it is to deter conflict through credible Air Power," he said. "Y is for Yukti, our ingenuity." He said that the IAF would continue to advance innovation in doctrine, procedures and technology; networked, AI-enabled command and control; layered counter-drone defence; responsive maintenance; force protection; resilience; and the use of near-space as an operational domain.

"U stands for unity of effort," he said. "In step with the vision of JAI — Jointness, Aatmanirbharta and Innovation — we will plan and fight as one alongside our Army, Navy and national agencies." He emphasised that air power is most effective when integrated from the outset.

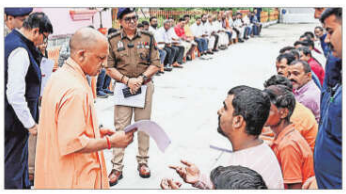
Describing the IAF as "vigilant, ready and resolute", he said, "Our commitment is clear: to remain ready, to keep transforming and to deliver whenever the nation calls." He also thanked his predecessor, Air Chief Marshal A P Singh (retired), for handing over the force in a high state of readiness.

During his four-decade-long service career, Air Chief Marshal Dixit has been actively involved in several operations and exercises, including Operation Safed Sagar, Operation Rakshak and Operation Sindoor.

EXPRESS special

Bihar playbook in UP polls: BJP rakes up SP's past

Deeptiman Tiwary
New Delhi, November 1



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath listens to people's grievances during Janata Darshan in Gorakhpur on Sunday. ANI

AT A rally in Bithoor, Kanpur last week, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's 45-minute address focused largely — barring 5-10 minutes — on the alleged misrule of the previous Akhilesh Yadav-led Samajwadi Party (SP) government.

Adityanath repeatedly underlined what he called the SP government's policy of Muslim appeasement, frequent communal riots, poor law and order and apathy towards Hindu cultural heritage. It was contrasted with his own government's record in building temples and sprucing up Hindu shrines.

Of all this, the BJP's UP unit chose to highlight on its X handle one particular clip.

"*Sapa ka matlab danga hai, Sapa ka matlab bhrashtachar hai, Sapa ka matlab parivarwaad hai, Sapa ka matlab yuvaon ke jeevan ke saath khilwad, Sapa ka matlab Pradesh mein arajakta hai* (SP means riots. SP means corruption. SP means nepotism. SP means playing with the lives and futures of the youth. SP means lawlessness in the state)," Adityanath says in the clip.

He then urged people to recognise "these corrupt people", "sympathisers of the mafia" and "friends of rioters" when they return in a new garb. Even the SP, he said, is now chanting Lord Ram's name. "*Lekin yaad rakhna aap Bajrangi hain... Kaalnemi ko Bajrangi ne hi pehchana tha* (But remember, you are Bajrangi... It was Bajrangi who saw through Kaalnemi's disguise)," he says.

Five days later, as the BJP formally moved its organisation into election mode with its state working committee meeting in Lucknow, Union Home Minister Amit Shah went further back in time to the Mulayam Singh Yadav government of 1990.

Recalling the October 30, 1990 police firing on kar sevaks in Ayodhya, Shah asked Akhilesh, "With what face do you even speak of forming a government?" Shah contrasted the firing with the construction of the Ram temple and said people would not forgive even the SP chief's "third generation".

After nearly 10 years of the Adityanath government, the emerging BJP campaign carries an apparent paradox: even as the party seeks a third successive term on the strength of its record, a considerable part of its political messaging continues to be about Mulayam, Akhilesh and what UP was like before 2017, when Adityanath first came to power.

It has similarities with how the NDA ran its campaign in the 2025 Bihar polls where Nitish Kumar was facing a nearly 20-year anti-incumbency. The NDA's campaign then was as much about reminding the voters of RJD's "*jungle raaj*" as it was about Kumar's achievements. This formulation has appeared repeatedly in speeches by senior BJP leaders in UP.

Adityanath has reinforced the message through easily recalled formulations. Across rallies this year, he has invoked "*Dekh Sapai, bitiya ghabrai*" to characterise women's security before 2017. The earlier dispensation has also been described as "one district, one mafia", contrasted with his government's "one district, one product".

The BJP's campaign material makes the comparison more explicit. One set of creatives from its UP unit uses a straightforward "SP government versus BJP government" format. One shows gangster-politician Atiq Ahmed under the former and the attachment of his benami property under the latter. Another contrasts an old report about investors raising law-and-order concerns with present-day claims about UP's tourism boom.

The emerging campaign has a recent precedent.

Ahead of the Bihar polls, the NDA faced a similar problem. Nitish Kumar had been in power, barring a brief interruption, for almost two decades. Yet a striking amount of the NDA's campaign remained focussed on Lalu Prasad and the RJD governments of the 1990s and early 2000s. The messaging was sustained. Of 12 campaign videos put out by the JD(U) over two months at the time, six were devoted to recalling "*jungle raaj*". The message to a voter who might have grievances against a government of 20 years was effectively: before deciding whether to change it, remember the alternative.

In UP, the BJP's depiction of the SP years is broader. SP rule is recalled not merely through Atiq Ahmed or Mukhtar Ansari, but through graveyard expenditure, iftar, riots, the firing on kar sevaks and alleged restrictions surrounding Hindu festivals.

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

CLASHES MARK ANDHRA CIVIC POLLS

Jagan says agents barred from booths; YSRCP cadres intimidated voters: TDP

Sreenivas Janyala
Hyderabad, November 1



Voters during the elections to urban local bodies, in Vijayawada on Sunday. ANI

AMID A few incidents of clashes between ruling Telugu Desam Party members and YSRCP cadres, elections to 92 urban local bodies, comprising 13 municipal corporations and 73 municipalities and six nagar panchayats were held in Andhra Pradesh on Sunday. In eight urban local bodies candidates have been elected unopposed.

On Sunday, YSRCP members alleged their agents were prevented from going inside the booths by TDP cadres. YSRCP president and former chief minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy protested outside the Returning Officer's office in Pulivendula in Kadapa district, seeking intervention after officials refused to allow him inside. Jagan strongly objected to YSRCP polling agents being prevented from entering polling booths during the Pulivendula Municipal election.

Officials, however, did not permit Jagan to enter the RO's office. He submitted a letter to the Pulivendula Municipal Returning Officer, demanding that the polling process be cancelled and repolling held in all 80 booths.

With Jagan demanding that Pulivendula municipal elections be countermanded, the TDP alleged that YSRCP cadres physically obstructed and intimidated voters. TDP MLA Burla Ramanjaneyulu alleged that Jagan and his party were making "desperate attempts to derail the local body elections" in Pulivendula.

Kurnool Range DIG Koya Praveen said there were incidents of hurling stones between the TDP and YSRCP supporters at Pulivendula.

WITH PTI INPUTS

● THE FORMER CONGRESS PRESIDENT HAD THE VANTAGE VIEW DURING THE TWO DECADES WHEN THREE PMs — RAJIV GANDHI, NARASIMHA RAO, AND MANMOHAN SINGH — WERE IN POWER

Sonia Gandhi: The outsider who became the Congress's ultimate insider



WEEKLY INSIGHT INTO WHAT'S CHANGING IN NATIONAL POLITICS – AND WHY

SONIA GANDHI has made a splash with her social media debut ahead of the release of her forthcoming book, '*Belonging: A Journey of Love*'. For the first time, the 80-year-old Congress leader took to Instagram, X, and Facebook to share tidbits from her autobiography to get people to pick it up when it is launched on November 10, predicting that the book would create a "*tamasha*".

The book has already aroused widespread interest nationally and in international circles. This is not surprising, for it is penned by a woman, Italian-born, who married into the first family of India in 1968. She made India her home and, for almost six decades, witnessed at close quarters some of the most dramatic events unfold, including the assassination of her husband Rajiv Gandhi in 1991. Seven years earlier, still dressed in her night clothes, she had rushed the blood-splattered body of her mother-in-law, Indira Gandhi, to the hospital.

In 2012, *Forbes* magazine ranked Sonia as the sixth-most powerful woman in the world. She is still seen as a troubleshooter for the party when required; over the years, she managed to establish cross-party links, be it Mamata Banerjee, Lalu Prasad, or Mayawati. She also enjoyed a special rapport with the late Atal Bihari Vajpayee and often smoothed the tensions between the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government and the Left parties, which had propped it up in power.

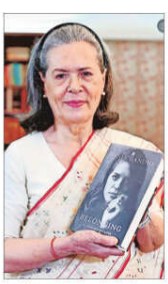
There is speculation about the timing of the book and the impact it could have on the highly polarised politics today, with the Nehru-Gandhi family at the centre of the Congress's stand-off with the BJP. But the book has been coming for a long time. There was a buzz some years ago that British historian and writer Patrick French was working on it. But it did not see the light of day for reasons unknown, and French died in 2023.

The book's title indicates that it may not just be about Sonia's own life and romance with Rajiv, but also emphasise the role and sacrifice of the Nehru-Gandhi family to offset the charge of "dynasty" and "entitlement" that are levelled against it. Even as she has seen herself as a custodian of the family's legacy, the second Mrs Gandhi has been conscious of the fact that "I am not Nehru's daughter" like her mother-in-law was with its inherent advantages.

When Sonia said 'no'

The country has had 14 prime ministers, including three of the Nehru-Gandhi family: Jawaharlal Nehru (for 17 years), Indira (16 years), and Rajiv (five years). Then there have been powerful leaders who came close to becoming PM, but did not make it.

There is also a third category of those who were offered prime ministership and did not take it. Sonia belongs to this group. She gave up the opportunity to become PM in 2004, when she was almost there after being elected the leader of the Congress parliamentary party. The UPA was backing her and President A P J Abdul Kalam had readied the letter to invite her to form the government. Instead, she appointed Dr Manmohan Singh.



Sonia Gandhi shows her autobiography '*Belonging: A Journey of Love*', to be launched on November 10. X/@SONIAGANDHI

The only two other leaders who turned down a chance to become the PM are Left stalwart Jyoti Basu, who served as West Bengal's Chief Minister for close to a quarter of a century, and former PM V P Singh, who did not take up a second stint. Basu was offered it in 1996, but the CPI(M) Politburo ruled against it, a decision the former later deemed a "historic blunder". VP also turned down the offer in 1996 when the United Front coalition was put in place, knowing that the Congress would never support him.

The most dramatic "no", however, came from Sonia. Natwar Singh has claimed in his autobiography that Rahul Gandhi, now the Leader of Opposition, did not want her to become PM as he felt she would be assassinated in six months. Spurning the country's top position, however, gave her an acceptability which might not have otherwise come her way. Today, Sonia is seen as the tallest leader in the Congress.

I still remember how a Haryana villager, speaking about Sonia, once told me, "*Byah kar aayi thhi, yaha ki ho gayi* (She came to the country after marriage and became one of our own)." Prevalent social norms — that a woman acquires the attributes of the family she marries into — also helped. Had it been a case of an Italian man marrying an Indian woman and making India his home, the story might have been different.

The Sonia phenomenon is unique in contemporary Indian politics. She emerged more as a wielder of power behind the scenes. One cannot think of another political figure who influenced three PMs — her husband, who was in the saddle from 1984-89, P V Narasimha Rao, who ruled from 1991 to 1996, and Dr Singh, who served in the post from 2004 to 2014.

She had the vantage view during the two decades when these three PMs were in power. The terms of these PMs spanned some of the most critical moments in contemporary political history, from when the Mandal and Mandir fires raged, and Kashmir and Punjab were aflame, to the opening up of the economy because of a balance of payments crisis.

However, by the end of this, the Congress declined from the unprecedented 414 Lok Sabha seats it clocked during Rajiv's time to heading an 18-party coalition under Manmohan Singh, and finally losing power in 2014 with the rise of Narendra Modi.

Sonia's ups and downs

Sonia herself joined active politics in 1997 when the Congress was eroding at the seams. She is credited with keeping the party united, taking it to victory in 2004, pushing for a rights-based framework that allowed the enactment of laws such as the Right to Information and MNREGA, which helped bring the party back to power in 2009. She helped win back the confidence of the minorities alienated after the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992. However, she failed to comprehend the changing Hindu psyche or stem the Congress's decline and is accused of keeping the seat warm for her son.

Through all this, Sonia Gandhi became the Congress's longest-serving president, heading the party for 22 years. In the process, she overtook stalwarts of the Independence movement such as Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Sarojini Naidu, Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Rajendra Prasad, J B Kripalani, and later figures such as K Kamaraj and Indira.

How did this "outsider", courted by the party bosses after Rajiv's assassination to lead the Congress, go on to become the irreplaceable "insider"? In some ways, 1991 was reminiscent of 1966, when party bosses had courted Indira and installed her as PM to upstage a rival, Morarji Desai. They had hoped Indira would remain pliant, but she got the better of them. Sonia, too, replaced the incumbent Congress president, Sitaram Kesri, within months of joining the party.

Even as the politically inclined hope that the new book will throw more light on some of these questions, the ordinary reader might look for how Sonia coped after she came to India. How did this housewife who abhorred politics when she and Rajiv lived in PM Indira Gandhi's house, willingly walk through its portals and meet the moment? Whatever else it may or may not do, Sonia's autobiography is bound to stir the political pot.

Neerja Chowdhury, Contributing Editor, The Indian Express, has covered the last 11 Lok Sabha elections. She is the author of How Prime Ministers Decide

6 Indian tourists stranded in Nepal, rescue ops underway

Press Trust of India
Kathmandu, November 1

SIX INDIAN tourists, including two women, have been stranded in the Shey-Phoksundo National Park area of Nepal since Saturday afternoon due to heavy snowfall, with security personnel mobilised and efforts underway to rescue them, officials said on Sunday.

The tourists had gone to the Dho area in Shey Phoksundo Rural Municipality's Ward No. 8, around 300 km northwest of Kathmandu. The area was covered in heavy snow, according to Dolpa CDO Junu Dhakal.

Shey Phoksundo Lake, located in the rural municipality, is Nepal's deepest lake. It is situated at an altitude of 3,600 metres and has an estimated depth of 145 metres. "We have located the area where they are stranded, and an Army helicopter is arriving to rescue them. We hope to rescue them soon," Dhakal told PTI.

Rescue efforts were halted until Monday after unfavourable weather conditions. The local administration is planning to send a helicopter belonging to Simrik Air, a private airline, on Monday to rescue the stranded tourists, Singh added.

Reliance Foundation to establish Nita Mukesh Ambani Anant Ashray

Mumbai:Founder and Chairperson of Reliance Foundation, Nita Ambani, Sunday announced the establishment of Nita Mukesh Ambani Anant Ashray, an initiative envisioned as a lifelong home for orphaned children, senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

Nita Ambani performed the groundbreaking ceremony at the proposed site in Karjat near Mumbai. Spread across approximately 100 acres, Nita Mukesh Ambani Anant Ashray is envisioned as a township that will provide a lifelong home for over 5,000 residents. Together with caregivers, medical professionals, support staff and their families, the township is expected to support a community of approximately 15,000 people. Residents will live in small, family-style homes, supported by dedicated house parents and caregivers.

The proposed township will comprise eight residential villages, each named after a sacred river of India.

During the ceremony, Nita Ambani said, "For me and my family, Nita Mukesh Ambani Anant Ashray is a beginning very close to our hearts. It is a step towards building a loving home for people with disabilities, children who need a home and seniors who seek care and comfort. As a mother, my deepest hope is that parents who have spent a lifetime worrying about who will care for their children when they are no longer there can find peace in knowing that their child will always have a home and a family of their own." ENS

3 days, no sign: Race against time in Uttarakhand to save 8 trekkers

Vidheesha Kuntamalla
Dehradun, November 1



SDRF personnel prepare to conduct a rescue operation in Uttarkashi. SDRF

EIGHT PEOPLE, including seven trekkers and a local guide, remain missing in Uttarakhand's Kedartal region after a 12-member party was trapped by heavy snowfall and avalanches on Friday.

Rescue teams are yet to get any trace of the missing trekkers despite repeated aerial searches and an attempt to approach the area on foot.

Two of the eight missing trekkers are women. While five of the trekkers — Tapas Bauri, 30, Ratan Ghosh, Manoj Khovas, 39, Ritu Mandal, 40, and Uday Ghosh – are from West Bengal, two, including 28-year-old Vartika Verma and Deepika Verma, are from Uttar Pradesh. Siddharth Rana, the 25-year-old guide, is from Uttarkashi.

"We are moving in two ways. One team is trying to reach the trekkers on foot, but because of the avalanche, it has stopped for now. Two of our personnel have also conducted aerial reconnaissance twice in the area, but nothing has been found," Arpan Yaduvanshi, Commandant of the Uttarakhand SDRF, told *The Indian Express* on Sunday.

Yaduvanshi said the force would make another attempt on Monday morning, November 2, to access the area by helicopter. SDRF personnel would be lowered using helicopter-slithering techniques and an attempt would be made to prepare a helipad to facilitate the helicopter's landing.

Once on the ground, they would conduct a manual search of the high-altitude terrain, he added.

"After landing, we will conduct a manual search because there is no option left. We have not found anything in the aerial reconnaissance," he said.

The search team would include a five-member, high-altitude rescue team and a four-member team from Nehru Institute of Mountaineering in Uttarkashi.

An Action Taken Report issued by the Uttarakhand State Emergency Operations Centre on Sunday said the 12-member team, comprising seven trekkers, one guide, one cook and three porters, had set out on the Kedartal trek from Gangotri on October 27. It was scheduled to return on October 29.

On October 30, the District Emergency Operations Centre in Uttarkashi received information about the team getting trapped because of adverse weather conditions, excessive snowfall and avalanches in the Kedartal area.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Mayank Garg, Deputy Director of Gangotri National Park, said hours after the group entered the trekking route early on October 27, the department received a weather alert concerning October 29.

"We could not inform the group about the alert as we could not make any contact with them," he said.

Four members of the group, three porters and one cook, were rescued on October 31 after rescue personnel cleared snow and created a route through the affected stretch.

The report records that teams from SDRF, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), forest department, police and district administration, along with a search and rescue team, were dispatched to the incident site on Saturday morning.

A helicopter conducted aerial reconnaissance of the Kedartal area, but the missing trekkers and their belongings could not be spotted.

Another aerial search was conducted on Sunday with SDRF personnel on board. This, too, failed to yield any leads.

The Kedartal route sees relatively few trekkers compared with the Gomukh route, which accounts for around 95% of visitors undertaking treks in the area.

It has been learnt that while teams visit the Gomukh route daily, monitoring on the Kedartal route is less frequent because fewer people take it.



Odisha CM Mohan Charan Majhi at Special Relief Commissioner's control room, in Bhubaneswar. ANI

Andhra braces for another cyclone, landfall on Nov 3

ENS & PTI
Bengaluru, November 1

FOUR DAYS after Cyclone Arnab battered its coastline, Andhra Pradesh is bracing for another cyclone — Murasu, forecast to make landfall during the early hours Tuesday.

A deep depression formed in southwest Bay of Bengal has intensified into a cyclone and is forecast to strengthen into a very severe cyclonic storm by Monday, before making landfall on the morning of November 3 between Nellore and Narsapur in Andhra Pradesh, the IMD said. The cyclone has been named 'Murasu' by India, meaning war drum.

"Cyclone Murasu is likely to move northwest and cross south coast of Andhra Pradesh as a 'severe' cyclone between Nellore and Narsapur during midnight and early hours of November 3," IMD DG Mrutyunjaya Mohapatra said Sunday. According to IMD, the storm will bring sustained winds of 100 to 110 km/hr, with gusts up to 120 km/hr, at the time of landfall.

Under Murasu's influence, very heavy to extremely heavy rainfall (115mm to over 200mm in 24 hours) is likely across coastal Andhra Pradesh. In Odisha, light to moderate rainfall is forecast in southern coastal districts.

Cyclone Arnab made landfall in Andhra on October 28, with wind speeds up to 150 kmph. Odisha government, which is already engaged in relief and rescue operations, has ordered the evacuation of people from low-lying areas and hilly terrain.

Andhra Pradesh CMN Chandrababu Naidu Sunday said, "Another cyclone is approaching ... officials must remain fully prepared to undertake relief and rescue operations".

Booked for 'sexually harassing woman officer', Odisha DG Prisons transferred

Posted as OSD in home department

Sujit Bisoyi
Bhubaneswar, November 1

ODISHA GOVERNMENT Sunday removed the director general (DG) of Prisons and Correctional Services Susanta Kumar Nath from his position, a day after he was booked on charges of sexual harassment and intimidation of a woman officer.

Nath, a 1993-batch IPS officer, is among the group of officers said to be eyeing the post of the next DGP. He has now been transferred as an OSD in the home department, considered a punishment posting.

Though the home department notification has not mentioned specific reasons behind Nath's transfer, senior officers said it is linked to the case registered against him.

The case against Nath and one of his alleged associate Kuldeep Rath, was registered on Friday under various sections, including sexual harassment, criminal intimidation and common intention, of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

The deputy commissioner of police, Cuttack, has informed the home department about the development, said officials. The Indian Express has accessed the copy of the FIR.

The complainant, according to the FIR, accused Rath of contacting her on Nath's behalf twice, in August and September 2025, inviting her to meet the latter over dinner at two hotels in Cuttack, which she cited as an "unwelcome personal invitation".

"These approaches were made with a clear sexual intention and constituted unwelcome sexual advances. When I disagreed to such sexual and illegal overtures, I was subjected to threats concerning my life, reputation, and career," read the complaint copy.

The complainant also accused Nath of pressuring her to withdraw a case against another senior official.

A senior police officer in Cuttack said all the allegations made by the complainant will be thoroughly probed and appropriate steps will be taken against him accordingly. The officer said the DG, prisons, other accused and the senior cited above will be examined as part of the probe.

While Nath didn't respond to calls for a comment on the allegations and his removal from the position of DG, prisons, a senior home department official said the state government is waiting for the probe report into the allegations.

As a case pertaining to selection of Odisha's next DGP is under sub-judice in the Supreme Court, Nath, in September, entered the matter as an intervenor after Odisha government withdrew his integrity certificate and excluded him from panel of officers sent to UPSC for DGP selection.

Four die of suffocation cleaning Ujjain hotel waste tank; probe on

Anand Mohan J
Bhopal, November 1



Rescue efforts hampered since chamber door could not be opened.

FOUR PERSONS died of suspected suffocation after entering a food waste tank at a hotel in Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain Sunday.

District Collector Raushan Kumar Singh said, "An unfortunate incident has been reported at a hotel premises. It appears there is a food waste tank; two individuals entered it, presumably for cleaning purposes. Subsequently, for reasons yet to be determined, two more people entered the tank to rescue them. In total, it is reported that four individuals have lost their lives."

The incident occurred around 11 pm at Shri Ganga Hotel on Ujjain-Dewas Road. According to preliminary information, the four workers entered a chamber used to collect food waste and other leftovers but were trapped.

