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Congress, PDP back NC ahead of J&K RS bypolls

SRINAGAR
The Congress and the Peoples Democratic Party on Thursday extended their support to the National Conference, ahead of the byelections to four Rajya Sabha seats of J&K. The PDP will back NC's Shammi Oberoi as a third preference to prevent BJP gains, said PDP's Mehbooba Mufti. » PAGE 2

Literacy sparked development in Kerala: Murmu

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
The power of literacy and knowledge has enabled Kerala to rank among the leading States on several human development indicators, President Droupadi Murmu said on Thursday. Ms. Murmu emphasised that knowledge drives innovation. » PAGE 3

Artist condemns vandalism of her works in Kochi

KOCHI
Algerian-French artist Ha nan Benammar has condemned the vandalism of a set of her works displayed at a art gallery in Kochi, calling it "violence in an art space." An artist from Kottayam, destroyed six of her works. » PAGE 3

Stay clear of West Bank, Trump warns Israelis

TEL AVIV
U.S. President Donald Trump said Israel would lose its crucial backing from the U.S. if it annexes the occupied West Bank, in a *Time* magazine interview. Mr. Trump also said that he believed Saudi Arabia would join the Abraham Accords. » PAGE 14

U.S. sanctions Russian oil; Indian refineries poised to cut imports

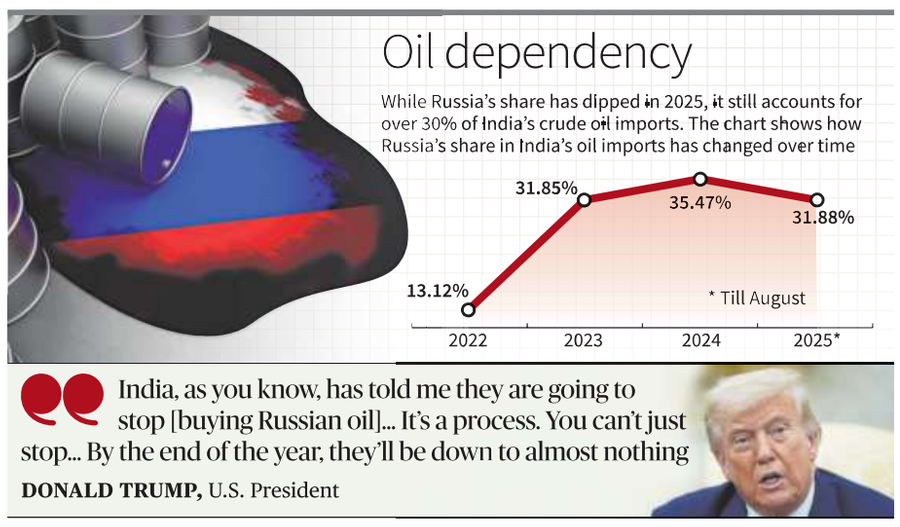
Rosneft and Lukoil hit with sanctions for 'funding Kremlin's war machine', pushing global oil prices up 3%; Trump says India will cut down imports to 'almost nothing' by the year-end; Indian firms are 'recalibrating' to align with new govt. guidelines

Reuters
WASHINGTON/NEW DELHI

U.S. President Donald Trump hit Russia's two biggest oil companies with sanctions in his latest policy shift on Moscow's war in Ukraine, prompting global oil prices to rise by 3% on Thursday.

Mr. Trump also reiterated his claim that India has agreed to "stop" buying oil from Russia and would bring its oil purchases down to "almost nothing" by the end of the year, and said he would persuade China to do the same. India and China are the two biggest buyers of Russian oil.

Indian refiners – including Reliance, the top Indian buyer of Russian crude – are poised to sharply curtail imports of Russian oil to comply with the new U.S. sanctions, industry sources said on Thursday.



> India, as you know, has told me they are going to stop [buying Russian oil]... It's a process. You can't just stop... By the end of the year, they'll be down to almost nothing
>
> **DONALD TRUMP,** U.S. President

The U.S. sanctions target oil giants Rosneft and Lukoil, which between them account for more than 5% of global oil output.

'Funding war'

The U.S. Treasury has given companies until November 21 to wind down their transactions with the Russian oil producers.

"Given [Russian] President [Vladimir] Putin's refusal to end this senseless war, Treasury is sanctioning Russia's two largest oil companies that fund the Kremlin's war machine," U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a statement.

"We encourage our allies to join us in and adhere to these sanctions."

Oil and gas revenue, currently down 21% year-on-year, accounts for a quarter of Russia's budget and is the most important source of funding for its war in Ukraine, now in its fourth year.

Mr. Trump expressed confidence regarding India's response to the sanctions. "India, as you know, has told me they are going to stop [buying Russian oil]... It's a process. You can't just stop... By the end of the year, they'll be down to almost nothing, almost 40% of the oil. India, they've been great. Spoke to Prime Minister [Narendra] Modi yesterday. They have been absolutely great," the U.S. President told the reporters at the White House on Wednesday.

Reliance Industries, which operates the world's biggest refining complex at Jamnagar in Gujarat, has a long-term deal to buy nearly 500,000 barrels per day of crude from Rosneft and also buys Russian oil from intermediaries.

It now plans to reduce or cease imports of Russian oil, including halting purchases under its deal with Rosneft, people familiar with the matter said.

INDIA bloc names Tejashwi as its CM candidate in Bihar

Amit Bhelari
SASARAM


Tejashwi Yadav

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav was on Thursday declared the chief ministerial face of the INDIA bloc for the Bihar Assembly election.

The announcement was made in Patna by the All India Congress Committee senior observer for the election, Ashok Gehlot, in the presence of Mr. Yadav and other leaders of the alliance.

Displaying unity after the initial hiccups over seat-sharing, the official announcement was made during a joint press meet in which Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) chief Mukesh Sahani, Bihar Congress incharge Krishna Allavaru, Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee (BPCC) president Rajesh Ram and Left leaders were present.

Mr. Gehlot announced Mr. Sahani as the deputy chief ministerial face of the alliance. He said the name of one more Deputy Chief Minister would be announced later.

"With the consensus of Congress president Mallikarjun Khage, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and all leaders present over here, we are declaring Tejashwi Yadav as the candidate for the Chief Minister position. Tejashwi Yadav *ji* has a long political journey, and we are confident that the public will shower him with immense love," Mr. Gehlot said.

"Along with this, we are also declaring a struggling young comrade Mukesh Sahani as the candidate for the Deputy Chief Minister position. We will announce the name of one more Deputy Chief Minister name later."

Mr. Gehlot asked the BJP leadership to name its Chief Minister candidate and not to ignore the question by saying that the election is being contested under the leadership of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

"Now, our question to Amit Shah *ji* is that we have already declared our Chief Minister, so you tell us who will be the face of the Chief Minister from the NDA?" Mr. Gehlot said.

Mr. Yadav thanked all the leaders of the INDIA bloc for showing trust in him saying he would live up to the trust.

"Together, we will uproot the corrupt 'double engine' government. Injustice is being done to Nitish Kumar *ji* in the NDA. He has not even been declared the face of the Chief Minister. The truth is that the BJP will not make Nitish Kumar *ji* the Chief Minister. Amit Shah has already confirmed that the elected legislators will select the Chief Minister. The question is – every time, the face of the Chief Minister has been declared, so why is such a statement being made this time?" Mr. Yadav asked.

'New example'

Mr. Sahani, who is also known as 'Son of Mallah', expressed his happiness over the announcement. In a post on X, he said: "Thanks to all allies of the *Mahagatbandhan* for expressing confidence in a son from the Extremely Backward Classes (EBC) for the Deputy Chief Minister position. This decision will set a new example for social justice and equal representation in Bihar."

Ever since the INDIA bloc was formed, repeated questions were being asked from the Congress leaders whether Mr. Yadav is the Chief Minister face of the alliance or not.