The victims have been identified as Ujjain residents Kamlesh Tamboli and Nitin Wahid, Wahid Khan, a sanitation worker, and Manoj Meena, who was from Rajasthan.

Ujjain SP Pradeep Sharma said the workers may have collapsed after being exposed to gas inside the chamber. Police have launched an investigation with the administration examining whether the workers entered the chamber to clean it or fell into it accidentally. MP government has announced financial assistance of Rs 4 lakh each for the families of the deceased.

The sole breadwinner of his family, Tamboli would look forward to the Diwali period, which would bring in extra work to help him meet his household expenses. Saturday night, the daily wage worker was assigned one such task — cleaning a food waste chamber at a hotel.

His brother Vijendra said, "During Diwali, he would get additional work. It helped him meet household expenses. He leaves behind his wife and a four-year-old daughter."

The chamber at the rear of the hotel is used to collect waste generated during food preparation which is channelled into the drainage system. A blockage in the chamber is said to have prompted cleaning operation.

Wahid Khan, who worked as a sanitation worker at a local hospital and earned around Rs 12,000 a month, had taken up additional work after his hospital duty. His nephew, Asif Khan, recalled Wahid's last phone call. "My uncle left home at 7 am with his tiffin. Around 8 pm, he called home and said he was going to work at the hotel and would return late. Around midnight, we received the news of his death. The family is now left without the man whose earnings helped sustain their household," he said.

Manoj Meena, a hotel supervisor, had been working in Ujjain since 2021. His father, Tejmal Meena, said, "My son had been working as a supervisor at Ganga Hotel for three years... He was the eldest of my three children."

Rescue operation was hampered since the chamber's gate could not be opened. Police got a cutting machine to access.

Accused in Andhra chainsaw attack injured in police firing

Girl on ventilator after 11-hr surgeries

Nikhila Henry & Kiran Parashar
Hyderabad, Bengaluru, November 1

THE 21-YEAR-OLD man who allegedly attacked a teenager with a chainsaw at her school in Andhra Pradesh Saturday was injured in firing while being detained, police said.

Andhra Pradesh Police said the man attacked the security personnel with a knife following which they shot back six rounds in self-defence. The man has been admitted to the government general hospital in Anantapur.

"The accused was hiding in Atmakur forest near Raptadu," a police source said. "The accused was not in custody. He had turned off his phone and had gone into hiding. Fifteen police teams were pressed into action to comb the forest. We found him and he attacked police officers," the source added.

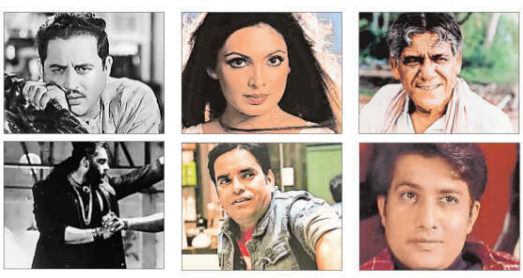
Meanwhile, the Class 10 girl was shifted to Manipal Hospital, Bengaluru, where she is on ventilator support. Her vital parameters are currently stable.

"On arrival, she was critically unstable, with ongoing facial bleeding, and was immediately shifted to the operating room. Extensive surgery involving multiple specialties was performed over nearly 11 hours. Following the successful control of bleeding, her blood pressure stabilised, and her transfusion requirements reduced. She has now been shifted to the PICU (pediatric ICU), where she continues to receive ventilator support," according to a press statement.

Minister N Lokesh Naidu Sunday visited the girl's family at the hospital. He said on X: "I assured her parents that our government and I will support them in every possible way. The culprit behind this heinous attack will face strictest punishment."

From Sanjay Gupta to Guru Dutt: When Bollywood personalities were found dead in their homes

Zeeshan Shaikh
Mumbai, November 1



(Clockwise from top left) Guru Dutt, Parveen Babi, Om Puri, Ravindra Mahajani, Brahma Mishra, Mahesh Anand

THE DEATH of filmmaker Sanjay Gupta at his Versova residence has brought into focus a recurring, if unsettling, feature of the lives of several film personalities: their deaths behind the closed doors of their homes, sometimes going unnoticed for days and, in other cases, discovered by family members or domestic staff.

One of Hindi cinema's earliest and most widely discussed cases was that of filmmaker and actor Guru Dutt, who was found dead in his Peddar Road flat on October 10, 1964, aged 39. The death of the director of *Pyaasa*, *Kaagaz Ke Phool* was attributed in media reports at the time to an overdose of sleeping pills taken with alcohol. It has often been described as suicide. Dutt was living alone at the time, following his separation from playback singer Geeta Dutt.

More than four decades later, the death of Parveen Babi, one of Hindi cinema's biggest stars of the 1970s and 1980s, exposed a different kind of isolation. Babi was found dead in her Juhu apartment on January 22, 2005, after the housing society secretary alerted the police that she had not collected her milk and newspapers for two days.

Police opened the apartment using a duplicate key. Neighbours told reporters that Babi rarely stepped out or received visitors. Her post mortem examination found no evidence of poisoning, strangulation or external injury. Police said she suffered from diabetes and gangrene in her left leg, and initial investigation ruled out foul play.

The death of Om Puri, 66 in January 2017 was discovered when he was found in the kitchen of his Lokhandwala apartment by his driver, who had arrived to pick him up. He had a head injury and there was blood on the floor. Police initially examined the circumstances, including questioning his staff. His death was subsequently attributed to a massive heart attack, with the injury believed to have been sustained when he collapsed. An accidental death report was registered.

In February 2019, Mahesh Anand, remembered for playing villains in Hindi films through 1980s and 1990s, was found dead in his Versova flat, aged57. His domestic help came to his house but received no response. His sisters were informed and the police and fire brigade were called to open the door.

Anand's body was found in the living room, with a liquor bottle nearby. Police registered an accidental death report.

In December 2021, Brahma Mishra was found dead in his rented flat in Versova. According to police, he had been living alone. Neighbours alerted the police after a foul smell began coming from the apartment. His partially decomposed body was found in the toilet.

Veteran Marathi actor Ravindra Mahajani, 77, was found dead in his rented flat near Talegaon Dabhade, Pune, on July 14, 2023. Mahajani, who had been living alone in the flat is suspected to have died two to three days before his body was discovered. Neighbours alerted the police after noticing a foul smell. The police broke open the door and found his body inside.

Chopper operators in Uttarakhand protest mandatory co-pilot rule

Vidheesha Kuntamalla
Dehradun, November 1

A COLLECTIVE of helicopter operators in Uttarakhand has threatened to suspend Char Dham charter services from Monday, opposing a new requirement making two pilots mandatory on every flight.

This comes two days after a helicopter crashed near Joshimath in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district, killing all six on board.

In a letter dated October 31 and addressed to the DGCA, 11 helicopter operators said the new requirement would substantially increase their operating costs and make continuing services financially unviable.

The representation was submitted a day after a helicopter operated by Trans Bharat Aviation crashed near Chhai village in the Joshimath area on Friday, while returning from Badrinath towards Dehradun.

The operators said they were unable to accept the twin-pilot requirement in its present form and proposed suspending their Char Dham charter operations from November 2, until the authorities reviewed the decision and arrived at a mutually workable solution.

"The mandatory deployment of two pilots on every charter sortie will substantially increase operating costs, crew requirements, accommodation and logistical expenses, and overall operational commitments," the letter stated.

"Given the existing commercial structure, prevailing charter rates and limited operational margins, these additional costs cannot be reasonably absorbed by the operators. Nor is it commercially feasible to pass on the entire additional burden to customers," it added.

The letter, addressed to DGCA chief, was signed by representatives of 11 companies were marked to Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation; the Secretary, Civil Aviation Department, Uttarakhand; and the CEO of the Uttarakhand Civil Aviation Development Authority. The regulator has directed operators to obtain positive destination and en route clearance from the Control Room at Sahastradhara before take-off for every leg of Char Dham operations.

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In fertiliser sales dip, a lesson for policymakers

SALES OF all fertilisers are down in April-September compared to the same period of 2025. That includes urea, the most widely used and cheapest fertiliser. The drop in sales — despite higher year-on-year production and imports — is a clear indication of subdued farmer demand because of the El Niño-induced dry weather conditions. All-India rainfall was 12.6 per cent below-normal during the south-west monsoon season (June-September), with significant shortfalls across the South, Marathwada and Vidarbha, Saurashtra and Kutch, Rajasthan, Bihar and the Northeastern states. Its impact is, perhaps, best reflected in fertiliser consumption. Nutrient offtake was low because the monsoon rains weren't adequate for farmers to buy and apply these on their crops. Thus, while overall kharif acreages may not have fallen much, the reduced fertiliser application could translate into lower crop yields.

It isn't kharif alone. October, too, has registered a 31.4 per cent rainfall deficit, pointing to the effects of an intensifying El Niño. Global weather agencies are projecting the current strong-to-very strong event to persist through January-March, before turning moderate-to-weak towards April-May 2027. Subpar precipitation means that much less soil moisture for the rabi (winter-spring) crops, the sowings of which have just commenced. Since El Niño is known to also result in warmer-than-usual winters in India, one can assume both acreages and yields to take a hit in this rabi season. That could put further pressure on consumer food inflation, which has already climbed from 4.2 to over 7.7 per cent year-on-year between April and September. India's last major episode of food inflation, when it averaged 8.5 per cent-plus, was from July 2023 to December 2024. The villain was, again, a long and strong El Niño. This time, it's a "super strong" El Niño.

For the government, the immediate options are to permit duty-free imports of pulses (including *masoor*, *chana* and yellow peas), raw sugar and cotton till March 31. It must also consider scrapping the basic customs duty on crude palm and soyabean oil. An extended zero/low duty window would give importers greater confidence to contract sizeable quantities of these commodities to make up for the inevitable domestic production shortages. For the longer term, policymakers need to accept climate change and geopolitical tensions as baseline "default" realities, not merely temporary "risks". This would mean investing more in climate-smart breeding and making farmers more efficient users of water, fertilisers, energy and other scarce resources. It calls for a fundamental reordering of the current inefficient subsidy regime and fiscal priorities. That's a political, more than an economic, challenge.

A larger reckoning lies behind US mid-terms

VOTERS IN the US midterm elections to 35 of 100 Senate seats, all 435 seats in the House of Representatives and for governors in 35 states will likely have local and domestic issues on their minds. There is the mounting cost of living crisis, growing threat to jobs from new technologies, deepening polarisation and division on matters of immigration and culture. But the outcome of these elections will also resonate beyond the US: It will indicate the room for manoeuvre that the White House will have in its foreign policy vis-à-vis the wars in West Asia and Eastern Europe, and more generally, the political capital Trump carries into the second half of his term.

Opinion polls and the wider political conversation suggest that Trump's popularity, including within his core MAGA base, may be eroding. On three key issues — ending "forever wars", controlling inflation and price rise, and people's anger at disconnected political and social elites — Trump appears to have disappointed his supporters. The all-but-unilateral invasion of Iran, and the subsequent effect on commodity prices, is hitting middle- and working-class Americans hard. The doublespeak over the so-called Epstein Files also appears to have made a dent. Attempts at redistricting and challenging the legality of mail-in voting have yielded mixed results, with US courts nixing the latter. In case Republicans lose both the Senate and the House, the battle lines between the legislature and executive will be more sharply drawn, and policies, whether on the White House's weaponising of tariffs and trade, or its conduct in the conflicts in Ukraine and with Iran, will come under greater scrutiny. If the Republicans retain or exceed their current strength, it will embolden the White House to continue down the current course.

New Delhi will hope that Washington's recent policies — against the grain of what has been a deepening bilateral relationship for three decades — will be tempered after November 4. There is, however, a broader lesson to be drawn from the current political moment in America. Whatever his own view of the presidential prerogative, Trump is not a strongman without an opposition. In its best version, the complexity of American politics at home is a check on the whimsical and unilateral exercise of America's power abroad.

FREEZE FRAME

BY EP UNNY



Challenge is wages, not jobs. Expanding Jan Vishwas interventions can help



MANISH SABHARWAL

FOUR THOUSAND years ago in Mesopotamia, Hammurabi articulated equal justice: An eye for an eye. His punishment prescriptions reflected power, not principle. Blinding an aristocrat led to losing your eye, but blinding a slave prescribed a fine. A similar disease — show me the employer, and I'll show you the rule — sabotages the massive creation of formal jobs that India's mass prosperity needs. Building on the recent remarkable decriminalisation of thousands of offences, Jan Vishwas must now expand to three interventions: *Siddhant* (enforce the principles of trust-based regulation); *sangreh* (create a single source of legislative truth), and *ashwasan* (guarantee that only obligations published there are enforceable).

The primary case for Jan Vishwas is high-wage job creation. Mass prosperity (we rank 128th in global per-capita GDP) did not accompany our remarkable achievement of mass democracy (30 lakh people win an election) because of a lack of land (every household could get half an acre and fit into Rajasthan and Maharashtra), labour (a third of our labour force toils in employed poverty) or capital (our equity+debt to GDP ratio equals sustainable global benchmarks). Our challenge is not jobs but wages, because the lack of Jan Vishwas breeds the 21st-century slavery of informal wage work and self-employment.

China's per-capita GDP is five times higher than ours — we were on par in 1991. This is not because they are smarter than us or work harder than us, but because our regulatory cholesterol — the lack of transparency, consistency, and trust in law enforcement makes it hard for entrepreneurs to combine land, labour, and capital into productive, innovative, export-oriented jobs that pay high wages. This could change with three Jan Vishwas interventions:

Siddhant or the philosophy of trust: Reducing regulatory cholesterol has begun, but it's a long road because of six toxic economic thought worlds: Prior approval (prohibited till permitted), enforcing the unenforceable (idealism with illusions that often informs regulatory role or capacity assessment), process is punishment (for the innocent), compliance and instrument blind spot (the worm's eye view of daily life of employers through 25+ non-act/non-rule administrative instruments rather than the bird's eye view of Acts), writing laws for edge cases (drunk driving becoming an argument against cars) and excessive criminalisation (jail is only a deterrent if cases are filed and quick prosecution is obtained). The new Jan Vishwas Siddhant's freedom, necessity, and proportionality world view is a strong start, but we need spiritual, intellectual, and physical adoption by more than 30 million civil servants.

Sangreh, a single source of legislative truth: Our Constitution replaced the rule of rulers with the rule of law, but it also holds that Ignorantia juris non excusat: Citizens and enterprises cannot plead ignorance of the law. But our duty to know the law presupposes the state's duty to make it knowable, understandable, and accessible. If the obligation is buried in an executive drawer, scattered across websites or hidden in a circular that nobody knows exists, the moral basis of ignorantia juris collapses. Our judiciary has often reinforced this principle. In *Harla v State of Rajasthan* (1952), the Supreme Court rejected secret laws, holding that citizens cannot be governed by rules "locked away in executive drawers" and unknown to those they bind. In *B K Srinivasan v. State of Karnataka* (1987), the Court shifted from secrecy to knowability, stressing that law must be such that both the compliant citizen and the one seeking to avoid it can know it. In *Viraj Impex v Union of India* (2019), it ruled that a law becomes operative only when it is properly published and reasonably brought to public notice. Global precedent is strong as well: The US has the Federal Register and Code of Federal Regulations, the UK has legislation.gov.uk, the EU has EUR-Lex, Singapore has Statutes Online, and Australia has its Federal Register of Legislation.

Sangreh, India's legal and regulatory digital public infrastructure, must become the canon for every legal right and obligation. Every ministry and state government can maintain its official legal repository, while *sangreh* aggregates and indexes these sources into a unified, searchable, machine-readable and API-enabled open national view. This reform is partly institutional (unifying the Ministry of Housing's physical gazette, MEITI's e-gazette, and Ministry of Laws India Code), partly legal (the legal language, syntax and architecture proposal by lawyer Rahul Matthan for Bharat Niti Lipi) and partly technological (the DPI architecture and protocols being prepared by IIIT's Centre for DPI and NCAER).

> Earlier attempts at creating a single source of truth did not fail because of a civil service conspiracy but because of poor design, weak capacity, power fragmentation, unsustained attention, and poor technology

Ashwasan, because trust needs certainty: Earlier attempts at creating a single source of truth did not fail because of a civil service conspiracy — though their resistance, fears and self-interest did contribute — but because of poor design, weak capacity, unsustained attention, power fragmentation, and poor technology. But the metafactor was obligation: There was no guarantee that anything not listed did not require compliance. This is addressed by the draft proposal from economist Sanjeev Sanyal for a Transparency of Rules Act (TORA) that requires every enforceable legal obligation — whether arising from an Act, rule, or more than 25 edicts — to be published on Sangreh. This would make Sangreh more than a repository. Enterprises and citizens would gain certainty and predictability, governments would acquire credibility, and corruption would get harder.

This year marks the 250th and 76th anniversaries of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* and the Indian Constitution. Though separated by geography and time, they advanced the same revolutionary idea: Democratic governments exist to expand human freedom, not constrain it. Smith argued that liberty, anchored in the rule of law and competition, unleashes enterprise, innovation and prosperity. Our Constitution argues that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. The three phases of Jan Vishwas reconcile these traditions. More importantly, their delivery will reinforce that what is wrong about India can be fixed by what is right with India.

Sabharwal is co-founder of Teamlease Services and co-author of Made in India

Energy security depends on if we electrify, and how we do it



NEHA DHINGRA

IN MARCH, as shipping through the Strait of Hormuz stalled, Indian families queued for cooking gas and induction cooktops sold out in several markets across the country. India imports about 60 per cent of its LPG, and nearly 90 per cent of those shipments pass through the strait. Within weeks, a conflict far from our shores affected our kitchens and factories.

Electricity offers a way to reduce that exposure. NITI Aayog's Scenarios Towards Viksit Bharat and Net Zero shows the scale of the shift ahead. In its net-zero scenario, electricity's share of final energy rises from 21 per cent in 2025 to 60 per cent by 2070, and the fuel import bill falls from about 4 per cent of GDP to 0.2 per cent. This makes electrification a strong component of economic and security strategy. India's clean power base is strong: In 2025, it became the world's fourth-largest producer of clean electricity. But how we electrify matters as much as whether we do.

Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)-led programmes saved 53.6 million tonnes of oil equivalent in 2023-24. The same discipline must now guide electrification. Two places to start with this are industrial heat and the kitchen.

Factories use almost half of all the energy consumed in India, and most of it comes from burning coal, oil and gas on site. Electricity meets only about a quarter of Indian industry's energy needs; in China, it meets nearly half. Closing that gap would also cut India's fuel imports, help industries decarbonise and help exporters meet carbon border rules such as the EU's CBAM.

Industrial heat is the lowest-hanging fruit, and heat pumps are the way to pick it. A heat pump works like an air conditioner in reverse, drawing heat from air, water or waste streams and moving it to where it is needed. In Indian conditions, air-source models deliver 2.5 to 4 units of heat for every unit of electricity; an electric boiler delivers at most one. Swapping a coal boiler for an electric one adds its heat demand to the grid, but a heat pump meets the same need with a fraction of the electricity.

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About half the heat used by Indian MSMEs is needed below 250°C, for steam, hot water, washing and drying; a large share of it is within the range heat pumps already serve. Dairies, food processors, textile units, pharmaceutical plants, hotels and hospitals depend on it, and much of it comes from coal, diesel or gas boilers. The kitchen follows the same logic. An induction cooktop delivers most of its energy directly to the pan, while a gas flame loses a large share to the surrounding air. The scope to switch is large: Surveys show that only 4 per cent of households own an induction cooktop.

Three things hold the market back: Cost, confidence and supply. A heat pump costs more to buy than a boiler and repays the difference rather slowly, given high industrial power tariffs and low fuel costs. Buyers have little way to judge the promised savings. Nearly 90 per cent of heat pumps sold in India are imported from China, leaving the market exposed to the kind of supply shocks electrification is meant to reduce.

Confidence is the first problem to solve. Manufacturers today quote efficiency figures tested under American, European or Chinese standards. A buyer has no way to compare the claims, because each was measured under a different foreign standard. But India has done it before. BEE's standards and labelling programme made the star label a signal consumers trust. Heat pumps need standards suited to Indian conditions, minimum performance requirements, backed by BIS certification, and a star label that gives buyers a way to compare products and claims. Work is underway on this.

During the LPG shortage, the government deferred mandatory star labelling for induction cooktops to January 2027 to keep the supply flowing. Standards should be in place before demand surges again, so that a buying rush does not fill homes and factories with substandard products. The outcomes would be tangible and energy efficient: Less imported fuel, lower energy bills for MSMEs, less new generation capacity to build, and a domestic manufacturing base for a growing global product.

The writer is India director, CLASP

In France, protest is also about the right to protest



FANNY SCHOBERT

A YOUNG man sits on a balustrade beside Montpellier's tramway tracks. The trams are not running. Police officers are deployed across the city centre, and the afternoon's demonstration has been banned. Still, he has come to protest. He invokes Article 35 of France's 1793 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which described insurrection against a government violating the people's rights as both a right and a duty. The Declaration has no constitutional force today. But he is drawing on France's revolutionary tradition to question the relationship between citizens and political authority.

The protests began in September with secondary-school students demanding more teachers, better facilities and greater educational resources. Their grievances concerned classroom conditions but also the opportunities education is supposed to provide. As teachers, parents and other citizens joined the protests, the debate widened. Among demonstrators, concerns ranged from wages, pensions and healthcare to purchasing power, environmental protection and discrimination. For those under 35, conversations revealed anxiety about what lies ahead.

Some doubted their earnings would ever provide stability, while others wondered whether the pensions they were paying would exist when they retired. Several struggled to picture their lives five years from now. These accounts suggest a concern deeper than immediate hardship: The fear that institutions can no longer deliver what citizens have come to expect of them.

In *The Social Contract* (1762), Jean-Jacques Rousseau asked what makes political authority legitimate. His answer centred on popular sovereignty, not a guarantee of prosperity. France's later development of public education and social protection nevertheless gave practical weight to an expectation of collective responsibility: Citizens contribute to society and expect institutions to protect their rights and provide essential services. Economic insecurity alone does not amount to a crisis of political legitimacy. But when dissatisfaction is accompanied by a belief that representatives do not respond, the question shifts from what the government delivers to whom it answers.

On October 24, the dispute acquired another dimension. Following violence at the previous weekend's protest, Hérault's prefect banned the planned demonstration on public-order grounds. Public transport was suspended and police deployed across central Montpellier. Demonstrators gathered nonetheless. Authorities have a duty to protect public safety, but peaceful assembly is also a protected freedom. For those who opposed the ban, the conditions under which they could express their demands had themselves become contentious. One placard read: "I was afraid to come. That is why I am here." Another declared: "When demonstrating is no longer a right, it becomes a duty."

> One placard read: 'I was afraid to come. That is why I am here.' Another declared: 'When demonstrating is no longer a right, it becomes a duty'

The young man citing 1793 thus embodied a shift: A protest about public services and economic security had become, partly, a protest about the right to protest. Indeed, a democracy is tested not only by how it exercises power, but by how it responds when that power is questioned.

The writer is a project manager based in Montpellier, France

40 YEARS AGO

November 2, 1986


INDIAN EXPRESS
Faroog Govt. tomorrow
India to lodge protest with US
Black stars in silent march

NC coalition to be sworn in

A NINE-member coalition government headed by National Conference president Farooq Abdullah will be sworn in on November 3 in Jammu, according to AICC-I sources. Sources said the ministry would comprise three ministers from Congress-I and six, including Dr Abdullah, from the National Conference. This would be named an "interim" government, and elections will be held in March next year, with an electoral understanding between the National Conference and Congress.

India to lodge protest with US

INDIA WILL register its deepest concern with the Reagan administration over its proposed plan to provide AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) to Pakistan, diplomatic sources have said. The Indian sources disclosed yesterday that Indian Ambassador to the US, P K Kaul, would call on the American Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger at the Pentagon. Kaul is expected to express India's fears and concerns over the possibility of the US supplying Pakistan with E-3A AWACS.

Gen Moczar of Poland dead

GENERAL MIECZYSLAW Moczar, one of the most controversial figures of post-war Poland and three times a contender for the leadership of the Communist Party, died aged 73, the official PAP news agency said. General Moczar, a World War II partisan leader and lifelong Communist, had been in retirement since 1983, when his chequered public career ended.

Taxmen beaten up

SIX INSPECTORS of the Central Excise and Customs Collectorate were beaten up when they went to search a jeweller's shop on a tip-off that gold biscuits and melted gold were being sold illegally. A large crowd assembled at the shop in the Sonya Maruti Square on Laxmi Road when two groups of the raiding party entered the licensed shop and a nearby place of the same jeweller and assaulted them, according to a complaint lodged at the Farasknana Police Station.

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

Netanyahu is making Arab Israelis' right to vote a crime.

— Haaretz, Israel

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Steel policy for 2047 needs to shift focus — from protection to competition



MONTEK S AHLUWALIA, SHISHIR GUPTA AND RISHITA SACHDEVA

THE MINISTRY of Steel has just released the Draft National Steel Policy: Vision 2047 with several objectives. These include making Indian steel globally competitive and increasing steel exports to 45 million tonnes (Mt). These are admirable objectives, but they do need clarity on what globally competitive means.

In one sense, the industry has done well. From producing less than 5 per cent of global steel and ranking ninth in 2000, India has become the world's second-largest steel producer at 170 Mt. Of course, we are very far behind China at 961 Mt.

The steel industry certainly looks good if competitiveness means profitability. The average profitability (EBITDA over sales) for the period 2000-25 was around 15 per cent, which is 3-4 per cent higher than the rest of Indian manufacturing. The profitability of the top three Indian steel firms is also 3-4 percentage points higher than their biggest global counterparts (2015-24). But does this profitability reflect greater efficiency or high protection? The answers to this are instructive.

One reason why profitability is high is because we keep iron-ore prices low. An export duty of 30 per cent on iron ore with more than 58 per cent iron content makes the domestic price of the ore 30-40 per cent lower than global prices. In effect, our iron-mining resources are underpaid to benefit the steel industry. This also lowers the incentive to mine, causing economic loss for mineral-rich regions.

India's steel industry also benefits from tariff protection through a 7.5 per cent import tariff, with an 11.5 per cent safeguard duty, which makes the duty rate 18 per cent. The comparable tariff in ASEAN is between 3-4 per cent. There are also non-tariff barriers in the form of Quality Control Orders (QCOs) on 228 steel products. The Gauba Committee has reportedly recommended the removal of 122 steel products from the QCO list. However, thus far, only 59 products have been suspended.

Profitability of Indian Steel firms under competitive conditions

	Largest private firm	Fastest-growing large private firm	Largest public firm
EBITDA/ Revenue, FY25	21.0%	14.4%	11.5%
Alt. 1. Prices reduce by 6%	16.0%	8.9%	5.8%
Alt 2. All iron ore is bought at global prices	6.6%	0.7%	-3.1%



ILLUSTRATION: C R SASIKUMAR

Consequently, domestic firms sell steel (hot-rolled coil) at a 6-7 per cent premium over a high-cost country like Japan. This has a detrimental impact on downstream industries. In the construction sector, steel accounts for around 15 per cent of total project cost. In the automobile sector, steel and steel-related products constitute roughly 5 per cent of the raw material. Smaller- and medium-scale industries, which are critical for exports, also face high domestic input costs.

What would happen to the steel industry's profitability if this policy largesse is withdrawn? The table shows the impact on profitability for the largest steel firms under two alternative scenarios.

In Alternative 1, tariffs are reduced so the price of domestic steel drops by about 6 per cent, broadly equating it with Japanese levels. The profitability of the largest private sector steel firm reduces by 25 per cent, that of the largest public sector firm drops by 50 per cent, and the fastest-growing large private firm drops by 40 per cent.

In Alternative 2, export duties on iron ore are removed, and the steel players buy all their iron-ore requirements at the global price. Here, the profitability of the largest private firm reduces to approximately 7 per cent, that of the fastest-growing private firm drops by 95 per cent, and that of the largest public-sector firm becomes negative.

> Other industries such as pharmaceuticals and auto components have shown that reduction in protection does not hurt the industry

It is a no-brainer that if India is to emerge as a competitive steel producer by 2047, the protection extended to the steel industry must be phased down. The industry may need to be helped but the ministry would have done well to spell out what needs to be done. It will not happen if it remains shielded by protection. Some solutions are offered below.

Reduce tariffs and non-tariff barriers: Duties should be reduced in a calibrated way over five years to the level of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). We should also immediately remove the QCOs from steel products as reportedly recommended by the Gauba Committee.

Other industries such as pharmaceuticals and auto components have shown that reduction in protection does not hurt the industry. Import tariffs on pharmaceuticals and automobile parts and components dropped from around 40 per cent in 2000 to 10-15 per cent in 2023. However, the share of India's exports of automobile parts in global exports increased from 0.2 per cent in 2003 to 1.5 per cent in 2024, and the share of pharmaceuticals increased from 0.7 per cent to 2 per cent.

The large difference in profitability between the largest private-sector firms and the largest public-sector firm also suggests that privatising some of the plants in the latter should be seriously considered. Since 2000, there have been three dominant steel players: SAIL, Tata Steel, and JSW. Interestingly, the market share of SAIL has declined from 30 per cent to 10 per cent, while that of JSW has increased from 1 per cent to 12 per cent by 2025. TATA Steel has maintained a 11-13 per cent share. Privatising will improve efficiency, governance, and fiscal outcomes without compromising strategic oversight.

Remove the export duty on iron ore: Abolish the 30 per cent export duty on high-grade iron ore to unlock value creation and increase its export revenues. This will expose domestic steelmakers to global ore prices, improving efficiency. It was the case earlier; we need to go back to that regime.

Overhaul the mining policy: Removal of export duty on iron ore will encourage exports of ore which will encourage further exploration of the resource. Unfortunately, the current mineral policy regime discourages exploration because those who find new mines have to surrender the newly discovered mines and try to get them back in a future auction, or get a share in the future auction proceeds. This is completely out of line with what successful mining nations do. It is one of the key reasons why only 10 per cent of India's obvious geological potential has been explored so far. We should adopt the policy followed in Australia and other mineral-rich countries to accelerate new mine development and boost mining's contribution to GDP.

The steel industry in India began with Jamsetji Tata in 1912, applying to the imperial power to set up a steel plant. This led to a sneering comment by the British official that Indians simply couldn't set up a steel plant. Permission was given, and Tata succeeded. Would Jamsetji have asked for the mix of duties and QCOs we now have?

Ahluwalia is distinguished fellow, CSEP, and former deputy chairman of the Planning Commission. Gupta and Sachdeva are senior fellow and associate fellow respectively, CSEP. Views are personal

Tata Sons case is about the financial system's safety



RAJNISH KUMAR

WHEN SANJAY Malhotra, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, was asked about Tata Sons at a media summit last month, he declined to discuss a specific company. Instead, he explained the rule and the reason for it. That is where this debate should begin, because the question is not about one business house. It is about the financial system's safety. After four decades in banking, I believe the regulator has the better argument.

A core investment company is a holding company that mainly owns shares in its own group companies, and the RBI regulates it as a non-banking financial company. The largest NBFCs sit in the upper layer and must list within three years. Tata Sons entered that layer in September 2022, so its deadline was September 2025. Instead, it prepaid more than Rs 21,000 crore of debt and applied to surrender its registration. In September, the RBI said no. With standalone assets above Rs 2 lakh crore, Tata Sons is well past the Rs 1 lakh crore threshold.

The RBI Governor's reasoning matters more than the mechanics. Such companies sit atop their groups, leverage funds and rely on the balance sheets of group companies to repay them. Public money, raised through banks and bonds, is therefore at risk. Hence, registration is needed.

I have seen what happens when that risk materialises. In September 2018, when I was State Bank of India chairman, IL&FS, also a systemically important core investment company, began to default. It had 347 group entities and about Rs 91,000 crore of debt. So little was understood about it that the government's first count of its companies was off by half. Within weeks, mutual funds faced redemptions and funding for the entire NBFC sector began to dry up. Tata Sons is, of course, no IL&FS. It is well run and has repaid its debt. My point is about the structure, not the company.

There is a second lesson, about timing. SBI led the rescue of Yes Bank in March 2020. In my memoir, The Custodian of Trust, I concluded that the action RBI took that March could probably have been taken as early as November 2019. Regulation does its best work before trouble arrives. The time to bring Tata Sons within the discipline of a listing is while it is strong.



ILLUSTRATION: VIKAS AGARWAL

The case against listing deserves a fair hearing. The Tata Trusts, which own about two-thirds of Tata Sons, fund hospitals, schools and research. There is a genuine fear that a listing could change the character of an institution built over generations for a philanthropic purpose. Tata Sons became net cash positive in 2023-24. And the Trusts are within their rights to place an alternative structure before the regulator.

But a rule based on size means little if size can be defined away. If the country's largest holding company can reorganise itself out of a requirement written for exactly such institutions, the requirement means nothing for anyone else. Nor does a clean balance sheet settle the matter. Debt repaid this year can be raised next year. The listed Tata companies, which together own nearly 12 per cent of Tata Sons, carried a consolidated debt of over Rs 2.6 lakh crore in 2022-23. That is indirect access to public money, whatever the standalone accounts say. The rule rightly looks at what an institution of this scale could do to the system, not at how well it is run.

Banking is a business of trust, and so is regulation; a regulator seen to make exceptions for the biggest names would find that trust hard to keep. Nor is listing a penalty. TCS, Tata Steel and other group companies have done well under quarterly disclosure and shareholder scrutiny. A sound institution has the least to fear from it.

The Trusts' concerns should be met in how the listing is done: Its timing, the size of the float, its structure, and the safeguards around control and the philanthropic mandate. The Tata Sons board has already decided to comply and, by reports, has begun talks with bankers. The RBI has a part to play too. Having held firm on principle, it can be practical on process: A reasonable timeline, openness with SEBI on the initial float, and clarity on preserving the Trusts' stewardship within the rules.

The RBI had the power to make an exception. It would not have been wise to use it. Exemption from a systemic rule cannot rest on a name and a legacy, however distinguished. The country learned at real cost in 2018 that an institution large enough to threaten the financial system must accept the discipline of transparency. The task now is to meet that requirement in a way that keeps what is valuable about the house of Tata intact.

The writer is former chairman, State Bank of India. Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Fragmented polity

THE Israeli election outcome highlights a deeply fragmented political landscape, resulting in a persistent deadlock where neither major bloc has secured the necessary 61-seat Knesset majority ('In Israel, a deadlock & the difficulties of change', IE, October 31). While Prime Minister Netanyahu's Likud and far-right allies lack a clear mandate, the opposition has failed to decisively reject his leadership following Hamas's devastating terror attack. This outcome leaves Israel at a critical juncture. The record representation of Arab citizens offers an opening for political integration and domestic reconciliation. Yet, rigid political fault lines remain deeply entrenched, threatening to stall progress.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

Accumulating power

CONCENTRATING POLITICAL authority may create an appearance of discipline, but it weakens institutional checks and discourages honest advice ("The Communist Party of Xi Jinping', IE, October 31). When appointments and promotions depend chiefly on loyalty, policy errors may remain unchallenged until their costs become serious. Durable governance requires credible institutions, internal debate and rules that apply even to the powerful.

B A Avyaan, Perundurai

The reform question

WHILE THE article raises valid concerns about administrative reforms, its criticism appears overly broad in attributing institutional shortcomings primarily to the present government ('Reforms 3.0 underline a credibility gap. First, reform the reformer', IE, October 30). A balanced assessment must acknowledge both limitations and achievements of reforms. If Administrative Reforms 3.0 lack credibility, the argument would be stronger with specific evidence of policy failures and practical alternatives.

Imran Hasan, New Delhi



Y K GUPTA

Cancer drug pricing: Test is in actual patient bills, supply

A MEDICINE'S price is shaped not by science but by how it travels from manufacturer to patient. That is the logic behind the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority's (NPPA) decision to bring 137 non-scheduled anti-cancer drugs under Trade Margin Rationalisation (TMR), effective November 9. Trade margins are capped at 30 per cent of the maximum retail price (MRP), excluding GST, and MRPs are expected to fall by up to 70 per cent. NPPA found mark-ups of up to 700 per cent. The reform should be judged by its consequences for patients, manufacturers, hospitals and innovation.

Does lower pricing hurt innovation? New medicines need sustained investment, so the question is fair. But trimming distribution margins does not touch the manufacturer's realisation. Consider a hypothetical medicine sold to a stockist for Rs 10,000 with an MRP of Rs 50,000: The Rs 40,000 gap covers intermediary margins, distribution costs and taxes. NPPA found per-dose pemetrexed prices ranging from Rs 546 to over Rs 72,000, and bevacizumab from about Rs 6,900 to Rs 1.18 lakh. TMR recalculates the permissible MRP; what the manufacturer earns is unchanged.

Immunotherapy drugs such as pembrolizumab and durvalumab are patented biologics not normally price-regulated, yet NPPA has included them. Pembrolizumab's MRP is about Rs 2.06 lakh per dose, and treatment runs over multiple cycles, so even modest mark-ups multiply. Patients often pay full MRP, though some pharmacies offer a discount. TMR narrows the gap, but the test is how much it improves affordability, which a post-implementation study should establish.

> Does lower pricing hurt innovation? New medicines need sustained investment, so the question is fair. But trimming distribution margins does not touch the manufacturer's realisation

Reaction of manufacturers has been mixed. Analysts note the cap does not automatically reduce realisations, and large-company shares that dropped earlier recovered as uncertainty eased. Associations of small manufacturers fear for jobs and availability in remote areas. NPPA's 2019 pilot on 42 drugs cut MRPs of 526 brands by up to 90 per cent, saving about Rs 984 crore a year, but this does not show the effect on availability or actual patient bills. Supply chains must be monitored for stock-outs, particularly of low-cost older drugs.

The All-India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists welcomed the move, arguing that MRPs are set upstream by manufacturers. The challenge is existing stock carrying older, higher MRPs: Relabelling and inventory reconciliation need clear guidelines and a practical transition framework.

Hospitals rely on retail mark-ups, so TMR will squeeze profitability, manageably but noticeably. Nuvama estimates an impact of around 4 per cent for Max Healthcare and 1–2 per cent for other large chains; overall EBITDA could fall by 1–5 per cent. The larger concern is whether hospitals recoup lost revenue through higher charges for consultations, diagnostics, consumables or bundled packages. This warrants scrutiny so that medicine savings become genuine reductions in out-of-pocket expenditure.

Can share-price moves be pinned on TMR? A fall in hospital stocks should not automatically be read as proof that policy has weakened profitability. Operating margins, earnings, patient volumes and total treatment costs are more meaningful indicators.

The ultimate test is tangible savings for patients. Transparent, itemised bills and periodic audits can show whether savings reach patients or are diluted elsewhere.

TMR must move from a pricing intervention to a measurable public health outcome. NPPA, with healthcare institutions and other stakeholders, should establish a monitoring framework tracking actual patient bills, medicine availability, hospital billing and treatment access. Manufacturers, distributors, chemists and hospitals need clear guidelines, predictable compliance requirements and ways to flag supply disruptions.

For a family facing a cancer diagnosis, the figure that matters is the bill at the end of the month. India need not choose between affordable medicines and scientific progress, but it must show it can have both. If savings reach patients, supply holds and innovation is rewarded, TMR will become a template for fairer pricing.

The writer is president, AIIMS Kalyani, former head, Department of Pharmacology, and dean, AIIMS, New Delhi



ADITYA GOWDARA SHIVAMURTHY

Why Delhi mustn't take its eyes off Pakistan-Maldives

MALDIVIAN PRESIDENT Mohamed Muizzu made a three-day state visit to Pakistan last month. Both countries signed 20 MoUs "to strengthen their relations in various fields", including socio-economic development sectors, cybersecurity, drug trafficking, and defence and maritime security. They aim to increase trade from $13 million to $200 million in the next two years. The visit underscores Muizzu's interest in diversifying ties beyond India. This, however, risks compromising India's long-term security and strategic interests.

Geography and religion have largely shaped Maldives-Pakistan relations. Despite a stronger bond with India, the Maldives has, in principle, practiced neutrality and advocated for regional integration and peace between New Delhi and Islamabad. Pakistan has also assisted the country with medical and religious education and even supported the construction of the parliament building. Engagements with Pakistan have increased under Muizzu since his early days. This trend is more visible in defence partnerships. For instance, in addition to Pakistan, the Maldives has signed MoUs on defence cooperation with China and Turkey. The Maldives has also procured armoured vehicles from the UAE, and even joined the Saudi Arabia-led maritime defence coalition. Under Muizzu, the Maldives is thus enjoying growing defence ties with all members of the Mecca pact. For Islamabad, the visit is an opportunity to challenge India's presence and interests in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Since Operation Sindoor, Pakistan and China have held trilaterals with Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Pakistan has advocated for SAARC revival, and even proposed a new South Asian bloc without India. It also plans to expand its naval presence in the Bay of Bengal.

> The visit to Islamabad underscores Muizzu's interest in diversifying ties beyond India

India's policy with respect to the Maldives has been pragmatic. It has used economic assistance to create leverage and long-term goodwill. It offered multiple extensions for T-bills worth $150 million; restructured debts; extended credit lines worth Rs 4,850 crore; and currency swaps worth $400 million and Rs 30 billion.

New Delhi's policy has merit. With presidential elections just two years away and Muizzu's growing unpopularity, India does not want to fuel anti-Indian rhetoric and nationalism. Given strong religious and historic ties, India knows that Pakistan cannot be completely isolated from the archipelago nation. Instead, some MoUs between Pakistan and the Maldives, like countering cyber crimes and drug trafficking, could even benefit India. But, defence and security-related developments will have implications. Muizzu's meeting with Asim Munir, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, to discuss military cooperation, regional security, and defence relations and their interest to strengthen institutional relations, defence partnerships, and professional exchanges have fueled fears of Pakistan being another stakeholder in the Maldives' security architecture. These developments will crowd an already crowded IOR and bring Pakistan closer to India's maritime boundaries. India will therefore have to make clear its security concerns, and communicate its red lines.

The writer is associate fellow, Neighbourhood Studies, Observer Research Foundation

INTEGRATING WITH CHINESE SUPPLY CHAIN COULD HELP INDIA BOOST COMPETITIVENESS: BOLLARD

'India must rethink trade deals, engage with China supply chains'

EXPRESS interview



ALLAN BOLLARD
FORMER GOVERNOR, RESERVE BANK OF NEW ZEALAND

AMID A rupture in global economy and fears of AI-driven job loss, economic development has become more urgent for countries globally, **Allan Bollard**, former Governor of the Reserve Bank of New Zealand told **Arav Shah** and **Ravi Dutta Mishra**. Speaking on the sidelines of the Kautilya Economic Conclave last month, Bollard said India should come up with ideas for plurilateral pacts at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and reconsider its position on mega trade agreements. He also said that integrating into Chinese supply chains could help boost India's competitiveness. Edited excerpts:

How do you make sense of the rising global economic tensions, with the US and China at their centre?

So, it is a big economic rupture in the world. A very big one. It is very significant, and we have to take it seriously. We need to remember that the US has had significant periods in the past when it decided that its interests differed from those of other major powers and pulled back into a form of isolationism.

We might have seen some of this coming in the 1980s, when Japan started growing its economy, particularly its motor vehicle and iron and steel industries, and competing with the US. American companies complained to the government, and there was a big pullback. This led to the US pulling out of the Gold Standard, signing the Plaza Accord and imposing so-called voluntary export restraints on Japan, which slowed down Japan's growth quite considerably.

I think we're seeing some of that again, but on a bigger scale because China is having a greater impact on the world than Japan did. So, from the US point of view, it is not unprecedented, but it is very significant.

Then, of course, we have China, which has made use of the East Asian growth model — a miracle growth model. It has lifted a huge number of people, about a billion, out of poverty. It is a huge economic achievement, but it has also led to very large trade surpluses. It is no surprise that if you have a trade surplus of over a trillion dollars, your main market, the US, is going to start objecting to that.

What is interesting is watching how China tries to respond. It is doing so by trying to restructure its industrial structures. I think it is finding this quite difficult because it has some structural problems. It cannot get domestic consumption upstrongly enough. It knows it is probably exporting too much, but it is hard to pull back from that.

With weaponisation of economic power becoming a major tool for countries, how do you think middle powers are place to provide leadership? BRICS, for instance is gaining prominence.

I don't see them gaining yet. I see possibilities, but I don't see it happening. We're all talking about BRICS, but it does not have enough binding power to keep its members together. It does not have a coherent, unified way of making decisions. So, I don't actually see it as a major source of power. EU has many domestic political problems. ASEAN speaks with one voice, and then it speaks with many voices. So, you could say there is space for India, perhaps Canada, and other possible examples, such as Japan. But then you have to ask: leadership to do what? I think there are many different kinds of leadership. I'm talking about a trade leadership role. We're not seeing India play that role currently.

The FTAs it is signing are a sign of that, but not a particularly strong one, in my view. We have been looking at the WTO, where multilateralism is not working, and there is no clear sign of how it can work. Plurilateral agreements are another possibility, and several initiatives are under way. I think the world, or much of the world is interested in hearing India come up with ideas for plurilateral-type possibilities. But that hasn't really happened so far. So, we're all saying we need more leadership, but that doesn't just happen.

India had concerns at the WTO about plurilateral agreements due to the wide divide between developed and developing nations. Are plurilateral pacts the only way forward?