Autumn blooms



Eye catchers: Gardeners tend to chrysanthemums as tourists walk past a theme park in the foothills of the Zabarwan forest range in Srinagar, Kashmir, on Thursday. IMRAN NISSAR

Gang 'plotting' acts of terror across Bihar gunned down

Shrimansi Kaushik
NEW DELHI

A joint team of Delhi and Bihar Police gunned down a four-member gang allegedly planning to spread terror in Bihar ahead of polls. They were killed in Delhi's Rohini area early on Thursday.

The gang, which called itself Sigma & Company, had publicised its earlier killings on social media. The police said they recovered an audio clip in which the gang leader could be heard conspiring to spread terror in Bihar.

FULL REPORT
» PAGE 4

Aland voter fraud: SIT identifies six suspects who prepared duplicate Form 7 applications

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the voter fraud in Aland in Karnataka has now unearthed a money trail where a call centre-like firm in Kalaburagi was allegedly paid ₹80 to make each of the 5,994 forged Form 7 applications.

It has identified six suspects, of whom five have been questioned and their statements recorded.

The SIT had raided their residences and recovered key digital devices using which the forged Form 7s were made.

However, the SIT is still tight-lipped about who paid the firm for this operation, even as it has raided premises linked to former BJP MLA Subhash Guttedar in connection with the case.

Mr. Guttedar won the 2018 polls with a slender margin of 697 votes against the Congress's B.R. Patil, and in 2023, the incumbent Mr. Guttedar lost to Mr. Patil by 10,347 votes. While Mr. Guttedar has denied any involvement in voter fraud, the SIT has not specified his role or given reasons why premises linked to him and his sons were raided recently.

Mr. Patil had raised the alarm over forged Form 7s in February 2023, following which ground verification had revealed that 5,994 of 6,018 Form 7s in Aland were forged and these forged applications were rejected. The Returning Officer had filed a complaint based on which an FIR was registered, and the case is now being probed by a SIT.

The SIT was formed after *The Hindu* on September 7, 2025, reported that the probe had gone cold with the Election Commission not cooperating. Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi had also flagged the issue at a press conference in Delhi.

It achieved a breakthrough in the first week of October identifying the "call centre-like" firm in Kalaburagi where these forged Form 7s were made.

Past results

The table shows previous election results in the Aland constituency in Karnataka

Election type and year	Party	Vote share (%)	Margin votes
2018 Assembly election	BJP	47.8	697
	INC	47.4	
2019 General election (Assembly segment result)	BJP	57.7	28,287
	INC	36.5	
2023 Assembly election	INC	51.3	10,348
	BJP	45.3	
2024 General election (Assembly segment result)	BJP	52.8	12,936
	INC	44.1	

Source: Election Commission of India

Pan-India SIR to cover more than 10 States in first phase

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) is all set to announce the schedule for a country-wide roll-out of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls at a press conference in the next few days. The first phase of the process will be implemented in more than 10 States and one Union Territory, including election-bound Assam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala, and West Bengal.

The EC took stock of the preparedness of all States and Union Territories for the pan-India SIR, at the two-day conference of Chief Electoral Officers (CEO) that concluded here on Thursday.

Schedule soon

The full commission will now discuss the matter and take a call on the schedule, which would be announced soon, sources told *The Hindu*.

The process is expected to be rolled out in two phases, beginning with Assam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala, and West Bengal, where Assembly elections are due in 2026. Those States where local body polls are scheduled to be held and are likely to experience harsh weather conditions during the winter will be tackled in later phases.

The sources said the commission heard the points raised by the CEOs of all States at the conference and while it responded to general queries and held a presentation on the SIR, no concrete decisions were announced at the meeting. It was stated that a decision would be communicated to all CEOs after the meeting of the Election Commission members.

The two-day conference was presided over by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar.

INBRIEF



Family event brings Thackeray cousins together once again

Amid buzz over a possible alliance, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and his cousin, MNS president Raj Thackeray, met once again on Thursday during a family gathering. It was the fifth meeting between the two leaders this month as their families gathered at the residence of Jaijaywanti, Mr. Raj's sister, on the occasion of 'Bhaubeej'. A day before, Mr. Uddhav visited Mr. Raj's residence in Dadar to greet his aunt and the MNS president's mother Kunda Thackeray on her birthday. The Thackeray cousins have publicly come together on at least 10 occasions since July this year. PTI

Haryana IPS officer's death: Union Minister meets family

Union Minister Manohar Lal on Thursday visited the family of Haryana IPS officer Y. Puran Kumar, who allegedly died by suicide, and expressed condolences. The Minister met Kumar's wife and IAS officer Amneet P. Kumar at their residence in Chandigarh. Kumar allegedly shot himself at his Sector 11 residence on October 7. In a 'final note' purportedly left behind by Kumar, he had accused eight senior IPS officers of "blatant caste-based discrimination, targeted mental harassment, public humiliation, and atrocities". PTI

(Those in distress may contact Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health suicide prevention helpline: 011-40769002.)

Day ahead of Rajya Sabha bypolls in J&K, Congress and PDP back ruling NC

Numbers in the Union Territory's Assembly suggest National Conference could win three seats and BJP the fourth, but Independents and smaller parties key to the outcome on last two seats

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR



Leader of the Opposition Sunil Kumar Sharma speaking during the first day of the Assembly session in Srinagar on Thursday. IMRAN NISSAR

The Congress and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on Thursday extended their formal support to the ruling National Conference (NC), a day ahead of the byelections to four Rajya Sabha seats of Jammu and Kashmir.

"Taking into account our sensitivities as a suffering State and our identity as a tested voice for a diverse and secular India, the Congress party has decided to keep all differences with the NC on the back burner - solely to reaffirm our commitment to our own ethos and principles," J&K Pradesh Congress Committee president Tariq Hameed Karra said.

Mr. Karra admitted that the upcoming Rajya Sabha polls have posed "a new challenge" while referring to growing differences with the NC, its coalition partner. "We sincerely hope that the NC keeps its flock together against all temptations and manipulations - and in that endeavour, we extend our full support. All our six Congress MLAs will support NC," Mr. Karra said, adding that his party chose unity over division during the 2024 Assembly poll as well.

The Opposition PDP, which has three legislators in the J&K Assembly, also offered support to the NC. "The PDP will back NC candidate Shammi Oberoi as a third preference to prevent BJP gains. We are giving our three votes to the NC's third candidate. This is to ensure that if the BJP wins the fourth seat, blame is not placed on us," said PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti.

Support for Bills

She said in lieu of the support, the PDP was expecting support to the Land Rights Bill and the Daily Wager Regularisation Bill introduced in the Assembly in the ongoing session.

"NC president Dr. Farooq [Abdullah] *sahab* called me and asked for our party's support. I told him that we need two Bills to be passed in the Assembly first," Ms. Mufti said.

The current arithmetic suggests that the NC could win three seats and the BJP the fourth seat. At present, the 90-member Assembly has 88 legislators as two seats of Budgam and Nagrota are currently vacant. The NC-Congress combine has the highest MLAs (52), which includes the former's 41, the latter's six and Independents. The BJP has the second highest count in the Assembly at 27 seats.

Independents and smaller parties will remain key to win two Rajya Sabha seats in the Union Territory. J&K Peoples Conference (JKPC), Awami Ittehad Party, and Aam Aadmi Party have one MLA each. The JKPC has decided to abstain from voting and AAP MLA Mehraj Malik, who is in jail, is likely to be provided with a ballot box there.

The NC has fielded candidates in all four seats while the BJP has named three candidates.

Rajasthan Police bust syndicate misusing govt. welfare schemes

Mohammed Iqbal
JAIPUR



Arrested members of the cyber syndicate in Jhalawar on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Rajasthan Police have successfully dismantled a major inter-State cyber syndicate involved in systematic fraud against Central and State government welfare schemes with the arrest of 30 persons.

The operation covered 30 locations across 700 km, stretching from Dausa and Bandikui to adjoining areas in Madhya Pradesh.

The police action, launched as part of 'Operation Shutterdown', was the first of its kind in the country, revealing large-scale misuse of public funds meant for farmers, the poor, and vulnerable communities.

Properties worth ₹3 crore, including ₹52.69 lakh cash, 14 luxury vehicles and electronic equipment, were seized.

Jhalawar Superintendent of Police Amit Kumar said on Thursday that a confidential investigation was launched after receiving a complaint about a man from Kamkheda region allegedly committing fraud in government schemes. There were suspicious transactions and repeated deposits of government funds into multiple bank accounts within short durations. "Fraud was detected in major welfare schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, social security pensions and compensation schemes. Funds were fraudulently withdrawn from Jodhpur, Kota, Bundi, and Dausa using identities sourced from Jhalawar," Mr. Kumar said.

Modus operandi

Multiple bank accounts were linked to a single mobile number and large withdrawals were made immediately after deposits, Mr. Kumar said.

During confidential field verification in remote areas, the probe found that some people were "purchasing" bank accounts and identity documents from ineligible persons, and these documents were used to fraudulently claim government benefits.

T.N. Assembly poll: supporters confident of Anbumani being accepted as PMK face by NDA

Udhav Naig
CHENNAI



Anbumani Ramadoss

PMK leader Anbumani's supporters are confident that the AIADMK and the BJP would end up recognising him as the "face" of the PMK when elections draw closer in the State even if the leadership tussle with his father and PMK founder S. Ramadoss remains unresolved.

Recently, BJP Tamil Nadu election in-charge, Baijayant Panda, met Dr. Anbumani in Chennai. Earlier, he had a meeting with the AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami and also called on Dr. Ramadoss while he was admitted in the hospital. While all the meetings were dubbed courtesy calls, Dr. Anbumani's supporters are of the view that the AIADMK and BJP would eventually recognise him as the PMK's face.

Sources close to Dr. Anbumani said, Mr. Panda and he have remained "great friends" since being seated close to each other in Parliament after the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Officially Dr. Anbumani and Mr. Panda have chosen not to comment over whether alliance negotiations have started between PMK and the AIADMK-headed NDA of which the BJP is a key constituent in Tamil Nadu.

But many in the party contend the friendship between the two leaders and the fact that the Election Commission of India has "recognised" the extension of Dr. Anbumani's tenure as PMK president until August 2026 already points to the scales tilted in favour of him. K. Balu, spokesperson of the Anbumani-led PMK, said the party has consolidated behind Dr. Anbumani despite his father remaining an icon of the Vanniyar community.

'Nothing on alliance'

Sources close to senior Ramadoss, who has shown no intention to climb down and reconcile with his son, said, "We are fully focused on party activities and *Ayya* (Ramadoss) would make an announcement about the alliance only on December 30 when the general body would be held. He has not indicated anything about the alliance to anyone," said a close confidant.

Haryana govt. seeks CBI probe into death of former DGP's son

Press Trust of India
CHANDIGARH

Ex-Punjab DGP, wife have been booked in connection with the death of Aqil Akhter

The Haryana government has written to the Centre, recommending a CBI probe into the death of the son of former Punjab DGP Mohammad Mustafa, sources said on Thursday.

The investigation will be handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) once the Centre accepts the State government's request, they said.

Mustafa and his wife Razia Sultana, a former Punjab Minister, have been booked by the Haryana Police in connection with the death of their 35-year-old son Aqil Akhter.

Akhter was found dead at his residence in Haryana's Panchkula on October 16. Also booked in the case are Akhter's wife and sister.

The FIR was registered on October 20 under Sections 103 (1) and 61 that deal with murder and criminal conspiracy charges, after a man named Shamshuddin from Punjab's Malerkotla filed a complaint alleging foul play in the death.

The complainant alleged that Akhter died under "suspicious circumstances", the police had earlier said.

Allegations dismissed

Mr. Mustafa has dismissed as "completely false" all allegations levelled against him and his family in connection with the death of his son. The Mustafa family has said that Akhter was undergoing treatment at a hospital in Panchkula as he had become "psychotic" and was not in sound mental health.

Address legal problems in Telangana's quota policy for BCs, says former chairman

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD



V.K. Mohan Rao, ex-chairman of the Telangana State Backward Classes Commission.

Failure to frame a lawful policy in accordance with the Supreme Court judgments, has pushed the issue of 42% Backward Classes (BC) reservation in Telangana rural local bodies to a situation where the State government has no other option but to start from scratch the exercise to provide the enhanced reservation to the BCs, according to Vakulabharanam Krishna Mohan Rao, former Chairman of the Telangana State Backward Classes Commission.

"When a State seeks to cross the 50% ceiling, the minimum requirement is that commissions should be quasi-judicial in nature, independent in operation, and vested with civil court powers." So, unless the current policy – full of legal flaws – is addressed from the first step, there is no way the desired result can be achieved.

Mr. Rao said that all three stages of arriving at 42% reservation lacked the legality and statutory powers, from the Social, Educational, Employment, Economic, Political, Caste (SEEEPC) Survey, to the constitution of the Dedicated Commission headed by Busani Venkateshwar Rao and finally the Justice Sudershan Reddy Committee.

Recalling the Constitutional framework, he said the Supreme Court in Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992) ruled that reservations must rest on contemporaneous empirical data and cannot exceed the 50% ceiling, barring proven extraordinary circumstances.

'Benchmarks not met'

In K. Krishna Murthy v. Union of India (2010), the Court prescribed the 'Triple Test' for local body reservations, which include a dedicated independent commission must conduct an empirical survey, quantifiable data must establish inadequate representation and the overall quota must not breach the 50% ceiling. It was reaffirmed in the Vikas Kishanrao Gawali v. State of Maharashtra (2021) case. Mr. Rao says Telangana did not meet these constitutional benchmarks.

A story of survival: tamarind tree planted by woman freedom fighter finds a place at Kolkata film festival

Bishwanath Ghosh
KOLKATA



The tamarind tree in Kolkata's Vidyasagar Colony, home to several bird species, features in the film *Friends of Jilipibala*, set to premiere at the Kolkata International Film Festival. BISHWANATH GHOSH

A neighbourhood tamarind tree has found its way to the Kolkata International Film Festival (KIFF) next month, with a documentary made on it selected for a world premiere in the National Competition on Documentary category.

The massive tree, which provides green cover to its surroundings, carries historical significance as it is said to have been planted about 70 years ago by freedom fighter Parul Mukherjee when she settled in a refugee colony, now known as Vidyasagar Colony, in south Kolkata after Partition. Ms. Mukherjee, a revolutionary, was convicted in the Titagarh conspiracy case in 1935 at the age of 20 and spent four years in prison.

The tree was under threat when builders recently took over the old building where Ms. Mukherjee had lived before her death in 1990. It was saved after a cultural movement was launched in July last year by the film's director, Debalina Majumder, who is also a neighbour. Following the campaign, the boundary wall of the property was restructured to leave the tree standing on land belonging to the Kolkata Municipal Corporation.

"The tree has given shelter to animals and birds for decades. I have been shooting those birds and animals for more than 12 years. This film documents the vulnerability of urban fauna in the face of urban redevelopment projects. Recently in Delhi, we saw mass mobilisation around street dogs. Hope we will find similar mobilisation against cutting trees and making urban fauna lose their homes," Ms. Majumder said about her 30-minute documentary, titled *Friends of Jilipibala*, which conveys its message through a toddler's reactions to various lives on the tree.

This year, the Kolkata International Film Festival will be held from November 6 to 13, and *Friends of Jilipibala* is among 10 films selected for the National Competition on Documentary category.

'Connected existence'

"Environmental Studies is now a mandatory subject in every field of education. Children continue to be most vulnerable to environmental degradation and have the least ability to take action regarding this. We wanted to make a film that shows our connected existence and a child's response to deforestation beyond her control - as she watched birds, animals and reptiles losing their habitat due to proposed development," Samata Biswas, the producer of the film, said.