I'd say plurilateral pacts, but also some mega trade agreements. Look at the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). These were developed in the Asia-Pacific, which has always been a trade-driven growth area. I do think India should look again at joining RCEP. But I think CPTPP is quite a long way beyond what I understand India is prepared to do.

I'm sure India is looking at RCEP again. It is very big. It is not what we would call a high-quality trade agreement, but that simply means the thresholds for market access are not as unrealistic as they might be under CPTPP. Of course, it has a political angle with China being the biggest player. But there would be considerable support for India joining, provided it does so sensibly, from almost every other country. I think that could make it quite possible.

FULL INTERVIEW ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

GST mop-up surges 23%, highest growth in 4 years

Shubham Rana
New Delhi, November 1

GROSS GOODS and Services Tax (GST) collections grew at the quickest pace in more than four years in October to a six-month high of Rs 2.31 lakh crore, amid festive demand and a sharp jump in import revenue, data released Sunday showed.

Collections rose 22.9% year-on-year (y-o-y), the quickest increase since September 2022. October collections were the second highest in current financial year. It was also the fourth consecutive month when GST collections were at Rs 2 lakh crore or higher. In current financial year, gross GST mop-up has risen 13.2% to Rs 14.78 lakh crore.

The robust rise in GST collections was driven primarily by a 42.2% y-o-y growth in import revenue to Rs 72,246 crore. Domestic GST collections grew 15.8% in October to Rs 1.59 lakh crore. "This distinction is important when assessing the headline growth, as import collections can be influenced by changes in import volumes, commodity prices and the value of goods imported," said Manoj Mishra, Partner and Tax Controversy Management Leader, Grant Thornton Bharat. "The growth in domestic revenue, therefore, remains an important indicator to watch when evaluating the underlying momentum in the economy," Mishra said.

Saurabh Agarwal, Tax Partner, EY India, said the sustained growth in import-linked collections underscores the need to further push domestic manufacturing capabilities. Domestic collections comprised Central GST (CGST) of Rs 42,935 crore, State GST (SGST) of Rs 51,340 crore, and Integrated GST (IGST) of Rs 64,769 crore.

On a month-on-month basis, gross GST collections were up 13.6% from September, reflecting increased demand because of the ongoing festive season.

GST revenue post-refunds rose 25.6% on year in October to Rs 2.03 lakh crore while refunds rose 6.5% y-o-y to Rs 27,934 crore. "Looking ahead, the festive season should keep demand buoyant, and collections for the coming month are likely to remain strong," Agarwal said.

In terms of state-wise performance, healthy growth in collections was seen in Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Assam, Meghalaya, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh. Tamil Nadu's GST collection grew just 3% in October. This warrants a closer examination of its manufacturing and consumption-led revenue trends, said Sivakumar Ramjee, Executive Director- Indirect Tax, Nangia Global.

"The policy challenge is therefore twofold: strengthen organic domestic revenue growth while ensuring legitimate refunds are processed swiftly," Ramjee said. FE

GST decriminalisation sets trust-based governance benchmark: CII

New Delhi: CII on Sunday described GST Council's decisions to decriminalise certain offences and rationalise enforcement powers as a significant institutional reform, saying the move marks a shift towards trust-based economic governance and offers a model for India's next generation of economic reforms.

On the decisions taken at the meeting, CII said consensus-driven approach showed how Centre and states could work together on difficult reforms to improve the relationship between government and businesses.

CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said, "The GST Council's decisions deserve special recognition as a landmark institutional reform. We deeply appreciate the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in advancing this transformation, and the constructive role of state governments in achieving consensus on an issue involving sensitive questions of enforcement, revenue protection and taxpayer rights". PTI

How welfare board will function, what changes for unorganised, gig workers

Ravi Dutta Mishra & Aanchal Magazine
New Delhi, November 1

THE MINISTRY of Labour and Employment on Friday notified the constitution of National Social Security Board (NSSB) for unorganised workers with 40 members and National Social Security Board for gig and platform workers with 22 members to design, monitor, and recommend welfare schemes to bridge the social security gap for gig and unorganised sector workers.

The Code on Social Security, which was notified along with three other labour codes in November last year, merged nine social security laws to cover both organised and unorganised sectors. It defined gig and platform workers legally for the first time and stipulated a national registration and a social security fund for unorganised and gig workers.

Social security board

The Code established a NSSB for workers to advise the Centre on framing and monitoring suitable schemes for different sections of unorganised workers, gig and platform workers.

The government has now notified the setting up of the Board for unorganised sector workers with 40 members that include representatives of employees and employers. The membership is dominated by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) linked unions and organisations like Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) and Laghu Udyog Bharati that has as many as six members on the Board.

The Board includes seven employees' representatives from trade unions and seven employers' representatives, with remaining members drawn from various government departments and the Parliament. Among trade unions, the RSS-linked BMS has three members, while Laghu Udyog Bharati, another RSS-linked organisation that works for MSME welfare, holds three of the seven employer seats. In the 22-member NSSB, while the Union Labour Minister and Labour Secretary remain Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson on the board for unorganised workers, the rest of the membership changes to include aggregators and quick commerce operators like Zomato parent Eternal, Zepto, Swiggy and Urban Company. From the workers' side, members include BMS, Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers, and National Front of Indian Trade Unions.

What will the board do?

As per the Code on Social Security, the NSSB will meet at least thrice a year and will recommend to the central government for framing suitable schemes for different sections of unorganised workers, gig workers and platform workers.

The Code envisions the creation of a Social Security Fund for gig and platform workers with contribution from Central and state governments, corporate social responsibility, fines collected due to compounding, etc. As per the Code, the Centre may, from time to time, frame suitable social security schemes for these workers on matters relating to: life and disability cover, accident insurance, health and maternity benefits, old age protection, and crèche. Aggregators like Amazon, Flipkart, Swiggy, and Zomato will have to contribute 1-2% of their annual turnover towards social security fund, with total contribution capped at 5% of the amount payable by them to the workers.

The boards, presided over by the Union Minister for Labour & Employment, will also monitor social welfare schemes for unorganised workers and "review the expenditure from the fund and account" along with undertaking "other functions as are assigned to it by the central government from time to time". The Ministry said the board will review record keeping functions related to the gig workers welfare scheme performed at the state level and also "advise the central government on such matters arising out of the administration of this Code as may be referred to".

The provisions of Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) now apply to all establishments employing 20 or more employees, regardless of the type of industry. Earlier, the EPFO Act was applicable only for the establishments mentioned in the Schedule 1 of the Act, primarily of the manufacturing sector. This norm was removed under the Code on Social Security.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Retirement fund body unveils services to ease provident fund access



Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya at EPFO's 74th Foundation Day celebrations in New Delhi, on Sunday. The minister launched WhatsApp services for PF balance checks. X/@MANSUKHMANDVIYA

ENS Economic Bureau
New Delhi, November 1

UNION LABOUR and Employment Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Sunday launched user-friendly measures for the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) subscribers, including WhatsApp services that will allow them to access PF balance and other details through a verified service. The retirement fund body, with over 34 crore total members and over 8 crore active subscribers, also launched automatic settlement for inoperative EPF accounts having balance up to Rs 1,000.

Under the verified WhatsApp service, EPF subscribers will be able to access PF balance, latest transactions and passbook, along with receiving personalised guidance and assistance for the Employment Linked Incentive scheme of Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana. "This will make routine services accessible through a familiar mobile platform and reduce the need to visit EPFO offices," the Ministry of Labour and Employment said. Another key step was initiation of automatic settlement after prescribed identity and bank-account verification to transfer eligible dues to rightful beneficiaries. Under this, subscribers having Aadhaar-verified inoperative EPF accounts with balances up to Rs 1,000 will not be required to file individual claims. This is expected to benefit around one lakh accounts involving Rs 5 crore. Speaking on the 74th Foundation Day of EPFO, Mandaviya emphasised that social security must be driven by human sensitivity, adding that every concern and grievance of workers must be addressed with compassion and empathy, viewing each worker with the respect and dignity they deserve as nation-builders.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

IL&FS moves NCLT to recover Rs 185.87 crore from former directors

George Mathew
Mumbai, November 1

IN A significant move, Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS) has approached the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), Mumbai, seeking directions to recover Rs 185.87 crore in excess managerial remuneration from its former directors of IL&FS, IL&FS Financial Services (IFIN) and IL&FS Transportation Networks (ITNL).

The recovery exercise yielded a poor response, as per the application. The three companies had identified Rs 187.01 crore as refundable, but recovered only Rs 91.08 lakh, including amounts paid by two independent directors after accounting for taxes. This represents less than 0.5% of total liability. No refund has been made by any of the former managerial personnel, it stated. The company has named 23 former directors and managerial personnel in its application, including former IL&FS Chair Ravi Parthasarathy, former Vice-chairman and MD Hari Sankaran, former Joint MD Arun Kumar Saha, and several former independent directors.

The list also includes former IFIN and ITNL executives. Parthasarathy passed away in April 2022. When IL&FS collapsed in 2018, it had a fund-based debt burden of approximately Rs 94,215 crore, and the government-appointed board took charge in October 2018. The new board had said it resolved approximately Rs 50,387 crore of group debt as of June 30, 2026.

The latest application, dated October 28, 2026 has sought a direction from NCLT declaring identified payments as excess remuneration and directing former directors to refund the amounts. It also sought an interim direction requiring them to deposit disputed sums in separate interest-bearing fixed deposit accounts pending disposal of the application.

The clawback relates to remuneration paid between 2013-14 and 2017-18, when the three companies reported profits in their original financial statements. But a forensic exercise to reopen and recast their accounts changed the picture, turning reported profits into losses. NCLT ordered the recasting in January 2019 after the government alleged that the companies' financial statements did not reflect their true financial position. The exercise covered 5 financial years (FY14 to FY18). It was undertaken by appointed chartered accountancy firms and auditors. NCLT took recast financial statements on record in June 2024.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

•BRIEFLY

Digi Yatra trials start at 7 airports for overseas flyers

New Delhi: **Civil Aviation Ministry on Sunday said Digi Yatra trials for international passengers have started at seven airports and the wider rollout is expected in 2027. It will be available on a trial basis for Indian nationals holding e-passports for select international flights of Air India and IndiGo. In a release, the ministry said Digi Yatra trials for international passengers are being conducted at seven airports — Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Cochin, Mumbai, Chennai and Amritsar.** PTI

Maruti Suzuki posts record sales in October

New Delhi: **Maruti Suzuki on Sunday posted its highest-ever monthly sales in October with 25% y-o-y growth in total dispatches to 2.76 lakh units, despite a high base in the year-ago period. Domestic passenger vehicle dispatches rose over 20% to 2.12 lakh units, while total domestic dispatches, which include Super Carry and sales to other OEMs, grew around 19% to 2.26 lakh units, as per an exchange filing.** PTI

Indians remit $20 billion abroad in 8 months of 2026

Mumbai: Outward remittances from India under the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) have crossed $20 billion during the first eight months of 2026.

Resident Indians remitted approximately $20.09 billion abroad during January-August 2026, compared with an estimated $19.08 billion in the corresponding period of 2025. The increase of approximately $1 billion, or 5.26%, highlights the growing appetite among Indian residents for sending money overseas, even as the country continues to grapple with forex requirements.

Significantly, reports that RBI suggested considering curbs on remittances to contain forex outflows under LRS should be treated as a serious warning rather than dismissed as routine regulatory speculation, analysts say.

The figures show an increasing transfer of financial resources from India to the rest of the world.

The most striking feature is the dominance of overseas travel. Remittances under this category totalled $10.96 billion during January-August 2026, making it the largest component of LRS outflows. The corresponding figure for same period last year was $10.67 billion. Travel remittances stood at $1.658 billion in April 2026, and were at $1.63 billion in August 2026, RBI data shows.

As per RBI data, remittances for education-related travel, including fees and hostel expenses, nearly doubled from $450.16 million in March to $855.52 million in August. Other travel remittances, including holiday trips and payments towards international credit card transactions, rose from $623.05 million in March to $713.80 million in August. ENS

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to toast India Inc's best

ENS Economic Bureau
Mumbai, November 1

INDIA INC has seldom looked in finer form. Its entrepreneurs are disrupting markets, widening their global footprint and innovating relentlessly, powering the economy to new highs. Today, *FE* celebrates these animal spirits at the inaugural *FE Leadership Awards*, honouring the best in the business.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will grace the evening as Chief Guest, and a gathering of the country's top corporate leaders will cheer the winners all the way to the podium.

The Union Budget, due in February, will be her tenth in a row, a record no other finance minister has matched. With it just round the corner, India Inc will be listening closely as the FM outlines the next steps for growth and shares her priorities for the year ahead. If the economy has shown remarkable resilience in the face of strong global headwinds, much of the credit goes to Sitharaman. Despite an energy shock, steep US tariffs and rising inflation, India continues to grow at a brisk pace, helped by a series of well-timed policy moves.

The GST rate revisions and income tax cuts announced in 2025 have kept consumption demand buoyant, while tax relief for foreign portfolio investors buying into government securities has signalled that India is



serious about a competitive tax regime. Her steady stewardship has been just as important. Even as she has cut taxes and stepped up public investment in roads, railways and ports, Sitharaman has kept the government on a credible path of fiscal consolidation, earning the confidence of investors and rating agencies alike. It was her landmark corporate tax cut of 2019 that made India one of the more competitive destinations for manufacturing investment.

The *FE Leadership Awards*, selected by a seven-member jury led by Kumar Mangalam Birla, Chairman, Aditya Birla Group, recognise those who are not merely navigating change but driving it. As industries are disrupted and markets redefined, leadership has never been more demanding. The jury included Arundhati Bhattacharya, President and CEO, Salesforce South Asia; Cyril Shroff, Managing Partner, Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas; Sanjay Nayar, founder, Sorin Investments; Amit Chandra, chairman, Bain Capital; Rajiv Memani, Chairman and CEO, EY India; and Manish Kejriwal, Founder and Managing Partner, Kedaara Capital.

The winners, led by Mahindra & Mahindra's Anish Shah as CEO of the Year and Sun Pharmaceutical Industries as Company of the Year, are trailblazing leaders and organisations that have reimagined their businesses for a changing world. They span India's established champions and its new frontiers, from Sarvam AI, winner of the Emerging Entrepreneur award, to Skyroot Aerospace, the Standout Innovator. JSW Group's Parth Jindal won the Young Turks award for building well beyond an inherited legacy, from paints to electric vehicles and Titan's Ashok Sonthalia was chosen CFO of the Year.

Resilience defined the Standout Unicorn award for Falguni Nayar's Nykaa, Hindustan Unilever won the Sustainability award and ABB India the MNC of the Year. Bella Casa Fashion & Retail was adjudged the MSME of the Year. FE

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• ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

How Google's AI push is affecting ad revenues, investors

Anagha Jayakumar
New Delhi, November 1

GOOGLE'S PARENT company Alphabet lost around $500 billion in value last week, announcing that its core search advertising business had taken a hit from its artificial intelligence (AI) products.

Its AI-powered search feature, AI Mode, is generating less advertising revenue than traditional Search, contributing to a slowdown in revenue growth.

The slide came amidst a larger sell-off in AI stocks, which picked up pace on Friday. Investors are discouraged by high share prices and have expressed scepticism about the industry's continued spending spree, increasingly financed through borrowing and stock sales.

Interestingly, Google's enterprise customers appear to have embraced the company's AI offerings, evidenced by the 103% growth in Google Cloud revenues in Q3 2026.

The tech selloff has drawn attention to a problem at the heart of the AI boom: major AI companies are spending big on data centres and compute even as questions persist over whether the revenues they generate will justify these investments.

EXPLAINED

A weekly column decoding AI's new frontiers, how they shape the world and our place in it

CHANGING SEARCH

- Over the last two years, AI Overviews, Google's AI-generated summaries, have begun appearing prominently in its results.
- A user now has less reason to click through to another website, impacting advertisers and, in turn, Google.

The placement of these ads depends on an auction that considers factors including the advertiser's bid, the relevance and quality of the advertisement, and the user's search. Google commonly earns money when users click on these ads through a pay-per-click model. Other payment models also exist. Advertising accounted for approximately 64% of Alphabet's $127.6 billion revenue in Q3 2026.

AI's impact on business

Over the last two years, AI Overviews, Google's AI-generated summaries, have begun appearing prominently on the results page. A user now has less reason to click through to another website, potentially leading to fewer clicks on search results.

Separately, AI Mode allows users to ask longer, conversational questions, even using voice, images, or documents. Google has argued that many of these queries are searches that users would not otherwise have made. If so, AI could eventually expand Google's advertising opportunities. AI Mode also allows Google to compete with chatbots such as ChatGPT and Claude. However, Google has yet to earn as much advertising revenue from them.

AI bubble concerns

According to *The New York Times*, Amazon, Microsoft, Google and Meta are on track to spend more than $720 billion this year on data centres and other capital expenses, roughly three times what they spent two years ago.

One metric investors are using to assess the sustainability of this spending is free cash flow, or the cash remaining with a company after paying its day-to-day costs and new capital expenses.

Of the four, only Microsoft reported positive free cash flow in the latest quarter.

Such results have revived fears of an AI bubble, with investors questioning whether rising valuations and infrastructure spending can be justified by future profits. Circular financing arrangements between AI companies have added to these concerns.

Earnings from Google ads

When a user Googles something, the order of results they see is determined by Google's proprietary ranking algorithms. These are known as organic search results, which Google ranks according to factors such as relevance.

Separately, Google began selling advertisements alongside search results through Google Ads in 2000.

Advertisers can select keywords relevant to their products or services, allowing their ads to appear alongside searches with similar intent. Searches signalling an intent to purchase goods or services are particularly valuable to advertisers, compared with searches made simply to seek information.

• GLOBAL

Forming a govt in Bibi's new Israel

Benjamin Netanyahu's high-risk high-reward right wing politics made him stand out, reshaping his career and his country. Today, though, he faces an Israel where he may no longer be a novel politician



EXPERT EXPLAINS

BASHIR ALI ABBAS
SENIOR RESEARCH ASSOCIATE, COUNCIL FOR STRATEGIC AND DEFENSE RESEARCH



Supporters of Israeli PM Netanyahu in Tel Aviv on Saturday. AP

FOR THE 12th time on October 27 this year, an Israeli election featured Benjamin 'Bibi' Netanyahu at its centre.

Even in an election featuring across-the-board campaigning around Bibi's security failures and corruption, Israel has ended up with a hung Knesset, with Netanyahu-led Likud remaining its single largest party. What is it about Netanyahu that makes and keeps him relevant?

New Netanyahu for old system

For any politician, exploiting fractures in a state's polity and fault lines among the electorate can be a natural avenue for gaining/retaining power. In Israel, while these fractures have outsized implications given the region's geopolitics, Netanyahu has shown an outsized exploitative ability to drive these to his advantage. This was evident from the very beginning of his career.

All Israeli Prime Ministers have had to focus principally on security, initially with stronger neighbours. So, when Bibi appeared on television in a gas mask in 1991 as Iraqi Scud missiles struck Israel, his security-focused platform was not unique, even if theatrical. In fact, when Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated in 1995 in the middle of the Oslo Peace Process, Bibi's road to becoming PM was virtually blocked given widespread accusations of his links with Rabin's assassins (and considering Bibi's fierce opposition to the Oslo process).

When he eventually became Israel's first directly elected premier (and its youngest, at 46) in 1996, it was hot on the heels of an unprecedented event — a spate of Hamas bombings in Jerusalem that February. This was the beginning of Hamas (alongside Hezbollah in Lebanon) becoming a near-permanent non-state threat for Netanyahu to counter and to leverage.

The rise in individual/group-linked threats, alongside a dilution of military threats from Arab states, allowed Netanyahu to weaponise the language of security and deploy it at the ethnic, tribal, religious, cultural, and social levels in a way no Israeli PM before him confidently could. This high-risk high-reward right wing politics has been key to both Netanyahu's uniqueness as a politician, and the evolution of the Israeli system to accommodate it.

New system for old Netanyahu

On election day this year, with Likud seemingly facing bleak exit polls, Netanyahu warned voters that "if we don't wake up now, we'll find ourselves with a government of Mansour Abbas and Ahmed Tibi" (the two leading Arab/Palestinian politicians in Israel).

Netanyahu has made such remarks earlier too. But the response they received tell the story of a changing Israel.

In 2015, during a similar Likud predicament, Netanyahu warned his constituencies that Arab voters were heading to the polls "in droves" and "threatening the rule of the Right." The opposition's outrage then was sharp enough for Bibi to issue a public apology. Almost 10 years later, the major criticism has come from the Arab parties, while others have been muted.

Netanyahu had set the tone for his attitude to Arabs as far back as 1996, saying, "Leftists have forgotten what it is to be Jewish. They think they will put security in the hands of the Arabs...that Arabs will look out for us". In that term, Netanyahu's stand made him stand out, at a time when the Israeli Left was still competitive (despite having lost their dominance in 1977).

His first term ended with electoral defeat in 1999. However, as both 9/11 and Hezbollah's consolidation in South Lebanon (especially after a 2006 war with Israel) supplemented the growing Hamas threat, Bibi incrementally found space to mainstream 'fringe' political framings, while staying within the traditional Right.

He combined his aversion to Arab Israeli interests with his exploitation of Ashkenazi-Mizrahi Jewish splits, by protecting the latter's interests despite being an Ashkenazi Jew himself, and by embracing ultra-Orthodox Jewish demands. This allowed Bibi to consistently cobble a majority strong enough to lead government near continuously since 2009.

In the 2019, 2021, and 2022 polls (the frequency itself indicating deep Israeli polarisation), Bibi drove this approach home by formally allying with hard-right parties.

Across this progression, Netanyahu consistently presented himself as the preeminent leader capable of dealing with the Hamas threat.

Domestically, Netanyahu has used the shield of security to deepen systemic fractures. For instance, he showed his ability to exploit Israel's lack of a rigid written constitution (and the country's reliance on Knesset-majority Basic Laws for constitutional evolution) across 2019-2025, as he turned against the judiciary that sought to convict him for corruption. This was a hard reversal of his 2012 position favouring judicial independence.

Netanyahu has leveraged military campaigns he initiated to defer court appearances for his trial. Ahead of elections, reports emerged that he had tried to restart hostilities with Iran, both by Israel and the US. The Opposition has increasingly accused him of using the security plank to shore up his own position rather than actually secure Israel.

A future old or new

Compared with 1996, when Bibi stood out for the risky nature of his politics in an Israeli polity that was yet to fully divorce the Left, Netanyahu now faces a need to stand out in a polity that has actively embraced the Right.

Having already led a more hard-right leaning government in 2022-26 than any Israeli PM before him, Netanyahu now needs a way to change his politics afresh, to suit a political landscape that he himself helped change.

While polarisation continues in Israeli society, alongside Arab parties recording unprecedented numbers in 2026 amidst a marked rise in racism and a genocide in Gaza, Benjamin Netanyahu may no longer be a novel politician in Israel.

Security plank

Netanyahu has leveraged military campaigns to defer court appearances for his trial. Ahead of elections, reports emerged he had tried to restart hostilities with Iran, both by Israel and the US.

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The Opposition has increasingly accused him of using the security plank to shore up his position rather than secure Israel.

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So much has Hamas helped Netanyahu weaponise security that by 2026, Opposition candidates like Gadi Eisenkot termed him the 'Yashar of Qatar' (roughly, the honest broker of Qatar), referring to Bibi's history of allowing Qatari aid to Hamas.

Kingmaker, unwanted: Arab parties' paradox in an 'ethnic democracy'



MOINUDDIN AHMAD



Banners calling for a Jewish-Arab government at a protest in Tel Aviv, Israel, on October 31. AP

THE RESULTS of the Israeli general elections, with no clear winner, once again shine the light on a democracy functioning in a deeply divided society. Every section of the Israeli society voted for their representatives.

While the coalition led by Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud managed to secure the maximum number of seats (53), it is not enough to form the government. The Gadi Eisenkot-led (Yashar) Opposition could manage 48 seats, despite thousands of its supporters flying in to vote for change. The surprise was reserved for the Arab parties, who received an unprecedented number of votes and seats (19) in the 120-member Knesset.

To form a government, the arithmetic looks simple: either of the two major Jewish political blocs could take the support of the Arab parties — such as the United Arab List (Ra'am) or the Hadash-Ta'al alliance — to assemble a majority. Yet, neither side appears willing to do so.

Understanding why both the right and centre-left exhibit such structural aversion requires examining how Israel balances its democratic institutions with its identity as a Jewish state. To analyse this issue, historian Alan Dowty has examined the nature of the democracy that Israel has maintained over time.

Democracy with a difference

Applying Dutch-American political scientist Arend Lijphart's theory of consociational democracy, Dowty ranks Israel among consensus-based regimes on several metrics while acknowledging its majoritarian features. Consociationalism suggests that a stable democracy in deeply divided societies relies on power-sharing, grand coalitions, mutual vetoes, and proportional representation.

However, in the Israeli context, these consociational features have historically been restricted to intra-Jewish politics—accommodating ideological divides among secular, religious, Ashkenazi, and Sephardic factions.

While Israeli Arabs enjoy the formal rights of citizenship, including voting and access to the political system, they have been placed outside the sphere of traditional Jewish politics. It took 40 years for the Arabs to establish their first independent parliamentary party — the Arab Democratic Party (Mada, 1988).

Summarising this institutional exclusion, political scientist Ian Lustick notes that Israel lacks a traditional Arab negotiating partner in the elite bargaining processes characteristic of consociational systems. Lustick argues that, despite Arabs constituting approximately 20 per cent of the population, Jewish and Arab political elites do not engage in systematic ethnic bargaining or proportional resource allocation, as is typical of classic consensus democracies.

There is another way of looking at Israeli politics beyond majoritarianism and consociationalism. Israeli sociologist Sammy Smooha suggests that Israel belongs to a category of "ethnic democracies" that combine a dominant ethnic character with democratic rights for all. According to this theory, the way Israel defines its public space and national interests only reflects the wishes of a Jewish majority while undermining the Arab minority's participation in national affairs.

Moreover, legislation such as the 2018 Basic Law further formalises this condition. The law specifies that the right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is only for the Jewish people. Arab politicians, civil rights organisations, and non-Jewish communities (including the Druze) have criticised the law for omitting explicit guarantees of civic equality. In July 2021, the Supreme Court of Israel upheld the law in a 10–1 ruling, determining that while the Basic Law anchors Israel's national identity as a Jewish state, it does not nullify individual human rights guaranteed under other Basic Laws.

Insider-outsider

While Netanyahu has framed the Arab bloc as a threat within, Opposition leaders too, during poll campaigning, had said they would stay away from those parties.

A primary factor behind this is the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Zionist parties accuse Israeli Arab citizens of extraterritorial loyalty. For most, the Israeli Arabs occupy a complex position as an "enemy-affiliated minority"—a population linked by geography, history, and kinship to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, while maintaining political citizenship within Israel, notes Smooha.

Amid the ongoing attacks on Gaza, most Israeli parties see reliance on Arab parties as a direct national security risk. In contrast, the Arab parties reject the Zionist definition of Israel as an explicitly Jewish state. Instead, they advocate their full rights and representation in Israel while supporting a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders, a position supported by many Jewish compatriots. When military operations escalate, Arab parliamentarians face intense pressure from their constituencies to denounce IDF actions.

After the counting of votes, a chorus has been growing that the Opposition bloc should join hands with the Arab parties to unseat Bibi. However, partnering with factions like Hadash-Ta'al risks alienating right-leaning coalition partners (such as Yisrael Beiteinu or Yamina successors), whose votes are equally vital to secure a 61-seat parliamentary majority.

There is recent precedent to this. In 2021, the 36th Israeli government was formed with the support of the Ra'am party. It prioritised civil rights, housing, crime prevention, and economic development in Arab towns over broader debates on political sovereignty. However, the government fell in 2022 over ideological issues, including the illegal settlements in the Occupied West Bank.

• AVIATION

Uttarakhand helicopter crash: The factors behind recurring air accidents

Sukalp Sharma
New Delhi, November 1

A HELICOPTER crashed while returning from Badrinath to Dehradun last week amid adverse weather conditions, killing all six, including the pilot, onboard. The incident has yet again highlighted the safety risks associated with operating helicopters in one of India's most challenging flying environments.

A series of unfortunate events

Uttarakhand has seen a spate of accidents, emergency landings, and other safety incidents involving helicopters in recent years, leading to questions on safety of helicopter-based pilgrimage tourism.

In July 2025, the Ministry of Civil Aviation informed Parliament that of the 12 helicopter accidents that took place in the country since 2020, seven occurred in Uttarakhand alone. Of the 30 people who lost their lives, 21 died in Uttarakhand.

Over the past few years, helicopter services operated by private sector aviation firms have become an increasingly important part of Uttarakhand's religious tourism economy, offering pilgrims a quicker and more convenient way to reach temples nestled in the Himalayas. The Char Dham pilgrimage route is quite popular, but is also witnesses many safety-related incidents.

The concentration of flights during the pilgrimage season, rapidly changing weather, difficult terrain, and gaps in policy and implementation of safety-critical measures make chopper rides in the hill state dangerous, according to experts. There have also been questions about whether the growth of helicopter-based pilgrimage tourism has outpaced the development of safety systems required.

The scale of the problem became particularly evident last summer, when at least five incidents involving helicopters occurred within a couple of months, including a couple of fatal accidents.

Challenges of terrain, weather

Much of the Char Dham route passes through deep valleys surrounded by steep mountains, making helicopter navigation challenging with little room to manoeuvre, particularly when weather conditions deteriorate suddenly, visibility plummets, or the chopper faces a technical problem.

Mountainous terrain also affects wind patterns, and airflow can change suddenly to create turbulence and other unforeseen challenges. Such areas are also prone to sudden visibility changes owing to cloud movement, mist, and unpredictable rain.

A particularly dangerous scenario is controlled flight into terrain (CFIT). This occurs when an aircraft that remains under the control of its pilot unintentionally strikes terrain or an obstacle. Preliminary indications after a helicopter crash near Gaurikund in June 2025 suggested CFIT as the probable cause.

One of the most important issues raised pertain to the lack of reliable and localised weather information. For instance, weather conditions at a base such as Guptkashi may not accurately reflect those at Kedarnath or inside the valleys connecting the two locations. Also, a general weather forecast for a district cannot necessarily tell a pilot whether a particular valley entrance is clear enough for a safe flight at a given point in time.



Wreckage of the helicopter that crashed near Joshimath on Friday. PTI

Air traffic management

Unlike a conventional controlled airport environment, helicopter operations in remote mountainous areas can function under different arrangements, as is the case with some helipads in Uttarakhand. So, air traffic management becomes particularly important in a narrow mountain valley where several helicopters may be operating simultaneously.

A key challenge is that many operators may conduct flights to and from a common destination, while pilots depend on radio communications and information relayed from other locations. Findings from earlier incidents have raised questions about the division of responsibilities for operational safety and oversight at shared facilities.

While aviation is a subject in the Union List and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation regulates the airspace, the Uttarakhand Civil Aviation Development Authority coordinates with helicopter operators. The accidents have raised questions about the absence of robust air traffic control systems in the region.

Commercial incentives

The commercial appeal of these services for operators leads to higher traffic volumes concentrated in a few months each year. This needs effective coordination between helicopters operating in the region, clear procedures for departures and arrivals, and accurate information about weather conditions.

During peak demand periods, helicopters may operate repeated shuttle trips, which raises concerns over commercial considerations impacting adherence to safety rules. Pilot fatigue is also a significant risk factor that requires proper monitoring.

{ WEEKLY CAPSULE }

High BP despite normal readings



RAPID OR excessive changes in blood pressure can increase the risk of heart disease, stroke and brain injury. Problem is they can happen even when average readings fall within the normal range. Researchers at the University of Virginia School of Medicine have identified a small group of nerve cells in the brainstem that helps maintain steady blood pressure. The brainstem regulates essential involuntary functions, and these newly studied cells appear to limit blood pressure swings as people move between everyday activities. A loss of just a few hundred nerve cells led to unstable blood pressure in patients.

Target zombie cells to fight ageing



MAYO CLINIC scientists have uncovered surprising new insights into "zombie cells," ageing cells that linger in the body and contribute to inflammation and disease. Seven studies reveal why these cells are harmful and identify new strategies for targeting them, including a natural compound found in tomatoes. In ageing mice, experimental treatments reduced inflammation and improved physical and brain health. The findings could open the door to therapies that combat some of the biological processes behind ageing. The new research shows that these cells are much more varied than previously understood.

Common drugs push virus spread



WIDELY USED anti-inflammatory drugs may unintentionally help dangerous viruses spread through the body. Scientists at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology found that JAK inhibitors, prescribed for rheumatoid arthritis and other inflammatory diseases, can weaken a crucial immune defence against influenza, COVID-19 and other infections. By suppressing genes that normally fight viruses, these medications may leave patients more vulnerable to infection. JAK inhibitors are often prescribed for autoimmune diseases and inflammatory conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis.

Exercise rewires your heart



EXERCISE DOES more than make the heart stronger. New research suggests it also physically reshapes the nerves that control the heart, revealing an unexpected difference between the left and right sides of the body. Scientists at the University of Bristol (UK) discovered that moderate aerobic exercise changes the structure of nerve cells involved in regulating heart activity. Even more surprisingly, the changes were dramatically different on the two sides of the body. The findings can help doctors develop more precise treatments for irregular heartbeats, chest pain, angina, and stress-induced conditions.

Close cavities in seconds



A SIMPLE LIQUID painted onto teeth can stop cavities in seconds without drilling, injections or anaesthesia, according to a major clinical trial involving young children. The treatment, called silver diamine fluoride (SDF), takes only seconds to apply to each affected tooth. Rather than removing damaged tooth material and placing a filling, a dentist uses a tiny sponge-tipped applicator to paint the liquid directly onto the cavity. The inexpensive treatment could spare thousands of children painful dental procedures and surgery while paving the way for broader FDA-approved use.



POLICY MATTERS

BY PALLY KUNDU, DG (STATISTICS) MOHFW
REENA SINGH, CHIEF DIRECTOR (STATISTICS), MOHFW

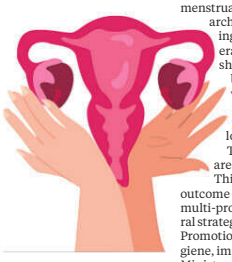
More young women adopting menstrual hygiene

NFHS-6 puts usage among women aged 15–24 at 79.2%, up from 57.6% in 2015-16

THE NATIONAL Family Health Survey-6 (NFHS-6) highlights an important but often underappreciated story of India's social development. While national attention has focused on improvements in maternal and child health, another indicator deserves equal recognition — the increasing use of hygienic menstrual protection among young women aged 15–24 years.

Nationally, 79.2% of women aged 15-24 years now use hygienic methods of menstrual protection — up from 77.6% in NFHS-5 (2019-21) and a dramatic leap from 57.6% recorded in NFHS-4 (2015-16). The World Health Organization and UNICEF's Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) define effective menstrual hygiene management as the use of a clean material, one that can be changed in privacy as often as needed, washed and dried or safely disposed of, without embarrassment or restriction, for preventing infection and maintaining comfort (WHO & UNICEF, 2012). This definition has anchored menstrual health within the global Sustainable Development Goals on good health, gender equality and has progressively shaped how countries design and track their menstrual-hygiene interventions.

India was among the early adopters of this global framework. The trajectory captured in NFHS-6 — from 57.6% in 2015-16 to 79.2% in 2023-24 — reflects genuine movement, not merely a rise in product uptake. It is evidence that India's menstrual-hygiene policy architecture is converging with, and in several respects helping shape, the global benchmark for what safe and dignified menstrual protection should look like.

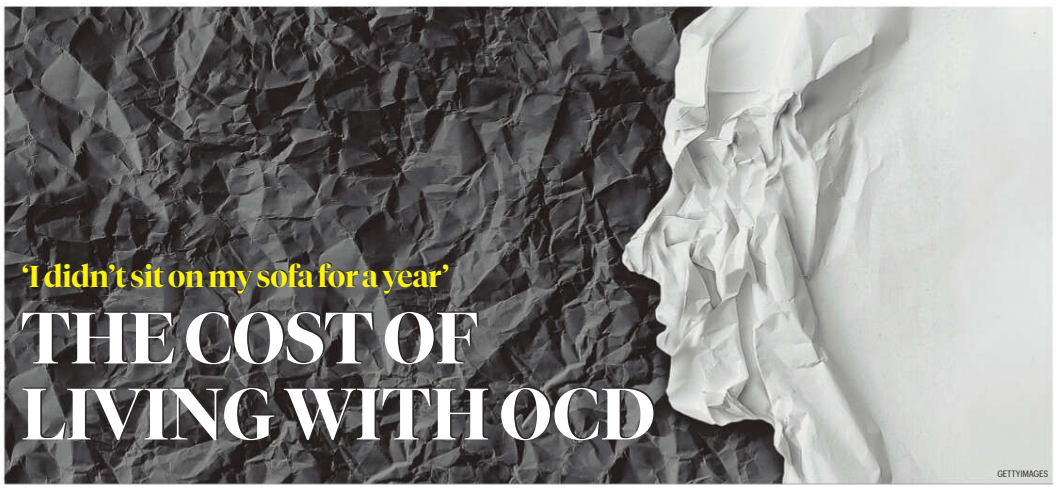


Numbers represent something far larger on the ground. Menstrual hygiene is no longer advancing in isolation — it is moving in step with a self-reinforcing shift in how young women learn, decide and are heard

The national gains are not accidental. This progress is the outcome of a deliberate, multi-pronged, multi-sectoral strategy. The Scheme for Promotion of Menstrual Hygiene, implemented by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and supported through the National Health Mission, promotes increased awareness among adolescent girls on menstrual hygiene, increased access to sanitary napkins to adolescent girls by ASHA workers using the platforms of schools and community, and promotion of safe disposal of sanitary napkins in an environmentally friendly manner. States and Union Territories are supported in providing sanitary napkins to adolescent girls at subsidised rates through ASHAs, using school- and community-based platforms. Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials form another important component of these efforts in promoting awareness. The government even launched the Jan Aushadhi Suvidha sanitary napkins under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP), available at Rs 1 per pad, to ensure affordable access to menstrual hygiene products. By January 2026, more than 100 crore Suvidha sanitary pads had been sold. Of these, over 22.50 crore pads were sold during FY 2025–26 alone. Currently, over 18,000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras nationwide distribute Suvidha napkins, thereby expanding access to safe and hygienic menstrual products.

Numbers that look incremental on paper often represent something far larger on the ground. The rise from 77.6% to 79.2% may read as a modest 1.6-percentage-point gain, but it means lakhs of additional young women moved from cloth or other unsafe materials to a hygienic method of menstrual protection in just a few years. Seen over a longer arc, the shift is more striking: hygienic protection among women aged 15–24 has climbed by nearly 22 percentage points since NFHS-4 (2015-16), when barely three in five young women had access to safe menstrual care.

Each of these is its own small triumph, and together they confirm that menstrual hygiene in India is no longer advancing in isolation — it is moving in step with a broader, self-reinforcing shift in how young women learn, decide, and are heard.



'I didn't sit on my sofa for a year'

THE COST OF LIVING WITH OCD

GETTYIMAGES

For people living with obsessive compulsive disorder, the distress goes far beyond neatness. Shame, misdiagnosis and delayed care can turn everyday routines into exhausting cycles of fear and compulsion

Reva Thakkar

FOR AN entire year, while pursuing her Master's in Bengaluru, Stuti did not sit on her apartment sofa. It was neither broken nor dirty. But after seeing her flatmates sitting cross-legged on it, she decided it was contaminated. "I didn't even touch that sofa thinking it was gross and unclean," she says. The 23-year-old sat on the floor instead and stopped friends and family from sitting on the sofa, fearing germs would travel from it to her bed, then to her. The thought of the resulting laundry, changing bedsheets and cleaning herself became unbearable.

She remembers the first time she felt this fear, though she had no name for it. At age three, after playing in a Mumbai park, she spent an hour scrubbing herself in the bathroom until her legs hurt and were bruised with tiny red scratches. A few years later, on a family trip to Rajasthan, she touched a camel but could not find water to wash her hands. Desperate to relieve the discomfort, she licked her hand. It worked, briefly. Then came COVID-19.

As the world grew vigilant about contamination, her father's repeated instruction — "sanitise your hands" — brought the obsessive thoughts back. "Since then, there hasn't been a single day when I have gotten to live my life normally," she says. Stuti was finally diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) in 2023.

What is OCD?

OCD is a mental health condition in which unwanted, intrusive thoughts trigger intense anxiety, leading to repetitive behaviours or mental rituals that provide only temporary relief. It has two defining features: obsession and compulsion. Obsession comprises recurrent, intrusive thoughts, urges or images that cause distress and feel difficult to control. Compulsion is a repetitive behavioural disorder — washing, checking, counting or verbalising a set of phrases — performed to relieve that distress, usually temporarily.

OCD has no single cause; it is thought to arise from a combination of genetic vulnerability, differences in brain circuits and neurotransmitter systems, and environmental factors such as stress or traumatic experiences. Globally, OCD is estimated to affect one to three per cent of the population. India's National Mental Health Survey (conducted last in 2015–16) estimated its prevalence among adults at 0.8 per cent.

Dr Uma Maheswari Ganesh, a clinical psychologist formerly with NIMHANS and who now leads a specialised OCD programme at Amaha Health, describes obsessions as "a song stuck in your head that won't leave." Unlike a pleasurable fixation, however, an obsession brings distress. "It knocks on your brain repeatedly without your consent. When someone says they are obsessed with a hobby, they may enjoy pursuing it. In clinical OCD, there is zero satisfaction — only distress," she says. Compulsions are no better. Someone who fears their hands are dirty may wash them five, 10 or 20 times, stopping not when their hands are clean but when the anxiety briefly subsides. "The thought returns, and the cycle begins again," she adds.

In India, clinicians also encounter intrusive blasphemous thoughts and sexual imagery. Dr Nand Kumar, professor of Psychiatry and head of the Centre for Advanced Research and Excellence in Neuromodulation at AIIMS, Delhi, says such thoughts can result in profound guilt and shame, making them difficult to disclose.

The cost of living in a loop

Dr Kumar warns that untreated symptoms can become entrenched through conditioning, leaving people to accept their suffering as inevitable. "If you don't admit you have a problem, open up or get treated, then you will end up accepting and perpetuating a lifelong mental condition," he says.

At 14, Sneha had a nightmare that someone had drugged her, the fear and trauma of which followed her into her waking moments. She hid it for years. "During peak Mumbai summers, I would wear long-sleeved hoodies and jackets because I was terrified that someone on the street would sneak up on me and inject me with drugs. The fear completely consumed my mind. I couldn't stay present in school or daily life." For Sneha, the greatest loss was concentration. "And that was worse than stigma."

This not only upends life but leaves the sufferer gasping to just keep up with daily goals, says Agra-based OCD specialist Dr Shyam Gupta. "Imagine a person spending three hours a day washing, checking or running things over in their head. That's a big slice of the day gone. Classes get skipped, work slows down, and friends stop calling because the person keeps cancelling and falling behind," he says. Govind, 26, a psychologist diagnosed with OCD in October, has long struggled with punctuality-related compulsions. To avoid being late, he arrives at least half an hour early, sacrificing sleep. "I have to wake up at 7 am for a class I have at 10.40 am," he says.

An Amaha report early this year, drawing on 13,825 people beginning care across India, found that fewer than one in eight could manage all their daily tasks. More than a quarter struggled to manage most tasks or any at all, while over half had lived with their concerns for more than a year before their first session. The findings illustrate the broader costs of delayed mental healthcare. The stakes are big. A Swedish study of more than 36,788 people with OCD found they were roughly ten times more likely to die by suicide than the general population. A 2024 study reviewing 814 patients at NIMHANS between 2008 and 2018 found that 19.8% had a documented lifetime suicide or self-harm attempt.

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from the OPD

Why diagnosis is delayed or missed

In India, distinguishing OCD from religious devotion or meticulous behaviour can be difficult. "What separates devotion from disorder is quite simple. It is how the person feels while doing it," Gupta says. "Someone who prays or cleans out of faith usually looks settled afterwards. Someone with OCD looks tense, rushed or afraid."

Temple rituals involve washing, pouring water over the head or repeating prayers. Because such practices may be culturally familiar, repeated rituals can go unnoticed. In some communities, cleanliness is also closely linked to notions of purity. Gupta describes a 16-year-old Arjun, who repeats a prayer up to 40 times each evening, restarting whenever his thoughts wander. His relatives see devotion; he experiences fear and exhaustion. "Arjun sits there tired and scared, with no idea how to tell them it doesn't feel like devotion," he says. Govind similarly keeps his diagnosis private. His compulsions involve numerical symmetry — stepping in a prescribed sequence, beginning with his left foot and ending with his right — alongside an intense need for reassurance about how others perceive him. "Because my symptoms don't fit the stereotype of OCD, I choose not to disclose my diagnosis to my parents or broader professional networks."

Gupta recalls Rohan, 26, who feared he might harm his younger sister after an uncle died in a road accident. He began avoiding the kitchen whenever she was there. "The thoughts horrified him, and that is typical," he says.

Families can inadvertently reinforce symptoms, too. Dr Ganesh compares the tendency to dismiss OCD as a personality quirk to viewing the character Monica from the TV hit series *Friends* as simply a "clean freak." In joint families, several people can become involved, helping sustain the cycle even as the person's work, relationships and social life deteriorate.