Festive season leaves Mumbai with worst air quality of year

Purnima Sah
MUMBAI

19 monitoring stations recorded highest daily average concentrations of PM2.5 since January

October emerged as Mumbai's most polluted month of the year, with 19 air quality monitoring stations recording their highest daily average concentrations of particulate matter (PM) 2.5 and seven stations registering peak PM10 (particulate matter less than 10 micrometres in diameter) levels since January.

The rise in pollution was recorded between October 18 and 22, coinciding with the festive season that typically sees increased vehicular movement and use of firecrackers in the city.

The data – sourced from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) – was compiled and analysed by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA). The city's air quality is tracked through continuous ambient air quality monitoring stations installed by the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board, the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation.

"While the celebrations draw more people outdoors, the air remains unsafe to breathe. It is crucial for authorities to address not just seasonal pollution spikes but everyday sources like construction dust, traffic emissions, and other contributors that steadily degrade air quality. Protecting public health must remain at the heart of the city's response," Manoj Kumar, analyst at CREA, said.

The worst-hit areas were Bandra Kurla Complex, where the PM2.5 value was 212 micrograms per cubic metre (g/m^3) on October 21, Malad West (188 g/m^3), Navy Nagar (167 g/m^3), and Mazgaon (130 g/m^3). For PM10, the highest daily average was recorded at Malad West (322 g/m^3).

"These figures far exceed the CPCB's permissible limits of 60 g/m^3 for PM2.5 and 100 g/m^3 for PM10 for a 24-hour average," Mr. Kumar said.

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INBRIEF



3 held for transporting 908 kg of marijuana in Telangana

Three men were arrested in Hyderabad while trying to transport 908.41 kilograms of marijuana from Odisha to Maharashtra. The seized contraband, along with a transport vehicle, mobile phones and cash, is valued at around ₹2.7 crore, informed a police official about the operation jointly conducted by the South-East Zone Task Force team, and Bandlaguda Police. Police said four others involved in the racket remain absconding.

A.P. man arrested for 'sexually assaulting' minor girl ends life

A 62-year-old man arrested on charges of sexually assaulting a 13-year-old girl, reportedly ended his life on the outskirts of Tuni town in Kakinada district of Andhra Pradesh. "At around 10.20 p.m. on Wednesday, the accused, T. Narayana Rao, appealed to the escort team to allow him to go to the toilet. He suddenly ran away and jumped into a pond," a senior police official told *The Hindu*. *(For those in distress, counselling is available at TeleMANAS-14416)*

Sex determination racket in Mysuru district busted

In a major crackdown on illegal sex determination and abortion practices, officials of the Karnataka Appropriate Authority under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act conducted a successful decoy operation in Hunuganahalli Hundi, Bannur taluk of Mysuru district, on Wednesday. While seven persons, including a nurse, have been booked, police confirmed the arrest of four persons.

Literacy helped Kerala lead in development indices: Murmu

Knowledge propels society forward and fosters self-reliance, says President; she unveils bust of former President K.R. Narayanan and pays homage to social reformer Sree Narayana Guru

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The power of literacy and knowledge has enabled Kerala to rank among the leading States on several human development indicators, President Droupadi Murmu said on Thursday.

Addressing the valedictory function of the platinum jubilee celebrations of St. Thomas College at Pala in Kerala, the President emphasised that knowledge drives innovation, propels society forward, and fosters self-reliance.

'Story of courage'

Ms. Murmu unveiled a bust of former President K.R. Narayanan at the Raj Bhavan in Thiruvananthapuram the same day.



President Droupadi Murmu after unveiling the bust of former President K.R. Narayanan at the Kerala Raj Bhavan on Thursday. PTI

Speaking on the occasion, the President described K.R. Narayanan's life as a story of courage, perseverance, and self-belief. "His academic excellence was a symbol of what determination and opportunity can accomplish when guided by purpose," she said.

Meanwhile, while inaugurating the death anniversary centenary of Sree Narayana Guru at Sivagiri Madhom in Varkala, the President said the revered social reformer inspired generations with his ideals of equality, unity, and love for humanity.

"Sree Narayana Guru was one of the leading figures of the pan-Indian reawakening witnessed during the 19th century. He devoted his life to liberating people from the darkness of ignorance and superstition," she said. Sree Narayana Guru was one of India's greatest spiritual leaders and social reformers whose philosophy and actions reshaped the nation's social and spiritual landscape, she said.



Water woes: Marooned residents being evacuated from Anjaneyar Koil Street in Vellore on Thursday. C. VENKATACHALAPATHY

North T.N. likely to get intense rainfall from October 26

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Even as an active northeast monsoon and associated weather systems continue to impact rainfall across Tamil Nadu, another low pressure area brewing over the Bay of Bengal is likely to trigger intense rainfall over the northern districts from October 26.

Wednesday's weather system, which weakened on Thursday, moved towards south interior Karnataka, and is expected to merge with the prevailing weather system over the Arabian Sea.

Due to this, heavy rainfall may occur in the Western Ghats region and a few north Tamil Nadu districts such as Ranipet and Vellore on Friday.

Meanwhile, the upper air cyclonic circulation prevailing over southeast Bay of Bengal is expected to influence the development of a low pressure area over southeast and adjoining east-central Bay of Bengal on Friday. This weather system is predicted to grow stronger by Saturday, and rainfall activity is set to pick up pace from Sunday.

B. Amudha, Head, (Additional in-charge), RMC, said rainfall activity over the State would be influenced by an interplay of various synoptic features.

Intense rainfall has been predicted for Chennai, its neighbouring districts, and Ranipet and Villupuram districts on Sunday. These districts, excluding Villupuram, are likely to receive heavy rainfall between October 26 and 28, according to the RMC.

During the past 24 hours ending 8.30 a.m. on Thursday, rain lashed most areas of Tamil Nadu, with Arakkonam in Ranipet district recording the heaviest rainfall of 13 cm. Many places, including Tiruchi, Thanjavur, Krishnagiri, and Kanniyakumari districts, received rainfall of light to moderate intensity till 6.30 p.m. on Thursday.

Active Northeast monsoon has brought surplus rain to the State so far this October – 21.2 cm, which is 85% above normal rainfall.

TDB official held by SIT in gold theft case

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala High Court-appointed Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the "misappropriation" of gold-plated copper moulds covering the sculptures at the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple arrested Murari Babu, a Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) official, from his residence in Kottayam on Wednesday.

The SIT brought him to the State Crime Branch Police office in Thiruvananthapuram for questioning. He was produced before a magistrate at Ranni in Pathanamthitta, who remanded him in judicial custody for 14 days.

The SIT has accused Mr. Babu of providing a false report that the gilded overlays contained no gold and were made of pure copper, before handing the artefacts to Unnikrishnan Potti, the prime suspect in the case, for repair at a metalworks factory in Chennai.

Kerala govt. signs up for PM SHRI funds

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government has signed up for the Union government's PM SHRI scheme to secure an estimated ₹1,446 crore for the modernisation of government schools in the State amid opposition from the Communist Party of India (CPI), a key ally of Left Democratic Front (LDF).

According to officials, K. Vasuki, General Education Secretary, was in New Delhi to finalise the modalities.

CPI State secretary Binoy Viswam told *The Hindu* that signing up for the PM-SHRI without taking the LDF into confidence was a violation of coalition ethics. "The CPI's State secretariat is convening at the party's State headquarters urgently on Friday to weigh the issue and register its strong objection," he said. The CPI had equated committing to the PM SHRI with adherence to the NEP.

TDP MLA accuses MP of taking 'huge sum' for ticket

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

A major political controversy erupted in Andhra Pradesh as TDP MLA K. Srinivasa Rao from Tiruvuru accused Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath of "taking a huge sum for fetching him ticket to contest in the Tiruvuru constituency" on Thursday.

Mr. Srinivasa Rao kicked up the row by posting, what he claimed to be proof of the money paid by him to Mr. Sivanath, in his WhatsApp status. This drew flak from the MP, who dismissed the allegation as "motivated," and said people were wise enough to understand the whole episode.