Who gets left out

Access to treatment involves more than whether services exist. A retrospective audit of 92 OCD patients at Mumbai's Sion Hospital found that 90% opted for medication, despite cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) being offered free of charge. Only two attended the sessions. Others said they could not spare the time for regular appointments. Free therapy is not truly free if attending it costs a day's wages.

Dr Ganesh notes that Indian research accounts for only about 18% of reported OCD cases from lower socio-economic groups, compared with 50%–60% from middle socio-economic groups. This does not mean OCD is less common among poorer communities. "Limited awareness, competing survival needs and the normalisation of repetitive behaviour can prevent people from reaching care," she says. The challenge, then, is not merely to make treatment available, but to make it accessible to those who can least afford the time, money and opportunity cost of seeking it.

Meanwhile, Stuti is getting accustomed to normal rhythms. She still takes long showers. When she returns from work feeling unclean, she still eats on the floor outside her door. But she has learned to press the pause button. "Sit with it. What's the worst that can happen?" she asks herself.

How to manage OCD

OCD MANIFESTS when certain neural circuits become hyperactive, and the brain's ability to filter information breaks down. "The first-line medication is SSRIs (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors), which increase serotonin levels between nerve cells and slow down compulsive behaviour. But medication alone often isn't enough. Even if we prescribe SSRI medication and anxiety is not handled, the patient will not respond," says Dr Nand Kumar. Hence, medicines to handle anxiety and heavy perspiration are often prescribed as well.

The gold-standard psychological treatment is Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP), often combined with medication. In ERP, a patient gradually encounters a trigger — such as touching a desk perceived as dirty — while resisting the usual compulsion. Over time, they learn that anxiety can subside without performing the ritual.

Psychoeducation is important. Dr Ganesh estimates that teaching patients and families to distinguish thoughts from actions accounts for 20%–25% of treatment success. For people whose compulsions are primarily mental, she uses Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), helping them observe intrusive thoughts "like passing clouds" without arguing with or engaging in them.



For Stuti, sessions revealed a history of childhood abuse which made ERP therapy difficult. For a year, she showered after every visit to the toilet. Eventually, the frequency became unsustainable, and she began holding her urine, developing what she describes as the worst urinary tract infection of her life. With her psychiatrist's help, she began sitting with the discomfort of feeling unclean, gradually extending the delay from two minutes to five, 15 and then 30. She still takes long showers, but they consume less of her day.

Sneha finds running meditative, forcing her attention towards her breath. Working in sales keeps her engaged with the outside world. Govind journals at night, describing the practice as "emptying the trash". Medication has also helped him. Within ten days, he noticed that he no longer unconsciously counted steps while scrolling through social media reels.

For patients who do not respond adequately to medication — 40%–60% based on research— Deep Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (Deep TMS) may be an option. Using magnetic pulses to modulate brain activity, the treatment typically involves sessions five days a week for four to eight weeks, alongside therapy. It can be expensive, though AIIMS provides it free of charge.

Dr Kumar estimates that approximately half of the patients who do not respond to medication benefit from Deep TMS.

OCD may require long-term management, and major life stressors can trigger a return of symptoms. Dr Ganesh stresses the importance of long-term relapse-prevention plans and psychiatric follow-ups. But, as Dr Nand Kumar says, earlier recognition remains critical. "The first step may be a simple question. Not what are you doing, but how does it feel while you are doing it? Does washing stop when the hands are clean, or does anxiety demand another round? Does prayer leave someone peaceful, or frightened?," he suggests.

While Sjoerd Marijne shepherded the women's hockey team to defeat China at the Asian Games, Savita Punia was the rock in the goal, helping India maintain their 1-0 lead, ushering in the Asiad gold. The coach and the senior player of the gold-winning team were at the Express Idea Exchange, moderated by Assistant Editor Nitin Sharma

'Coaches gave us freedom... it was our turn to give them a return gift'

SAVITA PUNIA, Goalkeeper, Indian Women Hockey

'A defensive structure is good and that is what will bring us titles'

SJOERD MARIJNE, Coach, Indian Women Hockey



ILLUSTRATION: SUVAJIT DEY

ON HER EQUATION WITH BICHU DEVI

We are each other's strength. I always have eye contact with her. Since her junior days, I had the trust that Bichu will be a good goalkeeper going forward for India

ON INDIA'S GAME PLAN AGAINST CHINA

When we have the ball, we don't want to lose it in our half so they can counter-attack. They had a few opportunities but not really big ones. We were good on the line in the penalty corners

Nitin Sharma: Your first thoughts on winning the Asian Games title and qualifying for the LA Olympics.

SAVITA PUNIA: Definitely, there was pressure because qualifying for LA was important for us. At the Tokyo Olympics (2021), we had our best performance ever, and when we did not qualify for Paris, it was a setback. When Sjoerd sir joined, our only target was to qualify for the LA Olympics directly through the Asian Games. When the team's spirit is good, we do not think about the pressure. Definitely, the final (against China) was a high-pressure situation but we followed the coaches' plans for the match.

SJOERD MARIJNE: It's a great achievement. It was a long road to the Asian Games final. The Asian Games was the most important tournament this year. In the end, it was about one match against China in the final. We wanted to avoid the shootout because a lot of things can happen. We had played against them (China) in the World Cup and we already knew that we could beat them. In the final, it was about staying calm and making the opportunity count. I must say we defended really well.

Nitin Sharma: When you returned as the India coach in January, what were your first thoughts?

SJOERD: I saw that team cohesiveness was missing. It was not a unit. There was a lack of discipline in a few areas. These things my staff and I brought back into the team. It helped that I knew the players, who were with me in the 2021 Olympics (Tokyo). They told the new girls how I am and got them to back my vision. Now, there is a lot of ownership in the team, something that was gone. I wanted to bring that back because we have a lot of knowledge inside the team and I wanted to use that. It is easier for juniors to come into the team. The seniors make the difference in the way they guide and the way they are focussed on the team goals.

Nitin Sharma: Savita, what was the team's reaction to Sjoerd coming back for the role?

SAVITA: It was our demand that we want Sjoerd sir. Hockey India asked us what we wanted because our performance was not up to mark in the last two years. When Hockey India president Dilip (Tirkey) sir and Bholanath (Singh) sir came to Bengaluru and asked whether we wanted a coaching change, we recommended Sjoerd and Wayne Lombard (strength and conditioning coach). So, as a team, we were definitely happy.

Nitin Sharma: How successful have you been in ensuring players dribble less?

SJOERD: It's about choosing the right moments to dribble. You show them clips when it's a good choice and when it isn't. And in that way, they learn by experience. Because I don't want us to lose our dribbling skills. That is something typically Indian, and I want to keep the Indian culture in the team. But you have to know when to dribble.

Nihal Koshie: Compared to the last decade, is the Indian team more receptive to ideas now?

SJOERD: They were always open. I also experienced that in 2017. It starts with the coach, the leader, the CEO... as long as you have a good vision and can involve the players in the process, they will embrace the vision. It must not be the vision of just one. I like players taking initiative and ownership... The reason why I like to work in India is because if they feel that this a good vision, they will embrace it and follow our instructions. They also hold their own meeting before which coaches have to leave the room. This does not happen with a lot of teams.

Nihal Koshie: What is discussed in the player-only meetings? Do you talk about the coach also?

SAVITA: Yes, we talk about the coach also. But we have the best staff. Ninety per cent of the players understand English but we try to motivate and boost the players. Young players are very good, seniors are cooperative. For example, it was my fourth Asian Games, so I shared my experience. Navneet (Kaur), Neha (Goyal) shared their experience. We talk about what strikers need from mid-field, what mid-fielders want from defenders, though we discuss everything with the coaches. Coaches give us so much freedom, it was our turn to give them a return gift (medal).

Nitin Sharma: Savita, as a senior player, can you share how tough it is for players to play under a foreign coach when Sjoerd joined initally?

SAVITA: Not difficult. Because, we had worked with foreign coaches earlier also in 2012, from Australia, and after that Sjoerd came. When Sjoerd sir came, one good thing that happened was that whether you knew English or didn't, the player had to open up with the coach about what is going on in her mind. If I am not able to understand English, I will raise my hand and say I didn't understand. So what coach demanded in 2017 and now, has worked for the players. If you don't have a demand, you are just satisfied but when coaches are demanding, it is a chance to improve. And that's why we put the request again that we need this coaching staff.

Rohit Mundayur: Sjoerd, what are your thoughts on the evolution of this team, defensively, since you took over.

SJOERD: Defensively, it's the basics of the way we play. You can always fall back on a good defence and from there you can build up your game. That's what you saw in the Asian Games and the World Cup. China was very strong in the final (Asian Games). They had more ball possession. But if you see in the fourth quarter, the moment they really had to attack, even with an extra player, they only entered the circle twice. That means that the defensive structure is really good and for me, that is what will bring you titles. We want to build and become better in ball possession. We know that the Indian team will always create opportunities (to score). It can be just one or two, but we always get that penalty corner. You saw that against China. We got one opportunity and we scored. For the rest of the game, we defended really well. That is why unity is so important and everyone needs to know their task.

Amit Kamath: How did you manage to beat China this time around in the Asian Games final?

SJOERD: How we approached the China match was that we knew that they are a very strong opposition and that's fine. I won't share the whole game plan because very soon we're playing China again (Pro League in November) and we want to win again. For us, one thing was important: being very calm on the defensive side. When we have the ball, we don't want to lose the ball in our half so they can counter-attack. That was very important in the match. They had a few opportunities but not really big ones. We were good on the line in penalty corners. That was our game plan against China.

British Raj: When China was awarded the penalty stroke, India took a referral and there was some time. What was going through your head?

SAVITA: A lot. Penalty stroke is always difficult for a goalkeeper. In the penalty shootout, there are eight seconds. When we asked for referral, I was reminding myself of a few things. Sjoerd trusts me and Bichu a lot, so that gives confidence. Taeke Taekema (penalty corner coach) has a database of players and we had seen that from day one. Pirmin Blaak (goalkeeping consultant) had trained us too. Usually, Bichu (Devi) and I would dive on the right side with stick and left side with leg, so at times angled shots on left side can go inside (the goal). Since Blaak came for the World Cup, we started diving to left with our gloves to save shots. Blaak asked Wayne Lombard to help us with practising those saves. Taekema also asked me to not take an early decision. So I didn't want to move early and I was patient.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH THE VIDEO

Shuvaditya Bose: If we talk about a year ago, you were conflicted about your future with the team. Can you tell us why that thought came to you?

SAVITA: Two years ago, the team was not improving and I thought I would leave the sport. But in January, I talked to Sjoerd and Wayne Lombard. We decided that I couldn't end my career like that. During the qualifiers, I wasn't with the team due to personal reasons but then I decided that Asian Games was a must for us. I think it is important for me to go out on a good note.

British Raj: Talk about the bond you have with Bichu Devi. First, she came as your understudy, then you started alternating between quarters.

SAVITA: Touchwood, I share a great bond with Bichu. We are each other's strength. I have spoken of everyone's contribution in that penalty stroke save but I always have eye contact with Bichu in such moments. Even when she is inside and I'm out, we keep that eye contact. Since her junior days, I had the trust that Bichu will be a good goalkeeper going forward for India. Being a senior goalkeeper, it is my responsibility to pass on my knowledge to her and give her that experience. She is very hardworking. I haven't seen many players at that age being so sincere. Since Sjoerd has come, we have mostly been roommates and we share our experiences and thoughts with each other. I think we are setting a good example. We are competitors but only in training. When we are playing for India, we are one. She looks up to me as an elder sister and I treat her as my younger one.

Nitin Sharma : How do you see the road ahead if this women's team has to win against the top three or four teams and if we have to get a medal in the LA Olympics?

SJOERD: I have that road clearly in front of me. We are playing the Pro League and we are playing against good countries. We will have a lot of learnings from that. To win at the Olympics, you need to be consistent and that's one of the most important things. We have almost two years for the LA Olympics and the squad will also get more depth. So there will be more competition in the team. Players will face all different kinds of challenges because competition brings out the best in the top players. Also, on the physical aspects, we are focussing on how to create the best ever version of ourselves. It starts with each individual. What can you improve? Do you become faster and stronger? All those kinds of things.

Nitin Sharma: You have given the players tiger-eye crystals.

SJOERD: I'm interested in the culture of India, and the Bengal tiger is, of course, a strong symbol... like *Bharat ki shernivaan*. So that is something of a metaphor for us. A tiger can wait, can be patient, and wait for very long for its prey. They only need one shot. It's exactly what happened against China but you don't want to give too much away. Every time they look into the eye, it's like... what is important for us is being calm, being aggressive, being patient, and striking at the right moments.

Nitin Sharma: What would you like the world to remember this team for?

SJOERD: Resilience, discipline, will power, and a team who enjoys what they are doing. And the last one is one of the most important things, because what people forget is the joy we have together. The last eight-nine months were amazing... it was the extra topping (icing) on the cake, because that (joy) made it really nice and it gives extra value to this golden medal. It was a combination of fun and being serious at the right moment. And that balance, at this moment, it's perfect together. Many people tell me that they see how much the girls are enjoying their time on the pitch. I think that's something we want to be remembered for.

Nitin Sharma: Savita, were you always interested in becoming a goalkeeper? Tell us about how you have evolved as a goalkeeper over the years?

SAVITA: I started playing in 2003 and I used to play as a defender. But my mother's health was not good and I wanted to leave hockey. In 2005, my coach told my father that I had the height and they could play me as a goalkeeper. So the coach made the decision and my father got me the kit. Since my father bought such an expensive kit for me, it was always on my mind that I have to play for India one day.

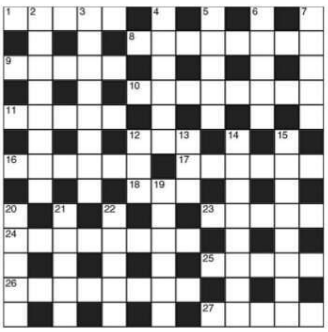
Nitin Sharma: In 2011, there was an incident when a bus conductor made a remark about you. Tell us about that.

SAVITA: I credit my parents for this. Because of them, especially my father, my hockey journey continued. In 2011, a bus conductor told me that my hockey kit bag was too big and I had to buy another ticket. I told him that I didn't have the money. I respected his decision but what hurt me was when I asked him to help me put the kit on the roof, he said, *"Tum to ladki ho, ek awaaz maro dus ladke aayenge."* (You are a girl, 10 boys will come to help if you call). I was angry and thought of quitting hockey. My father told me not to worry and got me a second-hand car. My family has been my backbone.

WHY SJOERD MARIJNE AND SAVITA PUNIA

The Indian women's hockey team won their first Asian Games gold in 44 years, confirming a berth at the Los Angeles Olympics. They were steered towards history with the win over China by coach Sjoerd Marijne — now in his second stint after the 4th place at 2021 Tokyo Olympics. India's senior most player, Savita Punia, who shared goalkeeping duties with Bichu Devi, was instrumental in staving off Chinese attacks, giving India their coveted prize

CROSSWORD 6135



ACROSS

1 Hot seat abandoned in a hurry (5)
8 One who falls for a film director (5,3)
9 German river on which revellers like to go (5)
10 No townsperson has beer after 6:50 (8)
11 Find fault in noise from engine (5)
12 Be a self-employed solicitor? (3)
16 Little distinction (6)
17 Subordinate gives name and number (6)
18 Bird exhibited in the museum (3)
23 Dollar pieces? (5)
24 Mention a different name (8)
25 Bags of patients (5)
26 Sad passage to quote back (8)
27 This said, repair is immediate by a saw (5)

DOWN

2 Something we can well forgo at the end of a book (8)
3 Defence cuts (8)
4 Fighting prevalent on street (6)
5 Where two sides get together to some degree (5)
6 One thousand years old statue (5)
7 Noisy drink? (5)
12 Note the old-fashioned farewell (3)
13 This creature's a bit of a flaming nuisance (3)
14 See great changes in economy travel (8)
15 Not still lacking support (8)
19 There's some point in this system (6)
20 Secret way to shoot a bird (5)
21 Strike me? It's wrong (5)
22 Kiss a girl before one is attached (5)

SOLUTIONS CROSSWORD 6134 **ACROSS:** 1 Everything, 6 Slap, 10 Rapid, 11 Contralto, 12 Psalmist, 13 Taste, 15 Tarring, 17 Pickets, 19 Pestles, 21 Bolster, 22 Learn, 24 Downpour, 27 Toothache, 28 Extra, 29 Date, 30 Present day **DOWN:** 1 Ears, 2 Exposures, 3 Yodel, 4 Hacking, 5 Nonstop, 7 Lilts, 8 Professors, 9 Critical, 14 Stipulated, 16 Iolanthe, 18 Entrusted, 20 Sidecar, 21 Bowyers, 23 About, 25 Preen, 26 Mary

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.

___ is a better safeguard of liberty than a standing army. - Edward Everett Hale (9)

RTAEO

CGLONU

GHLIT

EEEXCD

SOLUTIONS: Orate, Light, Unclog, Exceed

ANSWER: **Education** is a better safeguard of liberty than a standing army. - Edward Everett Hale

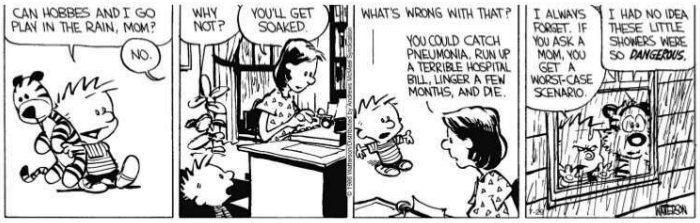
OVER THE HEDGE

BY MICHAEL FRY & T LEWIS



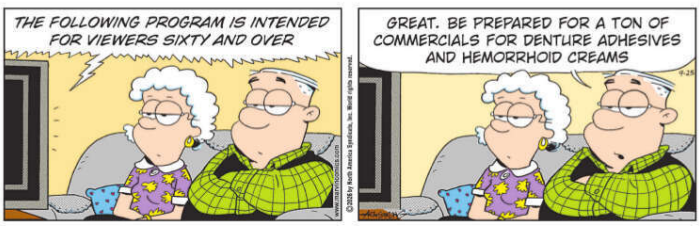
CALVIN & HOBBES

BY BILL WATTERSON



MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG



SUDOKU 6490

DIFFICULTY LEVEL 2s
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

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 6489

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

ROYAL STARS

BY GEORGIA NICOLS

ARIES (MAR 21 - APR 20): This is a wonderful day to talk and socialize with others. Sports events and fun activities with children will also appeal. Some people will encounter new love. Tonight: Socialise.

TAURUS (APR 21 - MAY 21): This is a feel-good day, particularly at home (even though there is increased activity and chaos on the home front). Relations with co-workers are positive. In fact, for some of you, a work-related romance might begin. Tonight: Relax at home.

GEMINI (MAY 22 - JUNE 21): This is a wonderful day for you, which is why you feel energetic, intellectually alive and eager to talk to others. You want to share your ideas, especially with a romantic interest. Be patient with silly mistakes at work. Tonight: Talk.

CANCER (JUNE 22 - JULY 23): This is a great day for financial negotiations if you can avoid the Moon alert. In particular, you might be pleased with purchases made for your home. Possibly, you'll buy something you've had your eye on for some time. Tonight: Check your belongings.

LEO (JULY 24 - AUG 23): This is a winning day for you because the Moon is dancing with Mars and Jupiter in your own sign, as well as winking at Venus. This makes you flirtatious, happy, convivial and ready to enjoy the company of others. Romance is blessed. Tonight: You win.

VIRGO (AUG 24 - SEP 23): This is a feel-good day. Perhaps you're expecting money or something to come through for you. You'll be pleased with purchases you make today, be aware of the Moon alert. Tonight: Enjoy privacy.

LIBRA (SEP 24 - OCT 23): This is a wonderful day to buy wardrobe goodies for yourself, if avoid the Moon alert. Enjoy the company of friends as well as groups. You might be involved in something competitive. Tonight: Be friendly.

SCORPIO (OCT 24 - NOV 23): It doesn't get much better than this. The Sun and Mercury are in your sign while the Moon, Mars and Jupiter are lined up at the top of your chart. This makes you powerful, charismatic and diplomatically ambitious. Tonight: You're admired.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV 24 - DEC 22): Be confident about exploring opportunities to travel as well as avenues related to medicine, the law, higher education and publishing. A friendship might turn romantic and surprise you. Tonight: Explore and learn.

CAPRICORN (DEC 23 - JAN 20): Financial negotiations will favour you today, along with discussions about how to divide or share something like an inheritance, even a debt. You also might get a boss, parent or someone in authority to endorse your side. Tonight: Check your finances.

AQUARIUS (JAN 21 - FEB 19): This is a fabulous day to talk because people want to see you. Ongoing relations with partners and close friends are excellent. Travel plans will appeal. Possibly, a long-distance romance or someone from your past will reappear. Tonight: Cooperate.

PISCES (FEB 20 - MAR 20): A work-related romance might begin for many of you today. You feel affectionate and passionate. You also might have a strong desire to "get away from all this" and do something different. Tonight: Get better organised.

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given to the Public that my client has agreed to purchase the property more particularly described in the schedule hereunder written belonging to Mrs.Bhawna Khanna W/o. Shri.Ajay Khanna.

All persons having any objection or claim against or in respect of the said property or any part thereof by way of sale, exchange, mortgage, charge, gift, trust, inheritance, possession, lease, lien or otherwise howsoever are hereby requested to inform the same in writing to the undersigned in his office at DBS House, Ghanshyam Talwatkar Marg, Old Prescott Road, Fort, Mumbai 400 001, together with the documents in support of such objection or claim within 14 days from the date hereof failing which such objection or claim if any of such person or persons will be considered to have been given up, waived and/or abandoned.