Mr. Rao's accusation was that he paid a few crores of rupees to Mr. Sivanath in the run-up to the 2024 elections, and stated that he would come out with more details on Friday.

'Vicious campaign'

Mr. Sivanath replied that he was not a person who switches political allegiances and would by no means indulge in such despicable things as taking money from other leaders. He insisted that he was a sincere TDP leader and would not tolerate the vicious campaign being waged against him.

Mr. Sivanath welcomed the lodging of a complaint with TDP State president Palla Srinivasa Rao, saying it was good for him as the facts would come out.

The State president reportedly summoned both the leaders for a meeting at the party's central office on October 24 to sort out the issue.

Harvest time



Unique paddy: Migrant labourers from Assam transporting the harvested GI-tagged saltwater tolerant Pokkali paddy from the Pizhala island near Kochi on Thursday. THULASI KAKKAT

Karnataka HC faults ED's action in bank fraud case

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka has faulted the action of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in attaching immovable properties mortgaged to a public sector bank to secure a loan.

The money laundering case was initiated based on a chargesheet filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on the bank's complaint against its officials and the borrowers, who allegedly defrauded the bank.

A Division Bench, comprising Justices D.K. Singh and Venkatesh Naik T., passed the order while dismissing the ED's appeal against an order passed in 2017 by the Appellate Tribunal, Prevention of Money Laundering (PML) Act, New Delhi.



The Karnataka HC dismissed the ED's appeal in a money laundering case

The tribunal had set aside the ED's 2012 action of attaching seven immovable properties, which were mortgaged to the bank by the accused borrowers.

When *prima facie* the properties mortgaged to the bank were not the proceeds of crime as they were in possession of the accused earlier, the attachment of these seven properties mortgaged to the bank for advancement of loans, could not be justified in law, the Bench said.

'In precarious position'

Further, the Bench said, if the agency was permitted to proceed with the attachment then it would put the bank in a 'precarious position' as lawful remedies to recover the loan would be affected.

The Bench also pointed out that the adjudicating authority of the ED had failed to issue notice to the bank under Section 8(1) and Section 8(2) of the PML Act before attaching the mortgaged properties.

IAS officer's resignation stirs a political row in Telangana

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Rizvi is said to have developed differences with the Excise Minister on certain issues

All India Services officer Syed Murtaza Ali Rizvi's sudden decision to take voluntary retirement from service has raised a controversy in Telangana.

Political parties criticised the state of affairs in the State government, alleging that officials were allegedly facing pulls and pressures from the powers that be.

The senior bureaucrat tendered his papers citing personal reasons, but pressure from the powers that be is not being ruled out. However, senior officials close to the officer said that opting for the Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) may have to do with personal reasons, more than administrative reasons.

Holding the portfolio of Secretary of Commercial Taxes and Excise in the Revenue Department, Mr. Rizvi is said to have developed differences with Excise Minister Jupally Krishna Rao on certain issues.

Differences between the two cropped up in respect of award of a contract for printing holograms to be affixed on liquor bottles, except beer, and the manner in which Mr. Rizvi was allegedly sitting on files sent by the Minister for his clearance.

Meanwhile, the Minister addressed a letter to the Chief Secretary alleging 'insubordination' on the part of Mr. Rizvi and demanding action against him on disciplinary grounds.

Mr. Jupally reportedly expressed displeasure that the Excise Secretary was reporting to the Chief Minister's Office in disregard for the Minister holding the portfolio.

Algerian-French artist's works vandalised at Kochi exhibition for 'verbal obscenity'

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

Algerian-French artist Hanan Benammar has condemned the vandalism of a set of her works displayed at the Durbar Hall Art Gallery in Kochi, calling it "violence in an art space."

Ms. Benammar, who resides in Oslo, Norway, was speaking to media in Kochi on Thursday, a day after P.H. Hochimin, an artist from Kottayam, destroyed six of her works featured in the ongoing exhibition 'Estranged Geographies,' alleging verbal obscenity in them.

She said she was disappointed by the fact that a fellow artist chose to pull down her works without discussing with her the criticism he had against the works.



Artist Hanan Benammar and Lalithakala Akademi chairperson Murali Cheeroth examining the vandalised art. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"I felt very stressful thinking about the safety of the artists here, the works, and the audience, but then I was very relieved to know that only the works were attacked," she said. Ms. Benammar said her works "ironically was a response to several acts of silencing and tone policing and, at times, the censorship I experienced as an artist." She said the works attempted to look into class and gender within language and colloquial language, in particular.

Murali Cheeroth, chairman, Kerala Lalithakala Akademi, told the media on Thursday that the executive committee of the institution has decided to file a police complaint. He said the artist has decided to leave the torn works intact and exhibit a CCTV footage of the act of vandalism at the show.

Police kill four 'gangsters' from Bihar in encounter in Delhi

Police say that on being signalled to stop, the gang opened fire at them without any provocation; they were allegedly conspiring to spread terror just before the Assembly election in the State; car, pistols recovered from them, police add

Shrimansi Kaushik
NEW DELHI

A Bihar-based gang allegedly conspiring to spread terror just before the Assembly election was gunned down by a joint team of the police of the State and Delhi in the Rohini area early on Thursday.

In a 10-minute encounter, nearly 20 police officers shot dead four members of the gang who were wanted in multiple murder-cum-extortion cases and were allegedly known for publicly taking responsibility for violent crimes, the police said.

A car, four sophisticated semi-automatic pistols, and one country-made pistol were recovered from the site of the encounter. The weapons have been sent for forensic analysis, the police said.

The gang – Ranjan Pathak, 25, Bimlesh Mahto, 25, alias Bimlesh Sahni, Manish Pathak, 33, and Aman Thakur, 21 – called itself Sigma & Company, and had publicised earlier killings on social media.

The police said that after the shoot-out, they recovered an audio clip in which Ranjan, the gang leader, could be heard conspiring to spread disorder and terror in Bihar. The gang had been evading arrest in the State and had taken shelter in Delhi.



Scene of shoot-out: Forensics and police vehicles at the site where four wanted men were killed in an encounter with a joint team of the Delhi and Bihar police forces in Rohini of New Delhi on Thursday. PTI

"We received specific input from the Bihar Police regarding the movement of these wanted criminals in Delhi. Acting on this, we formed a joint team with the Bihar Police. The criminals were wanted in several cases involving murder, armed assault and illegal possession of weapons. Based on surveillance and technical inputs, the accused were tracked moving towards Bahadur Shah Marg in Rohini," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch) Sanjeev Kumar Yadav.

To avoid detection, the gang members did not put SIM cards in their phones. Instead, they used Wi-Fi hotspots from passers-by to make Internet-based calls through social media platforms.

This strategy helped them remain untraceable through call detail records and conventional mobile-tracking methods, the police said.

Mr. Yadav said that around 2.20 a.m., the police intercepted a white car with four occupants on Bahadur Shah Marg near Pancholi Park in Rohini. "On being signalled to stop, they opened fire at the police without any provocation. The police retaliated in self-defence, leading to a brief exchange of fire during which all the four accused were injured," he said.

'Dreaded criminal'

Mr. Yadav said the four were rushed to Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital where they were declared 'brought dead' by doctors.

The police said Ranjan was a "dreaded criminal" who carried a cash reward of ₹50,000 for information leading to his arrest. He and his associates had been linked to the murder of former Brahmarshi Sena district chief Ram Manohar Sharma in Sitamarhi district of Bihar.

The police said the gang would issue notes to "justify" a murder. After killing Sharma, the gang circulated a note which bore the title Sigma & Company with a tagline "*Nyay, Seva, Sahyog* (Justice, Service, Support)". The gang listed eight alleged "crimes" of Sharma and called him a "sinner".

They had claimed that its fight was not against any caste or community but against "corrupt" police officers, and the oppression of the poor and weak. Declaring that the punishment for such "offences" was death, the gang claimed that corrupt officers had made their lives miserable and said that "those who gave ₹11 as blessings will receive ₹111 as a return gift".

The police cited a case in Sitamarhi's Choraut where the gang had accepted contract money and killed a man named Sharavan Kumar. They entered his shop and fired six bullets at him.

At Bajpatti in the same district, they shot Aditya Kumar and killed him. In an extortion case reported at the Gadha police station, they demanded ₹45 lakh from a person and had threatened to kill the complainant, the police said.

Bombay HC sets up panel to protect Sanjay Gandhi park from encroachments

Purnima Sah
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court has constituted a high-powered committee headed by former Allahabad High Court Chief Justice Dilip Babasaheb Bhosale to protect and preserve the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) after observing that successive governments have failed to implement its directions to safeguard the park for nearly 30 years.

The Division Bench of Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam A. Ankhad was hearing a contempt petition and a PIL alleging "gross contempt" of multiple orders aimed at safeguarding SGNP, a 104 sq.km. green expanse within Mumbai and Thane. Despite repeated judicial interventions since the late 1990s, the court noted that the State had not taken "effective steps" to comply with its directions.

The order passed on October 16 and made available on Wednesday (October 22, 2025), said, "Various orders passed by this Court over a period of thirty years are still to be complied with. This has perhaps led to further encroachments in SGNP."



Urban oasis: The park acts as Mumbai's 'green lung', absorbing carbon emissions and replenishing groundwater. FILE PHOTO

The court recorded that only 49 km of the 154 km boundary wall has been built, despite orders in 1997, 1999, 2000 and a final judgment in 2003. Even subsequent directions in 2024 and early 2025 were not followed. The judges observed that this prolonged inaction has allowed encroachments to spread deeper into the park.

Calling SGNP "a crown jewel for the cities of Mumbai and Thane", the Bench observed, "Considering the present scenario, and to ensure that steps are taken for protection of SGNP, we deem it necessary to constitute a High Power Committee."

SGNP is one of the few national parks in the world located within city limits. Spread over 104 sq km, it is home to leopards, over 1,000 plant species, and the ancient Kanheri caves dating back to the 1st century BCE. The park acts as Mumbai's "green lung", absorbing carbon emissions and replenishing groundwater. Encroachments and unchecked urbanisation have long threatened its ecosystem.

The committee will include Justice Bhosale as chairperson, former Maharashtra Chief Secretary Nitin Kareer, former Director General of Police Subodhkumar Jaiswal, and Anita Patil, Conservator of Forests and SGNP director, as member secretaries.

The panel has to expedite construction of the boundary wall, suggest measures for compliance, identify land and oversee rehabilitation of encroachers, and recommend steps for removal of illegal structures.

The matter will be heard next on February 19, 2026.

Unions unite against drafts of labour, power Bills

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella organisation of various farmers' organisations, and the platform for ten Central Trade Unions (CTUs) have decided that workers and farmers from every district of the country will submit memorandums to President Droupadi Murmu against the draft Electricity Amendment Bill and the draft Labour Policy of the Labour Ministry. The joint memorandum will be submitted to the President through district collectors on November 26.

The joint meeting of the CTUs and SKM held last week reiterated their resolve to continue "coordinated and synchronised actions in solidarity to challenge the pro-corporate, anti-worker, and anti-farmer policies of the Central Government."

The meeting decided to hold one-month campaigns on the CTUs and SKM's charter of demands, as well as their common issues in all districts and State headquarters, which will culminate on November 26. "The leadership everywhere will submit a memorandum of concerns and demands addressed to the President. The meeting noted that it is most urgent for the masses to campaign to safeguard secular democracy, to push back against the pro-corporate, anti-labour, anti-farmer, and anti-national oppressive policy framework of the Central Government, which is becoming more vindictive and oppressive," the joint statement said.

The statement added that the Centre is serving the interests of international finance and has failed to protect Indian farmers, workers, small businesses, and trade against U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff regime.



Piyush Goyal meets German Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy Katherina Reiche, in Berlin on Thursday. @PIYUSHGOYAL

Piyush Goyal hopes for India-U.S. trade deal in 'near future'

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday said he hoped for a trade deal with the U.S. to materialise in the "near future". He added that the teams of both countries were in dialogue and that talks were "progressing".

Mr. Goyal is in Berlin at the moment, following a short trip to Geneva to speak at the 16th session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

"We are in dialogue with the United States of America," Mr. Goyal told the media in Berlin. "Our teams are engaged. We recently had the Commerce Secretary visit the U.S. and he met with his counterparts. We continue to engage with them and talks are progressing. We hope to work towards a fair and equitable agreement in the near future."

These statements come at a time when relations between India and the U.S., though currently overtly thawing, remain tense under the cloud of the 50% tariffs the U.S. has imposed on imports from India.

It remains to be seen when Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet Mr. Trump next as the dates of the next Quad Summit have not yet been finalised, and Mr. Modi has said he will attend the upcoming ASEAN summit only virtually.

Separately, Mr. Goyal during his trip also held talks with various officials in Europe regarding the India-European Union free trade agreement negotiations.

On Thursday, the Minister posted that he had met Katherina Reiche, the German Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy. During his time in Berlin, the Minister also met Levin Holle, Economic and Financial Policy Advisor at the Federal Chancellery and Germany's G7 & G20 Sherpa.

He also chaired a roundtable with CEOs and leaders of German Mittelstand companies at the Indian Embassy, who conveyed their "keenness to do business in India and expand existing investments", the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said in a release.

It added that Mr. Goyal is scheduled to meet Xavier Bettel, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Luxembourg and hold one-on-one discussions with CEOs of leading German companies, including Infineon Technologies, Schaeffler Group, Renk, HerrenknechtAG, Enertrag SE, and the Mercedes Benz Group.

Modi to participate in ASEAN meet virtually, drops Malaysia travel plan

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not travel to Malaysia to attend the 47th ASEAN summit on October 26, but will participate in it virtually. This was announced by him in a social media post on Thursday.

The annual summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a 10-nation grouping, and associated meetings will be held from October 26 to 28 in Kuala Lumpur.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has not provided any reason for Mr. Modi's decision, though Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said that Mr. Modi had cited the "ongoing Deepavali celebrations" as the reason for the change in plans.

Jaishankar goes instead

The Ministry announced that External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar would represent Mr. Modi and lead the Indian delegation at the summit on October 27.

"Had a warm conversation with my dear friend, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia. Congratulated him on Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship and conveyed best wishes for the success of upcoming summits. Look forward to joining the ASEAN-India Summit virtually, and to further deepening of the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," Mr. Modi said.



Diplomatic stage: The annual summit of the ASEAN and related meetings will be held in Kuala Lumpur from October 26 to 28. AFP

In a statement posted on X, Mr. Ibrahim said he had discussed the details of the summit with Mr. Modi. "...I respect his decision and extended my greetings for a happy Deepavali to him and the people of India."

The summit will draw a host of dignitaries, including U.S. President Donald Trump. It was expected that the venue would be a meeting opportunity for Mr. Modi and Mr. Trump, especially as the India-U.S. relations remain uneasy after Mr. Trump imposed punitive tariff on India because of India's purchase of Russian crude oil.

Mr. Trump and Mr. Modi exchanged greetings on Deepavali on Tuesday as the India-U.S. negotiations for a trade pact continue. The two sides, however, gave differing takes of the conversation with Mr. Trump telling a group of prominent Indian-Americans and Indian Embassy officials in the White House that the call focused on trade deal, purchase of Russian oil and "no war with Pakistan", and the Indian sources maintaining that Pakistan was not discussed during the call.

Officials had earlier given mixed signals about Mr. Modi's travel plans for Kuala Lumpur saying that the Bihar election campaign requires the Prime Minister's attention. Earlier, Mr. Trump had invited Mr. Modi to the Sharm-el-Sheikh peace summit for ceasefire in the Gaza Strip but India was represented at the event by Kirti Vardhan Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs.