THE SCHEDULE ABOVE REFERRED TO

The entire Third Floor, having a covered area of approximately 206.1/2 Sq. Yards. comprising 3 Bedrooms with attached Bathrooms, one Drawing-cum-Dining Room, one Kitchen, Balconies, together with the entire terrace above the Third Floor with exclusive roof rights, 3 (three) car parking spaces being the three middle parking slots shown on the stilt parking layout, 1 (one) utility space in the Stilt floor, and a separate and exclusive entry gate for those parking spaces on the centre of Property No. S-288, Greater Kailash Part-I, New Delhi-110048 along with 22.5% undivided, indivisible and impartible ownership rights in the said plot of land, together with proportionate rights in all common areas and facilities, and all rights, easements, privileges and appurtenances, fixtures, fittings, woodwork, shafts, lift, water, electricity and sewerage connections to the said plot being a portion of the freehold plot of land bearing No. 288, in Block 'S', measuring 206-1/2 Sq. Yds. (equivalent to approximately 172.66 Sq. Mtrs.), situated in the residential colony known as Greater Kailash Part-I, New Delhi-110048, in the Revenue Estate of Village Yaqutpur, within the limits of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, bounded as under:

East: Plot No. S-290, having a double-storied house thereon;
West: Plot No. S-286, having a single-storied house thereon;
North: Service Road;
South: Road

Dated this 02nd day of November, 2026

(VINOD L. DESAI)
Advocate for Intending Purchaser
E-mail : advocatevinoddesai@gmail.com

UJVN Ltd.
(An Uttarakhand Govt. Enterprises)
H.O. "UJJWAL" Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephone-0135-2763808 Fax: 0135-2763508
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866 Website: www.ujvnl.com

RO No. 1019 **TENDER NOTICE** Date: 31.10.2026

Office of Executive Engineer (Maint.), Khodri Power House, invites sealed tenders from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below,
Tender No:-17, 18 & 19/EE(Maint.)/Khodri/2026-27.
Name of work: (1) Hiring of Vehicle with driver for round O' Clock duty at Khodri Power Station.
(2) Hiring of vehicle with driver for office of the EE (Gen.), Khodri Power Station
(3) Hiring of vehicle with driver for office of the EE (M), Khodri Power Station
Estimated cost (In Lakh): Rs. 7.33 (GST extra), 4.91 (GST extra) & Rs 4.91 (GST extra) respectively
Date of availability of bid Document on website : 02.11.26 10:00 Hrs
Last date for submission of tender : 23.11.26 16:00 Hrs.
For fuller & further details, kindly visit our website. The tender document can be downloaded from the Nigam's website "**www.ujvnl.com**".
Executive Engineer (Maint.) khodri power station

"AVOID WASTEFUL USE OF ELECTRICITY"

CANTONMENT BOARD, MATHURA

INVITATION OF E-TENDERS (DUAL BID SYSTEM)

Electronic Bids are invited by Cantonment Board, Mathura for the under mentioned works:

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Earnest Money 2% in (Rs.)	Tender Form Fee
1	Construction of Cantonment House Building at Sister Mess Road, Mathura Cantt for the period of one year.	40,00,000	80,000	1500/-
2	Repair / renovation of Building at Shri Krishna Bal Vatika Park, Basantar Marg, Mathura Cantt. (Ground Floor & Mumty) for the period of one year.	49,28,100	98,562	1500/-

The interested contractors / firms shall upload all the documents related to above works on the **website** https://defproc.gov.in/ w.e.f. starting date 02.11.2026 at 1600 hrs to ending date 23.11.2026 upto 1700 hrs. The terms & conditions for the above mentioned works may look up the ibid website.

Chief Executive Officer
Cantonment Board, Mathura
(Akash Garg, I.D.E.S.)

No. CBM/e-Tender / 2026-27/Vol-II/ 679
Dated: 29 Oct, 2026

UTTARAKHAND POWER CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Govt. of Uttarakhand Undertaking).
Victoria Cross Vijeta Gabar Singh Urja Bhawan, Kanwali Road, Dehradun-248001. Corporate Identity No. UA40109UP2001SGC025867/2358,
Telephone-(0135)-2763672-75, Fax-(0135)-2760289, Website: www.uktenders.gov.in

E-TENDER NOTICE (NIT)

Uttarakhand Power Corporation Ltd., Dehradun invites e-tender for supply of following item:-

Sl. No.	Tender Specification No.	Name of Item	Quantity (Nos.)	Estimate cost (₹)	Average Yearly Turn Over of Preceding Three Financial Year (₹)	Earnest Money Deposit (₹)	Cost of tender document including GST (₹)	Last Date & time of online request for Tender and Submission of tender in online & off line mode	Date of opening of Part-I of tender in online and offline mode
1	CCP-II/19/2026-2027	33kV 800A Line Isolator	150	66.535 Lakh	1.500 Crore	1.330 Lakh	5 900	25.11.2026 upto 17:00 hrs	26.11.2026 at 15:30 hrs
2	CCP-II/20/2026-2027	33/11kV, 12.5MVA Power Transformer	30	55.621 Crore	83.431 Crore	1.112 Crore	29 500	25.11.2026 upto 17:00 hrs	26.11.2026 at 15:45 hrs

For further details, please visit our website www.uktenders.gov.in

No.: 900/EE/(CM)/UPCL/A-2 Dt. 31.10.2026

SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
Corporate (Contract & Procurement-II)

"SAVE ELECTRICITY IN THE INTEREST OF THE NATION. Use LED Bulb, Save Electricity (Toll Free No. 1912) "Pay Electricity Bill Online 24x7 from www.upcl.org". (For information on Electricity theft, informer may report to Toll free No 1800 180 4185/ Fax No. 0135-2760911)

GOVERNMENT OF CHHATTISGARH,
WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
WATER MANAGEMENT DIVISION NO. 1,
RAIPUR (C.G.)

e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
eProcurement Portal: https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in

Online Tenders are invited for the following works up to 18.11.2026 at 17.30 Hours (As per S.O.R Enforced from Dated 01.08.2010 and amended on dated 23.04.2026)

S. No.	System No.	NIT No. and Dated	Name of work	Amt.
1.	202794 First Call	15/SAC/20 26-27 Raipur, Dated: 28.10.2026	Filling of water through Pipe line from Kolhan Nalla to Bouli Tank in Block Arang, District Raipur	Rs. 120.36 Lakhs (Excluding G.S.T.)
2.	202842 First Call	16/SAC/20 26-27 Raipur. Dated: 28.10.2026	Construction of Pump House, Intake Well and Pipe Line on Kolhan Nalla from Kotni Stopdam to Thela Tank in Block Arang, District Raipur	Rs. 175.40 Lakhs (Excluding G.S.T.)

The details can be viewed and downloaded online directly from the Government of Chhattisgarh Integrated e-Procurement Portal (**https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in**) **from Date 04.11.2026, at 17.31 Hours. (IST) onwards..**

NOTE :-

All eligible/intrested contractors/bidders are mandated to get enrolled on the Integrated e-procurement portal (**https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in**) and get approval on specific vendor class from PWD under Centralized Contractor/Supplier Registration in order to download the tender documents and participate in the subsequent bidding process. All Prequalification Certificates issued by Water Resources Department from dated 01.11.2025 till date is valid in this tender (As per Engineer-in-Chief, W.R.D. Raipur's Letter No. 425001/TC/ 2016/ldwZ@vLFkk;h/ 7989 Raipur Dtd. 30/09/2026)

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Water Management Division No. 1, Raipur
For, Superintending Engineer
Mahanadi Circle, Raipur (C.G.)

R.O. No. 262704296/4

PROCLAMATION
(U/o 5 Rule 20 of C.P.C)
IN THE COURT OF THE SENIOR CIVIL JUDGE & JMFC COURT AURAD-B
O.S. NO. 176/2025

1. Sheshabai W/o Late Tejerao, Age:75 Years, Occu: Household, and Agriculture and others R/o Village Janwada Tq. Bidar.
2. Yeshwant S/o Late Tejerao Age 53 years, Occu: Business and Agriculture
3. Sunita W/o Late Ashok (D/o Late Tejerao) Age: 50 years, Occu: Household and agriculture
4. Sanjukumar S/o Late Tejerao Age 48 years Occu: Business and agriculture
5. Anita W/o Late Shivaji (D/o Late Tejerao) Age: 46 years, Occu: Household and agriculture
6. Gnyaneshwar S/o Late Tejerao Age 45 years, Occu: Business and Agriculture (All are R/o village Janwada Tq. Bidar)

.....Plaintiff No. 1 to 6

Versus

1. Renew Wind Energy (BUDH) Pvt. Ltd. R/o 10th floor DLF Square M block Jacaranda Marg DLF city Phase-II Gurugram Haryana 122002. (Through its General Power of Attorney Sudhindra S/o Srihari Chimmalgi R/o Bengaluru) & 19 others

.....Defendant and others.

Sub:- Suit for partition and separate possession etc.

To,
Defendant No. 1
Renew Wind Energy (BUDH) Pvt. Ltd. R/o 10th floor DLF Square M block Jacaranda Marg DLF city Phase-II Gurugram Haryana 122002. (Through its General Power of Attorney Sudhindra S/o Srihari Chimmalgi R/o Bengaluru)

Whereas, in the above named plaintiff has filed a original suit against above named defendant no. 1 and other defendants, for declaration of title separate possession in respect of land suti land sy. no. 84/1 measuring 20 acres 15 guntas R/A of Rs. 7.11, land sy. no. 84/*2 measuring 17 acres 35 guntas and sy. no. 85/*/1 measuring 34 acres 23 guntas, sy. no. 86/*/2 measuring 2 acre 10 guntas and land sy. no. 86/*/1 measuring 29 acres 29 guntas all these lands situated at village Ekkara village of Aurad Taluka and Bidar district. The suit summons and notices were issued by this court to you/defendant no. 1 through RPAD and court notice on several times, but the same were returned as un-served, and it appears that you are willfully and deliberately avoiding the service of the suit notices. Hence this proclamation being issued calling upon of you to appear in person or through pleader on 10-12-2026 at 11:00 AM duly instructed to answer the claims of the plaintiff. Otherwise, take notice that, the case of the plaintiff will be heard and decided in your absence, in accordance with law.

Hence, this proclamation is issued under seal of this court on 13th day of October-2026.

Seal

By order of the Court
Chief Ministerial Officer
Senior Civil Judge &
JMFC Court, Aurad-B

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, Kamaljeet Singh R/o S-221/108, Street No.3, Vishnu Garden, New Delhi-18 have changed my minor daughter's name from Sahej Kaur Mahal to Sehaj Kaur.

0040886603-1

I, Bibhuti Bhusan Swain, residing at Bhangel, Noida, U.P., permanent resident of Kutilo, Jagatsinghpur, Odisha, have corrected my father's name from Kashinath Swain to Banamali Swain vide affidavit dated 24/10/2026 sworn before Notary Public at Noida.

0050300691-1

I, SHAILENDER, S/o Sh. RAM PHAL, R/o Plot No. 196, First Floor, A-Block, Vasant Kunj Enclave, Vasant Kunj, South Delhi, have changed my name to SHAILENDER NASHIER and shall hereafter be known by this name for all purposes.

0040886319-7

I, Sandeep Yadav resident of B-1394, Shastri Nagar, Delhi - 110052 hereby declares that I had changed the name of my son from NIRVAN to NIRVAN YADAV vide affidavit No IN-DL327951329309 20Y dated 28.10.2026 at DELHI.

0050300680-1

LOST & FOUND

Original Land Deed/Possession letter of Zia ur Rehman resident of C-1/4 Taj Enclave Geeta Colony Delhi 110031 missing from 11/10/2026. Finder kindly contact 9540670994

0050300689-1

"IMPORTANT"

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The Indian EXPRESS JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

SBI
IT Project Management & Strategic Coordination Dept., State Bank of India, Global IT-Centre, Sec-11, CBD Belapur, Navi Mumbai-400 614
E-mail: dgmit.pmd@sbi.co.in; Website: https://sbi.bank.in

CORRIGENDUM NOTICE

RFP NO. SBI/GITC/IT-Project Management & Strategic Coordination/ 2026/2027/1506 DATED: 12.10.2026

Corrigendum with reference to the RFP has been published on **https://etender.sbi/SBI/** portal and in Procurement News at **https://sbi.bank.in**.

Last date and time for submission of bids: 17.11.2026 up to 16:00 hrs.

IT Project Management & Strategic Coordination Dept.

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NOTICE INVITING E- TENDER

CONCOR invites E-Tender in Two Packet System of tendering for the following work:-

Tender No.	CON/AREA-II/ENG/MMCT-Chharudi/E-89506/2026-27/R1
Name of Work	Construction of Warehouse, Building Works, External Electrical Works, Fire Fighting Works and Allied Works in connection with Development of Multi Modal Cargo Terminal at Chharudi (Gujarat) [Package-II].
Estimated Cost	Rs.3481.39 Lakhs (including GST)
Completion Period	12 (Twelve) Months
Earnest Money Deposit	Rs.69,62,800/- (Rs. Sixty-nine Lakhs Sixty-two Thousand Eight Hundred only)
Cost of Tender Document	NIL
Tender Processing Fee (Non-refundable)	Rs. 3540/- (inclusive all taxes & duties through e-payment.)
Date of sale of Tender (online)	02.11.2026 (from15:00 hrs.) to 16.11.2026 (up to 17:00 hrs.)
Date & Time of submission of Tender (online)	17.11.2026 up to 17:00 hrs.
Date & Time of Opening of Tender (online)	18.11.2026 at 15:00 hrs.
Pre-Bid Meeting: both online & offline	10.11.2026 at 12:00 hrs at NSIC New MDBP Building, 3rd Floor, Okhla Industrial Estate, SOUTH EAST DELHI, DELHI – 110020 Online link for VC shall be shared after receipt of Pre-bid Queries on request.

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Group General Manager(Projects),
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Alcaraz defeats De Minaur to win Vienna title



Carlos Alcaraz beat Alex de Minaur 6-1, 6-4 in the final. AP

Reuters
Vienna, November 1

CARLOS ALCARAZ beat Alex de Minaur 6-1, 6-4 to win the Vienna Open on Sunday, claiming his fourth title of the season and the 28th of his career, and extending his ATP 500 winning streak to 26 matches.

The 23-year-old Spaniard arrived in Vienna on the back of titles in Doha and Tokyo and completed a perfect 16-0 record at ATP 500 events in 2026, capping another dominant week without dropping a set across his five matches.

Alcaraz seized control from the opening stages, breaking De Minaur's serve in the first game and quickly establishing a double-break advantage as the Australian struggled to contain the world number two's intensity.

The seven-time Grand Slam champion raced through the opening set 6-1, repeatedly punishing short balls and forcing errors from De Minaur.

Although the 27-year-old Australian put up greater resistance in the second set and kept pace for long spells, Alcaraz delivered a high-quality all-court performance to close out victory in 97 minutes and secure his seventh consecutive win over De Minaur.

Alcaraz will head to next week's Paris Masters brimming with confidence after his flying start to the European indoor swing, having already qualified for the season-ending ATP Finals in Turin.

De Minaur, meanwhile, will turn his attention to Paris as he continues his push to qualify for the ATP Finals for a third consecutive year.

Vacherot bags 2nd title

Associated Press adds: Valentin Vacherot clinched his second career title after beating Jiri Lehecka 2-6, 6-3, 6-3 in the Swiss Indoors final on Sunday.

The unseeded Vacherot's other title came at the Shanghai Masters last year, when the player from Monaco came through the qualifying rounds.

He sealed victory this time when Lehecka's two-handed backhand landed just out.

The eighth-seeded Czech player was seeking his first title of the year.

"I ended up playing a really solid second and third set. I hit really good shots at the right moments," Vacherot said. "Sometimes it's about not playing perfect for the whole match, and just playing good when it matters."

Vacherot waved his racket to the fans in Basel as he celebrated his win.

AGEING LIKE FINE WINE

Sindhu shows her creative side in second Tour triumph of 2026

Former world champion gets better of Line Kjaersfeldt to clinch Hylo Open

Shivani Naik
Mumbai, November 1

A PIVOTING backhand lob that went over the head of Line Kjaersfeldt. It came after PV Sindhu had used strong wrists and great anticipation to stay in the rally - a rare occasion when the Dane dictated. It was the limited repertoire of the 32-year-old Kjaersfeldt in some part. But the Indian's 21-12, 21-14 victory to win her second title of 2026 at Hylo Open in her third final, was down to one of the most underrated aspects of her game - the creativity.

The Indian would declare the win was a birthday gift for her Strength & Conditioning coach Wayne Lombard.

"Hats off to my team. We have been planning accordingly. As you get older it becomes important to be smarter in what you choose. But also important for me to stay calm and I know there's still room to improve. Things are getting better," she would tell *BWF*, adding, "My husband is here so I plan to celebrate with all my family. It's also my SnC coach Wayne Lombard's birthday. So this is a gift to him," she added.

Power and persistence have always been hallmarks of her game. But the technically insistent coach Irwansyah has brought about incredible metamorphosis in Sindhu's creative game, which has bloomed as she has grown confident in her abilities to think on her feet, trust her defense and that cellular - Sindhu quality of treating every point as important.

In her second stint in the Top 10 these past six months, the Indian harnesses her physicality to use the court's geometry. Often second-best to Carolina Marin in speed, Sindhu has worked on her reflexes and reactions, and from there sprouted the backhand lob that arced over the Dane's head, deflating her attempts at initiative.

The racquetwork needed her to get across her body and send the shuttle into a parabola at 17-11.

But the win was a walk in the park - a reflection of what will push Sindhu back to World No 6 next week. The first point had come from a cross court smash, a signature by now. Half a dozen came from her net attacks where she believes she can be domineering, not just dominant. The drops to the net were otherwise used to elicit lifts that Sindhu could easily put away.

"I think it was important for me to give my 100 percent irrespective of who the opponent was," she said.

"We have played a lot of times and for me it was important to focus on every point. Not about whole game but every point mattered to me. I took the lead from the beginning and didn't give her a chance."

Runners and retrievers like Kjaersfeldt stand a very tiny chance against Sindhu, when she is dictating both the power and pace like she did these last two weeks. At the French, she had ran into An Se-young, but at neighbouring Germany, she went on to collect her 7th career Tour title, handing the Dane her 8th loss in 8 career finals.

It is bad enough for opponents that Sindhu can rain down smashes from the back. But when she looms large at the net and twiddles her racquet strokes while also rampaging with net smashes when charging, it's pretty much difficult to devise counters.

Three of the Top 4 - Seyoung, Chen Yufei and Akane Yamaguchi remain tricky, though she beat the Japanese at Japan earlier this year for a Super 750 title. But Sindhu 3.0 is a serious threat to opponents and the World Tour Finals will test them severely.

"Grateful to my team. Everyone worked very hard. There are days when you are absolutely low and they are there to pump you up. It's been an amazing week. It's time to go back and celebrate," she would say.



TITLE TRACK

10 BWF Tour titles
Japan Open 2026, Hylo Open 2026, Singapore Open 2022, Swiss Open 2022, Syed Modi International 2024 and 2022, BWF World Tour Finals 2018, India Open 2017, Korea Open 2017, China Open 2016

5 World Championships medals: Gold in 2019, silver in 2017 and 2018, bronze in 2013 and 2014

2 Olympic medals: Silver at Rio 2016 and bronze at Tokyo 2020

9 Years after which Sindhu has won two BWF Super 500 or higher titles

PV Sindhu had claimed her maiden Super 750 title in Tokyo in July. BWF/BADMINTON PHOTO

India pull away in second half to ease past Malaysia

Express News Service
New Delhi, November 1

IT HAS become a bit of a repeated script at the Asian Champions Trophy: India score first, the opposition levels proceedings soon after, and sometimes even holds the hosts for a decent period. But they can't stay with Craig Fulton's men till the end and a scoring burst in the final quarter takes the home team past the finish line with a comfortable margin.

The script from the China and the Japan games was enacted against Malaysia at Jalandhar's Olympian Surjit Singh Hockey Stadium on Sunday, and it was again left to Harmanpreet Singh to get his team out of what could have turned into a tricky situation. The captain was on target with his drag-flicks – first giving his side an early lead, and then putting them 2-1 ahead. His third goal – converting a penalty stroke - put the matter beyond the reach of the South-East Asians, who went down 2-4.

Malaysia had reached the final of the recent Asian Games, and were supposed to be India's biggest test in the tournament, for which they are overwhelming favourites. It seemed so for a large period of the game. In fact, at half time, both teams were level in almost every metric. India needed a big push, and Harmanpreet provided that.

With one round of games left, the four semifinalists have already been decided. Apart from India and Malaysia, Japan and South Korea have also made the last-four stage of the six-team tournament. India will play the Koreans in their last round robin match on Monday, while Malaysia will face Japan.

After Harmanpreet – who was the highest scorer in the tournament going into Sunday's game – put India ahead in the third minute, they controlled proceedings to a large extent till Akhimullah Anuar capitalised on some lax defending and scored the leveller in the 25th minute.

It was in the later half of the games against Japan and China that India pulled away, and that happened here as well. Harmanpreet answered his team's call in the 33rd minute to regain the lead and when Sukhjeet scored a field goal 10 minutes later, the writing was on the wall for the Malaysians.

Devoid of pressure, India played freely in the final quarter and when a penalty corner was blocked with a body on the line, Harmanpreet made it 4-1 from the spot. Shello Silverius's field goal in the last minute was only a consolation.

Forward Abhishek had injured his ankle during warm-up and Fulton said it hurt the balance of the team.

"It's not easy to lose a striker. You play with four and then your midfield changes. He (Abhishek) didn't play the whole game, so we played with 15 men," the India coach said. "Scoreline should have been better. You have to take the chances. Some days it works really well, some days it doesn't, and today was difficult."

India is the strongest team in the continent and won the Asiad gold medal at Aichi-Nagoya, beating Malaysia 5-1 in the final. But Fulton said one cannot always expect such one-sided scorelines.

"I'd love to say we could win these games 7-0. It doesn't work like that. But I think we're playing well. We could be a little bit sharper and take a few more chances in the first half and make the gap a bit bigger," the South African remarked.

But a fourth win in a row gave him a reason to smile.

"Consistency does matter a lot, and the momentum is good and we're playing well."



Captain Harmanpreet Singh (C) netted a hat-trick. HOCKEY INDIA

It was in the later half of the games against Japan and China that India pulled away, and that happened on Sunday as well

Lakshya ends title drought with dominant show



Lakshya Sen beat Jonatan Christie 21-17, 21-10. BWF/BADMINTON PHOTO

Shivani Naik
Mumbai, November 1

LAKSHYA SEN wins a lot of matches despite playing — excruciatingly — like Lakshya Sen.

He will build himself an 18-10 lead, then get complacent and hope points will flow seamlessly - if not hit the snooze button entirely. He will then find himself at an unsavoury 18-17 situation, then jolt himself awake and race to the finish, leaving those watching and wondering what the mid-game funk was all about.

The Indian World No.14 ended his title drought of this season, winning the Hylo Open in Germany on Sunday when he defeated Jonatan Christie 21-17, 21-10. That said mid-set snooze came in the opener. However Jojo Christie is in such poor form that as soon as he got to 17-18, he panicked and snatched at what should have been net-kills and sprayed the shuttle wide and long trying to elude Sen's defence.

On either side of that regulation buffering that hits Sen routinely, he had an array of wonderful strokes. The hop-smash that travels like a bullet. His usual explosive stride at the net and some excellent ways to put Christie into awkward positions from where his errors sputtered both at the net and when he went for the lines.

Christie struggles

The Indonesian, who maintains his World No.6 rank, has been known for his ability to nail the corners. But he struggled throughout to find his range.