Since the U.S.'s imposition of 50% punitive tariff on India on August 7, Mr. Modi and Mr. Trump have spoken on multiple occasions, but have not met despite meeting opportunities. The official-level conversation has also become difficult as Mr. Trump continues to insist that he mediated an end to the May 2025 conflict between India and Pakistan, a claim that Indian officials have refused to confirm.

Modi skipping ASEAN meet to avoid being cornered by Trump: Congress

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is attending the ASEAN summit virtually instead of travelling to Malaysia to avoid "being cornered" by U.S. President Donald Trump.

Taking to X, Congress communication chief Jairam Ramesh said it was one thing to post messages in praise of President Trump, but far too risky to be physically seen with the man who has claimed 53 times that he stopped Operation Sindoor and that India has promised to stop buying oil from Russia.



Jairam Ramesh

"The reason why Mr. Modi is not going is simple. He just doesn't want to be cornered by President Trump who will also be there. He refused an invitation to attend the Gaza peace summit in Egypt a few weeks back, precisely for this reason," Mr. Ramesh said.

"The PM may well be recalling that old hit Bollywood number: *Bachke rehna re baba, bachke rehna re*," he added.

Prime Minister Modi is scheduled to participate virtually in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) summit, which will take place in Kuala Lumpur from October 26 to 28. He has also spoken with his Malaysian counterpart Anwar Ibrahim ahead of the meeting.

Reliance to recalibrate

In a separate post on X, Mr. Ramesh reacted to a news report quoting a Reliance Industries spokesperson who said the company would recalibrate its import of Russian oil to align with the priorities of the Indian government.

"Modi Proposes, Reliance Disposes, Trump Exposes," he said.

Union govt. asks CJI to recommend a successor

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Centre has, in a letter to Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai, sought his recommendation for naming his successor. The CJI is currently on a four-day visit to Bhutan. His office said he would come back and send his recommendation to the government.

As per seniority norms, Justice Surya Kant is the next in line to become the 53rd CJI. Chief Justice Gavai is scheduled to retire on November 24. Under the Memorandum of Procedure for appointment of the CJI and Supreme Court Judges, the Law Ministry seeks the recommendation of the outgoing CJI on the next appointment. The letter from the government kickstarts the appointment process for the next CJI.

The process usually begins a month before the incumbent is to demit office.

Justice Kant was born on February 10, 1962, in Hisar in Haryana.

After completing his graduation from his hometown, Justice Kant earned his Bachelor's degree in Law in 1984 from Maharishi Dayanand University, Rohtak. He started his legal practice at the Hisar district court and shifted to Chandigarh in 1985 to practise in the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

Justice Kant has represented a number of universities, boards, corporations, banks and also the High Court itself.

Justice Kant became the youngest Advocate-General of Haryana on July 7, 2000, and was designated a senior advocate in March 2001. He was elevated as a judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court on January 9, 2004 and was appointed the Chief Justice of the High Court of Himachal Pradesh in October, 2018. He is due to retire on February 9, 2027.

BIHAR ASSEMBLY ELECTION

Nitish takes jab at Tejashwi over poll promises

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday took a veiled swipe at his former deputy Tejashwi Yadav, accusing him of trying to "mislead" women by making hollow promises about the Jeevika self-help groups.

Without naming the RJD leader, Mr. Kumar said in a social media post: "The people of Bihar had given them a chance, but they used power to serve their own interests instead of serving the people."

"Some people, just before elections, are trying to portray themselves as champions of *Jeevika Didis* and half of Bihar's population," he said.

His remarks came a day after Mr. Yadav promised a hike in monthly remuneration to ₹30,000 for nearly two lakh "community mobilisers" involved with Jeevika self-help groups. PTI



Over 1.4 crore Jeevika Didis are playing a vital role in Bihar's economy, says the CM. ANI

Lalu 'tortured' Congress, allies, says Deputy CM

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary on Thursday alleged that RJD supremo Lalu Prasad "tortured" the Congress and other INDIA bloc allies by "fielding nominees against them" to install his son Tejashwi Yadav as the chief ministerial candidate for the Assembly polls. "It is a black day for democracy, as the son of a registered criminal has been announced as the CM candidate," Mr. Choudhary said at a press conference in Patna.

He accused the RJD of "perpetuating 15 years of misrule in Bihar characterised by loot, fear and corruption".

"I don't know who is guiding him (Tejashwi)... The cumulative cost of just two election promises is ₹17 lakh crore, while Bihar's budget is around ₹3 lakh crore," the BJP leader said. PTI



He [Tejashwi Yadav] should answer who was the Chief Minister when he served as deputy CM. He only makes hollow announcements

RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD
BJP leader

Two INDIA bloc candidates take back papers

Two INDIA bloc nominees in Bihar withdrew their candidature in Nawada and Madhubani districts on Thursday, officials said. While Congress' Satish Kumar withdrew from Warsaliganj, Bindu Gulab Yadav of Vikassheel Insaan Party took back her nomination from Babubarhi in Madhubani. PTI



It was always known that if [RJD president] Lalu *ji*'s jungle raj were to return in Bihar, [RJD leader] Tejashwi Yadav would be Chief Minister

PRASHANT KISHOR
Jan Suraaj Party founder



Vikassheel Insaan Party chief Mukesh Sahani presents a bouquet to RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav in Patna. ANI

For a former set designer, it's the stuff of a Bollywood film

Sobhana K. Nair
GAYA

For Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) leader Mukesh Sahani, life has come full circle. Five years ago, he had walked out of a *Mahagatbandhan* (grand alliance) press conference alleging that the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) had "backstabbed" him. On Thursday, sharing the stage with nearly the same set of leaders, he was anointed the Opposition alliance's Deputy Chief Minister candidate.

The VIP's electoral performance since its formation in 2018 has been less than impressive. Currently, it has no legislator in the Bihar Assembly. Mr. Sahani has lost two elections – the 2019 Lok Sabha polls from Khagaria and the 2020 Assembly election from Simri Bakhtiyarpur. In the 243-seat Assembly, VIP is contesting only 15 seats.

Despite this, Mr. Sahani has earned a public assurance from the grand alliance that he would be made Deputy Chief Minister if the alliance won. The decision is aimed at mopping up every possible vote, especially in north Bihar, where the grand alliance had a dismal performance in 2020.

Mr. Sahani commands influence over the Extremely Backward Class (EBC) vote. The EBCs, a disparate group of castes, account for a substantial 30% of Bihar's voters. The Nishads, or the boatmen community, form approximately 9.6% of the State's population, shows the 2023 State caste survey, with the Mallah sub-caste among the Nishads, to which Mr. Sahani belongs, making up 2.6% of the population. The decision could have an impact on other communities such as Bind, Manjhi, Beldah, Kewat, and Turha, which could prove decisive in the Mithila, Koshi, and Champaran regions.

A school dropout, Mr. Sahani studied till Class 8. At 19, he left home to try his luck in the Hindi film industry. After odd jobs, he managed to find his footing as a set designer. His company, Mukesh Cine World Private Ltd., boasts projects such as the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer *Devdas* (2002) and Salman Khan-starrer *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* (2015).

The switch from films to politics did not come easy. In 2010, he founded the Sahani Samaj Kalyan Sanstha. Seeing the crowds he was gathering, the BJP roped him in as a campaigner for the Assembly election in 2015. In July 2018, he founded the VIP.

In the Lok Sabha election a year later, the grand alliance offered the VIP three seats. The National Democratic Alliance swept Bihar and barring a lone Congress MP from Kishanganj, no grand alliance candidate could win.

Dramatic moment

On October 4, 2020, at a similar setting as Thursday's press conference, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav declared that the VIP would get seats from his own party's quota, without spelling out the number. As soon as Mr. Yadav finished speaking, the VIP supporters started raising slogans. Mr. Sahani was given the microphone to call for calm. Instead, he dramatically declared that he was "backstabbed". At that time, one of his key demands was the assurance of the Deputy Chief Minister's position. He walked out of the grand alliance to join the ruling NDA.