"It was important to stay patient. I got a good start and I had the lead. It was important I get good lengths on my lifts and contain him on the smashes. And ya, on flat drives, I was taking advantage again today. It was important to get a good lift and play steady," Sen would tell the BWF after the victory.

On the drives, Jojo's frustration was evident as he found the net agonisingly and couldn't extricate himself from that muddle. Sen's high lifts did the job in numbing the Christie smash.

Christie led 4-3 in head-to-head prior to the match, but hasn't quite recovered from the stinging loss pounded on him by Sen at the Olympics. His consistency helps him reach deeper into draws, but titles have eluded him this year even as Alwi Farhan and Ubaidillah have emerged from the Indonesian badminton factory.

Big relief

Sen, who dominated Toma Popov in Saturday's semifinal, wasn't as aggressive on the day. But he got the job done - despite the characteristic lull in the middle.

"It's been quite some time since I won a tournament, so it feels quite good. To play this well - and the last two matches were really top-quality opponents and I managed to beat them convincingly - so ya, I'm happy with how I played," the Indian said.

This was Sen's seventh career title (incidentally, the same as Sindhu's earlier) and his first since winning the Australia Open last season. He had won the Hylo back in 2021, but this was crucial after a torrid time on the Tour this year with eight first-round exits post the All England final appearance.

It was just eight months, but felt like a nightmare with some stinging losses.

"Couple of first-round losses really plays with your confidence. But the way I played the tournament from Round 1 gave me a lot of confidence. Coming into this tournament, I didn't have really good performances, but I was really determined to play one match at a time. Find my rhythm, stay at it. And in the last two matches, I got it," Sen would say.

"I was in much better shape back then," Sen admitted, referring to his All England run, adding, "And I was close to my best level as well today. But All England is always something I have come so close to and not won. But we are just extra motivated for that week. Last time, I was very motivated and out there to win. Even today, it's been a while since I played back-to-back matches like this so I was determined to go out there and win the title."

The title puts Sen in a good frame of mind ahead of a five-day break.

"Going back to India now. It's been four weeks in Europe. But I'm excited to go home for five days and we have a big celebration coming up for Diwali. My extended family will be coming down to celebrate. We are also moving into a new home, so it's a big thing for my Mom and Dad. So, Diwali and a big house-warming party," he signed off.

STEELY RESOLVE

Asian Games trials agony that fuelled Kajal's World Championship spark

British Raj
New Delhi, November 1

KAJAL DHOCHAK, only 18 years of age, created history by becoming the maiden heavyweight Indian woman wrestler to win a medal at the Wrestling World Championships. Last Wednesday, she nailed silver in the 76kg title clash in Astana, Kazakhstan.

Five months ago, she was nursing a heartbreak. The youngest World Championships medallist was aghast after losing the trials for the Asian Games. She was leading in the final before losing to Priya Malik in the final few seconds. The loss crushed Kajal for a few days before she started preparing for the biggest tournament of her life, the Wrestling World Championships.

"It stung me for some days. The Asian Games come once every four years. While I was leading, I thought that I would hug my uncle if I [won] and were selected. But it changed in the last few moments. It was a lesson for me," Kajal, who is a JSW athlete, says during a virtual interaction.

"After a few days, I decided to focus on the Senior World Championships and I think the pain of losing the Asian Games trials is gone now," she adds.

However, once she locked the berth for the Senior World Championships, Kajal's eyes were fixed on the top prize. "*Maine soch liya tha ki belt lana hai*. (I had thought that I had to win the title). However, on that day of finals, my luck was not with me. I had defeated my opponent before in Pro Wrestling league but in the final, she scored in the last moment and I couldn't cover it after that," says Kajal.

Despite the loss, Kajal's medal was historic since it was India's third-ever silver in the tournament's history and the first-ever medal in the heavyweight categories. She is confident of qualifying for the Los Angeles Olympics.

"After the medal, defeating top wrestlers, I am confident that next year I can secure the Olympic berth. The World Championship was a good experience and I will use my learnings in the next season," says Kajal.



Kajal Dhochak (R) bagged a Worlds silver in the 76kg category. UWW

Overcoming anxiety

This is Kajal's first year on the senior circuit after she turned 18, and the teenager has impressed, portending a bright future. She has competed at every level from U20 to U23 to Senior and won in every rung.

> **"After the medal, defeating top wrestlers, I am confident that next year I can secure the Olympic berth."**
> KAJAL DHOCHAK, ON HER LA 2028 PROSPECTS.

Apart from silver at senior world championships, she defended her title at the U20 World Championships, besides winning gold at the U23 Asian Championships.

Kajal believes that the consistent exposure at the international level helped in overcoming the fear of competition. "If we play less [fewer tournaments], there is a lot of anxiety before the bouts. But since I competed in all kinds of tournaments and featured in so many trials, that anxiety has gone," she says . "Now, I don't feel the pressure in my head. It is just like any other bout."

Following on to her pattern, Kajal will continue her competitive streak this year. She will compete at the trial for U20 Commonwealth Championships if selected and the senior nationals. "I have a few tournaments lined up. Apart from the U20 Commonwealth Championships, I will also participate at the Seniors nationals later in December," says Kajal.

The biggest lesson she learned, she says, was the need to control her aggression. "I get very aggressive during the bout and don't want to give away any points. My coaches have told me to stay calm and I think I learned it this time that I have to control my aggression during the bouts," reveals Kajal.

Apart from aggression, Kajal has to bolster defence. "I have to work on my defence. Also, from now on, I won't become defensive in the last moments. I will continue to attack like I always do," she said.

With a senior World medal in her kitty, Kajal has an important year. After the World Championship medal, she is buoyant that she could fetch more glory for her country.

Gambhir lauds series win after a solitary practice session



Gautam Gambhir. PTI

Express News Service
New Delhi, November 1

WHILE INDIA succumbed to a seven-wicket defeat at Hamilton on Sunday, the issue at the top of head coach Gautam Gambhir's mind was workload management amid an intensely busy schedule while acclimatising to New Zealand conditions in a very short timeframe.

A second successive defeat brought the series score to 3-2 in favour of the visitors, but Gambhir was all praise for his team for coming out on the right side of the result.

India had only one practice session between landing in Kiwi land and the first T20I in Wellington. The previous home series against the West Indies ended on October 17. They landed in the New Zealand capital on October 20, trained the next day before the series began on October 22.

Gautam Gambhir said he was never fazed by the challenge confronting the Indian team

"It's an incredible effort because the boys got only one day to prepare. Different conditions, different weather, different dimensions, playing against a quality side like New Zealand in their own backyard with the amount of experience they had in T20 cricket. Plus, most of the boys are touring New Zealand for the first time," Gambhir said at the press conference after the fifth T20I at Seddon Park. "So, I think the boys can be extremely proud of their efforts."

High Expectations

Delivering under high expectations while facing different conditions and oppositions was a noteworthy achievement, the head coach felt.

"After one practice session, after taking a 15-hour flight, if the guys can deliver that kind of performance, especially against a quality side, they deserve a lot of credit. This is an achievement which we should always talk about because these guys were always under pressure, especially not being prepared that well in these conditions," he added. But Gambhir said he was never fazed by the challenge confronting the team. "I am not afraid of anything. In my dictionary, there is no such word as fear. If we hadn't won this series, nobody would have even talked about getting just one practice session."

EXPERIMENTATION AND REDEMPTION

Seifert gives Kiwis wings, denies positive ending for Shreyas & Co

Visitors rue dropped catches as Tim's assertive 93 secures consolation victory for New Zealand in fifth and final T20I

Shuvaditya Bose
New Delhi, November 1

SUNDAY'S FIXTURE was India's 24th T20I since July — a match every fifth day. No team has been busier in the shortest format. With a sample this vast, every aspect has been dissected about Shreyas Iyer's team, every word written, and attention has already swung to the ODI series. Into this setting the T20 caravan rolled at Hamilton, for the second successive dead rubber of the five-match series, with an agenda of just two items — experimentation and redemption.

The latter was on display in abundance. New Zealand won by seven wickets, and the victory belonged to Tim Seifert, who had made only 36 runs in the first four matches. His 50-ball 93 helped his team make light work of the 192-run target set by the visitors. In a similar vein, Indian captain Shreyas Iyer and Ishan Kishan had each recorded a first T20I half-century in nine matches.

Experimentation was comparatively thinner. Bhuvneshwar Kumar was given another opportunity after managing only one wicket in the first three matches before being dropped for the fourth, while Varun Chakaravarthy ended his month-and-a-half hiatus from the eleven. Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, however, spent yet another evening watching a T20I from the dugout, a ritual growing more Groundhog Day by the match.

Iyer conceded that having already won the series made the changes possible, though they did not pay the dividends he and the management would have wished. Kumar began menacingly, giving away 11 runs in his first two overs, eight of them from edged boundaries. His next two, though, cost 30.

India did have the start they wanted, courtesy Arshdeep Singh, who has been the team's most effective bowler in these conditions. Finn Allen misjudged the bounce of a short ball and skied his pull, and Kishan ran backwards from midwicket to take a fine catch. At this point, the praise for India's fielding ends.

Seifert would have had a very contrasting end to the series, had he not been offered a glimpse into India's penchant for equilibrium in the fourth over. He hoicked to deep backward point and Naman Dhir, presented with a regulation chance, let it slip through his hands — as Adam Milne did when it was his turn to bat.

The screws were turned in the last over of powerplay, where Kumar was taken for a ride by Seifert. The over yielded 20 runs for New Zealand, courtesy of a couple of sixes — both struck with disdain over the bowler's head, and an equal share of fours.

The first eight overs went according to the hosts' plans, but Chakaravarthy reeled India back in during the ninth by dismissing India's serial antagonist, Daryl Mitchell. But tables turn quickly in this format, as the leg-spinner learnt when his next over cost 18.

For those determined to be overly critical, there was another drop in the 14th over. Glenn Phillips, the player of the series awardee with 341 runs, struck the leather with venom right back into where it had come from — Prince Yadav's arms. The seamer got a hand to it, but rather than lament the lost chance, he might count his blessings that every phalange remained intact.

Sanju Samson could expect less leniency for his mistake six deliveries later, when he failed to hold on to an edge off Phillips' willow. It happened to be India's eighth drop in the series, and Iyer admitted after the match that the team's fielding standards merits an introspection. Little else in the chase merits mention besides Seifert's dismissal in the 16th over, which denied him what would have been his first international century in the eighth year of his career. In terms of the match, though, the wicket was academic as New Zealand's required run rate was 5.14 at the time.



Tim Seifert's 50-ball knock, including five sixes, took New Zealand past the 192-run target with ease. AP

Shaky start

Earlier, the Indian openers, Abhishek Sharma and Samson, scrambled for answers to the two-way swing and variable bounce that Adam Milne conjured, and made five runs from their first 12 balls, before 93-run partnership between Iyer and Kishan steadied India's ship.

At 111/2 in the halfway stage, India should ideally have accumulated a score significantly higher than what they eventually did, but Kishan's dismissal in the 11th over sparked an unrelenting processing of wickets, save for Dhir's sole resilient act of 22-ball 33.

For New Zealand, the finale came wrapped in a Catch-22. They can take heart from the last two matches, for 2-3 reads far more respectably than 0-5. Yet having crossed the line in Auckland and Hamilton, they will rue what their captain, Mitchell Santner, called "small moments" in the opening games, where they were only one favourable moment away from victory. He will have little time to dwell on it. Blink, and the ODI series is upon us. Welcome to modern cricket.

BRIEF SCORES: India 191/8 in 20 overs (Ishan Kishan 61; Adam Milne 4/19) lost to New Zealand 195/3 in 18 overs (Tim Seifert 93; Nitish Kumar Reddy 1/19) by 7 wickets.

• The firing and misfiring squad

A lot worked for India in the triumphant series; a lot didn't

WHAT WORKED

1. Kings of Powerplay
India accumulated 338 runs in the Powerplay at 11.27 runs per over, as opposed to New Zealand's 276 at 9.2.

2. Prince of death
Prince Yadav's economy rate in overs 17-20 was a frugal 8.50 — best among Indians.

3. Dhir here to stay
Naman Dhir justified his selection with consistent contributions throughout the series. He scored 138 runs at 46 and 200, topping India's leaderboard.

WHAT DIDN'T WORK

1. Middle-overs melee
India's batting in the middle-overs left a lot to be desired. Between 11-15 overs, India lost 12 wickets, while scoring at 7.33.

2. Bhuvi's brickbats return
Bhuvneshwar Kumar took 1 wicket in 4 matches, conceding 180 runs in the process.

3. Couldn't spin it like Santner
Whilst Mitchell Santner produced a masterclass in spin bowling, taking nine wickets at an economy of 7.36, Axar Patel and Varun Chakaravarthy conceded 203 runs in 19 overs.

Boyle, Foxcroft's rescue act keeps NZ A on top

Express News Service
New Delhi, November 1

NEW ZEALAND A did not have the start they would have preferred on Day 2 of the second unofficial Test against India A, before Matthew Boyle and Dean Foxcroft launched a stunning comeback bid, courtesy of whom the team's score reads 218/3 at stumps. Boyle is currently unbeaten on 107 off 148 balls, while Foxcroft is batting on 80 off 180 deliveries. Together, the pair added 205 runs for the fourth wicket.

Before the duo's epic rescue act, the home team had a disastrous start to their innings. Captain Rhys Mariu could only score a 17-ball 4, before edging a Mohammed Siraj outswinger into the gloves of his India A counterpart, Dhruv Jurel. Minutes later, Mukesh Kumar produced something similar, luring Curtis Heaphy into a cover drive that caught the outside off of the Kiwi opener's willow.



Captain Dhruv Jurel fell for 105 early in the morning. CREIMAS

A couple of deliveries later, Kumar showcased his ability to swing the ball both ways. Tim Robinson had anticipated the treatment Heaphy had received, but was subjected to a brilliantly executed inswinger instead, falling into the leg before wicket trap.

At 13/3, it seemed at the time that the hosts would have a difficult period negotiating with the unrelenting questions asked by the Indian pace pair. However, Boyle and Foxcroft not only steadied the innings, but produced a foundation from where New Zealand A can look to amass a run mountain.

Kumar was India's most effective bowler of the day, taking two wickets for 44 runs, while Siraj recorded figures of 16-4-49-1. Washington Sundar (14-1-44-0), Akash Deep (11-2-35-0) and Manav Suthar (5-0-29-0) were all wicket-less.

Earlier, India A were bowled out for 346, adding a further 55 runs to their account from their overnight score of 291/7.

Captain Jurel had an anxious wait for his century as he ended the first day unbeaten on 99, but he managed to achieve the three-figure mark in only the third delivery of the day.

The 75-run partnership between him and Akash Deep came to an end when he edged a Brett Randell delivery into the palms of Mariu at second slip. Deep, however, ensured India A's innings did not come to a premature halt as he scored a resilient 116-ball 68, hitting 10 fours and a couple of sixes in the process. Fraser Sheat, the 28-year-old seamer who recently featured for Nottinghamshire in English County Championship, was the pick of the bowlers from New Zealand, picking up four wickets.

BRIEF SCORES: India A 346 all out (Dhruv Jurel 105; Fraser Sheat 4/63) lead by 128 runs against NZ A 218/3 (Matthew Boyle 107 not out; Mukesh Kumar 2/44)

• BRIEFLY



Leander Paes will be part of a joint panel with Chintan Parikh. PTI

Paes joins Parikh's camp, to contest AITA elections as a team

IN A significant political realignment ahead of the All India Tennis Association (AITA) elections, Leander Paes has joined hands with interim president Chintan Parikh to contest the elections as part of a joint panel, agreeing to take up the vice-president's role under the banner of 'Tennis First'. Paes, who was initially looking to contest the elections against Parikh, will now be part of a joint panel with the administrator, who will seek another term as president. The decision follows a meeting between the two, where Paes proposed joining Parikh's group and expressed his desire to work towards strengthening Indian tennis at the grassroots level. PTI

Pant ruled out of third India A game as well

RISHABH PANT was on Sunday ruled out of the final red-ball fixture between India A and New Zealand A, starting November 7, as a precautionary measure, casting a shadow over his availability for the first Test in Wellington. His unavailability robs him of crucial time in the middle ahead of the two-match Test series. Pant is now a one-format player for India, having lost his place in the white-ball formats. PTI

Hesson suggests central contracts for young players

PAKISTAN'S ALL format head coach Mike Hesson has recommended a clutch of young players to be considered for the PCB's central contracts for the 2026-27 season. Besides young players, the board is still to decide on retaining the experienced players in the contracts. "Expect a few of the experienced seniors to be dropped from the central contracts list this year," a source said. PTI

Qatar Grand Prix still on track despite pushback

MOTOGP OFFICIALS told teams on Sunday they had received no information warranting a change to next weekend's Qatar Grand Prix despite pushback, but Yamaha have withdrawn. A MotoGP spokesperson told Reuters, "Following a review of the latest information, official assurances from the State of Qatar and independent assessments available to us, we have received no information that would warrant a change." REUTERS

Real Madrid win 3-0 to continue unbeaten run

REAL MADRID cruised to a 3-0 win at Racing Santander in LaLiga on Sunday as goals from Kylian Mbappe, Jude Bellingham and Yan Diomande secured their sixth successive victory in all competitions. Third-placed Real moved to within three points of leaders Barcelona and one of second-placed Atletico Madrid. Racing remain 16th. Madrid travel next to AEK Athens for Champions League. REUTERS

FC Goa, SC Delhi register their first wins in ISL

FC GOA registered their first win of the Indian Super League season with a 2-1 victory over Inter Kashi FC on Sunday. Goals from Francisco Feuillassier (35') and Christian Borrego (66') on either side of a Sumeet Passi strike (51') helped the Gaurs turn the contest in their favour, handing Inter Kashi FC their third defeat of the campaign. Sporting Club Delhi scored three goals in the final 20 minutes, including two in stoppage time, to pull off a dramatic 3-2 comeback win over Mumbai City FC in their Indian Super League match on Sunday. PTI

Saibari and Gnabry ruled out indefinitely

BAYERN MUNICH'S injury woes deepened when Ismael Saibari and Serge Gnabry were ruled out for an indefinite period after both players were forced off in 2-2 draw with Borussia Dortmund. Saibari suffered a ligament tear in his right ankle after appearing to twist it. Gnabry was substituted just two after Saibari's departure, with Bayern confirming the winger suffered a muscle injury in his thigh "Saibari and Gnabry will be missing from FC Bayern for the time being," the club said. "Saibari has already undergone successful surgery." REUTERS

• BIG UPSET

Giantkiller at 10: Mani leads wave of Indian prodigies upsetting Grandmasters

Amit Kamath
Mumbai, November 1

FIDE MASTER Sarbartho Mani caused one of the biggest upsets at the ongoing 1st Chola Chess International Grandmasters Tournament in Chennai by bringing down a grandmaster on Saturday. Greece's Dimitris Alexakis lost in the second round of the tournament to 10-year-old Sarbartho, who shrugged off an Elo rating deficit of 225 points to take down the Greek player. A FIDE master title is two rungs below the grandmaster title in FIDE's hierarchy of titles.

Sarbartho has been making headlines in recent years for his creative play in tournaments, but this was the first time he had brought down a grandmaster in competitive classical chess tournament play. The win over Alexakis was notable for several reasons. By the 15th move, Sarbartho's position looked bleak and almost unwinnable. But when the Greek grandmaster resigned after 58 moves, not only had Sarbartho changed the trajectory of the game and defied ratings, the young Indian boy held a whopping one hour and 12 minutes on his clock compared to Alexakis, who was down to 36 seconds remaining.

Grandmaster RB Ramesh, who is the tournament director of the 1st Chola Chess International Grandmasters Tournament, pointed out how Sarbartho's early creativity had caught even him by surprise.

"What was special in Sarbartho's game was that after 1.e4 to 1...c5, Sarbartho played bishop e2 (with his second move). That was amazing," Ramesh chortled in an interview with ChessBase India. "When I saw this, I thought it was some live relay issues on the second move itself. But then I realised after a few moves he actually had played bishop to e2. Such a young kid playing so creatively. Very impressive!"



Sarbartho Mani defeated Greece's Dimitris Alexakis. INSTAGRAM

Sarbartho then got into trouble very quickly in the opening. He was trying to create pressure on the king-side, while Alexakis was trying to open the centre. In 15 moves, the evaluation bar showed that the Greek grandmaster held an edge of +2 which translates into an advantage of having two additional pawns on the board compared to your opponent.



> **"What was special in Sarbartho's game was that after 1.e4 to 1...c5, Sarbartho played bishop e2 (with his second move). That was amazing."**
> **RB RAMESH,** ON SARBARTHO'S OPENING

"After 15 moves, if we see what's happening, it's almost like an opening position from a Fischer Random game. All of Sarbartho's pieces are almost stuck on the first rank while his opponent has made considerable progress," said Ramesh in his analysis.

But in the middle game, the tide turned in Sarbartho's favour, one blunder after another. "Even though the game was not accurate throughout, this is how you learn. You miss some things, you see other things, but you learn in the process," said Ramesh. Sarbartho started the tournament by defeating Indian international master Shahil Dey, while Alexakis had beaten veteran international master Padmini Rout.

The perception of Indian youngsters being stronger than their rating suggests has been proven true at the Chola Chess tournament. The first round on Friday held several scary Hallowe-en tales of Indian youngsters upsetting grandmasters. FIDE master Madhesh Kumar beat GM Mamikon Gharibyan, FIDE master Adhiraj Mitra defeated GM Santiago Yago De Moura while FM Samyak Dharewa defeated IM Ayush Sharma. FM Avirat Chauhan held grandmaster Aronyak Ghosh to a draw as did FM Aadik Theophane Lenin (who drew grandmaster Nikita Afanasiev), FM Aarit Kapil (drew GM Mayank Chakraborty) and FM Vandan Alankar Sawai (who held Ukrainian GM Vitaliy Bernadskiy).

How it started

The Kolkata-based Sarbartho's tryst with chess started at the age of one, with a chess board that his father, Sidhhartha Mani, bought for him as an unusual gift. The story goes that when Sidhhartha (who is a cardiologist while Sarbartho's mother is a pediatrician) was young, Viswanathan Anand was his idol. Then last year, his son Sarbartho was in the same team (Team Freedom) as Anand at the FIDE World Rapid and Blitz Team Championships.

"For the initial three years, I played chess with my father and then started beating him," Mani had once recalled in an interview with ChessBase India.

He started playing in the nationals from the age of six. So far, he's won the national championship titles in the U7 category (in 2023) and U11 category (2026) besides winning the U10 world championship last year.

The two titans of Kolkata chess, grandmaster Surya Shekhar Ganguly and grandmaster Dibyendu Barua, have had a role to play in shaping him with coaching, as has RB Ramesh, with the Chola Chess initiative.

Sarbartho's goal for the coming months is to earn an international master norm or two. At the rate he's going, that should not be too far away.

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