The VIP won four of the 11 seats it contested under the NDA, though Mr. Sahani failed to win the Simri-Bakhtiyarpur seat. Despite the loss, he was accommodated in the Nitish Kumar Cabinet. Three of the four VIP MLAs switched to the BJP midway through the Assembly tenure. Lamenting the betrayal, Mr. Sahani returned to grand alliance in April 2024.

NDA, grand alliance establish powerful dominance, shrinking space for others

Since the 2015 election, the two fronts have been the principal players in Bihar's political landscape; the strength and appeal of these formations are such that those who tried their luck independently could not sustain themselves; entry of JSP has triggered talk about a possible end to the duopoly

IN FOCUS

T. Ramakrishnan
CHENNAI

Bihar's political duopoly – the *Mahagatbandhan* (grand alliance) and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) – appears to be getting well entrenched, shrinking the space for any third or other political formation.

The perceptible shift in the pattern of voters' preferences can be seen from the outcome of the Assembly election in 2015, when the grand alliance, consisting of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), its traditional ally, Congress, and the Janata Dal (United), handed down a drubbing to the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). At that time, the combined vote share of the two principal formations exceeded 75%.

The grand alliance's vote share was 41.84%, with 178 out of the total 243 seats, while the NDA secured about 34% with 58 seats. This election was the only instance of the JD(U) facing the electorate in alliance with the RJD and the Congress. On all other occasions, the party has been with the BJP, as part of the NDA.

Before 2015

Prior to 2015, the collective strength of the two formations was close to two-thirds of the votes polled. It was about 65%, both during October-November 2005, when the NDA decisively ended the 15-year reign of Rashtriya Janata Dal founder Lalu Prasad, and in 2010, when the alliance won a whopping number of 206 seats. In February 2005, in the first Assembly election that took place after Jharkhand was carved out of Bihar in November 2000, the combined vote share was about 53%.

The strength and appeal of the principal formations are such that those who tried their luck independently could not sustain themselves and ended up joining either of the two coalitions. At the same time, it is not that the formations do not benefit from the presence of smaller parties.

A prominent example is the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation, which had faced the elections on its own or along with smaller parties up to 2015. Five years ago, it joined the grand alliance, winning 12 of the 19 seats it contested.

On different occasions in the past 20 years, the State's two prominent Dalit leaders – Ram Vilas Paswan, who founded the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), and his son, Chirag Paswan, who is heading the LJP (Ram Vilas) – attempted to make it big independent of the two formations. In the February 2005 election, the LJP won 29 seats. Though there were widespread expectations that it would play the kingmaker, the circumstances were such that the Assembly was dissolved by the then President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in May 2005 even before it met once, the first such instance in the country.

Mutual dependence

The continued presence of the Hindustani Awam Morcha-Secular (HAM-S), originally a breakaway group of the JD(U), in the NDA is another illustration of mutual dependence of the players concerned.

The entry of the Jan Suraaj Party (JSP), founded by poll strategist-turned-politician Prashant Kishor, into the fray has triggered talk about the possibility of the JSP ending the State's duopoly, just as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) did in Delhi and Andhra Pradesh, respectively.

However, with Mr. Kishor opting out of the electoral fray, it remains to be seen if the JSP will be able to relegate the grand alliance or the NDA to the third spot.

Past voting patterns

The table shows the alliance-wise vote share and seats *(in brackets)* secured in Bihar's previous Assembly elections. The alliances considered for the analysis are as of 2025

Year	RJD+ (or Mahagatbandhan)	JD(U)+ or BJP+ (or NDA)	Third formation
Feb. 2005	28.27% *(82)*	25.52% *(92)*	LJP+ 17.62% *(39)*
Oct. - Nov. 2005	31.01% *(65)*	36.11% *(143)*	LJP+ 14.21% *(13)*
2010	25.58% *(25)*	39.07% *(206)*	INC 8.37% *(4)*
2015	41.84%^ *(178)*	34.08% *(58)*	CPI-CPI(ML) + 3.57% *(3)*
2020	37.23% *(110)*	37.26% *(125)*	LJP: 5.66% *(1)*, GDSF: 4.61% *(6)*

RJD - Rashtriya Janata Dal. **JD(U)** - Janata Dal (United). **BJP** - Bharatiya Janata Party. **INC** - Indian National Congress. **LJP** - Lok Janshakti Party. **CPI** - Communist Party of India. **CPI-ML** - Communist Party of India Marxist-Leninist. **GDSF** - Grand Democratic Secular Front.

Note: Figures mentioned in brackets refer to the number of seats won by formations. ^In 2015, the JD(U) was a part of the RJD-led alliance. The BJP headed a coalition then



New entrant: Jan Suraaj Party chief Prashant Kishor during a campaign road-show for the upcoming Bihar Assembly election, in Vaishali. ANI

'Modi-led NDA rally will pave way for big win in Bihar'

Devesh K. Pandey
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally along with other senior leaders of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) on Friday, kickstarting the campaign for the Assembly election, will further boost the already positive atmosphere ensuring a one-sided victory in Bihar, State Minister and four-time MLA Nitin Nabin said on Thursday.

Speaking to *The Hindu* over phone, the BJP leader said the NDA's prompt decision on seat-sharing had played a key role in energising the campaign. He is contesting the Assembly election for the fifth time from the Bankipur constituency.

Mr. Nabin accused RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav of making empty promises ahead of polls.

"He earlier promised to give one government job to every family in Bihar. A simple calculation shows it is completely impractical. Realising the mistake, he then made another promise, of providing ₹30,000 jobs in a bid to woo voters," the Minister said.

Earlier, in a written response, Mr. Nabin said the people of Bihar had consistently supported the NDA as they had seen visible change on the ground. "From better roads and bridges to improved connectivity, from education reforms to social welfare schemes, the focus has always been on inclusive development," he said.

Bihar voters must choose between NDA's *vikas* and INDIA bloc's *vinaash*: Nadda

Amit Bhelari
SASARAM

On a day when the Opposition INDIA bloc officially declared Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav as its chief ministerial face in Bihar, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president J.P. Nadda slammed Mr. Yadav and his father, RJD chief Lalu Prasad, for their alleged record of "corruption and jungle raj".

In Bihar to campaign for the ruling National Democratic Alliance's candidates in the Goh and Patepur Assembly constituencies, Mr. Nadda said the upcoming election presented Bihar voters with a choice between development and destruction.

"Today, Lalu and Tejashwi are talking about development. Let them tell the public that during their government, Bihar was in an era of corruption, jungle raj, and darkness. Even today, they have not apologised to the people of Bihar for this," Mr. Nadda said.

The Bihar Assembly election pits the NDA's *vikas* (development) against the INDIA bloc's *vinaash* (destruction), he said, adding that the RJD stands for *Rangdari Jungleraj Dadagiri* (extortion, lawlessness, and intimidation).



Union Minister J.P. Nadda speaks during a campaign rally in the Goh constituency in Aurangabad, Bihar on Thursday. X/ANI

'Rule of goons'

The BJP president pointed out that the RJD is fielding Osama Shahab, the son of don-turned-politician Mohammad Shahabuddin, in Raghunathpur seat.

"By giving a ticket to Shahabuddin's son, Lalu-Tejashwi have proven that even today these people are eager to bring back the rule of goons. These people do not want the development of Bihar; they want to push Bihar into the gutter of corruption. During their rule, looting, murder, and kidnapping had become a business," he alleged.

In a veiled attack on the RJD leader, who faces charges in a land-for-jobs scam case, Mr. Nadda asked whether those who take away even land for jobs would be able to provide employment. Mr. Yadav had recently announced that every household in Bihar would be given a government job if the INDIA bloc was voted to power.

"These people will never give jobs or security. They can only offer corruption, looting, kidnapping, murder, and jungle rule," Mr. Nadda said, telling the youth to ask their parents and elders about the "dark age" of Lalu Prasad's government before casting their votes. He claimed that under the NDA government, Bihar is moving towards development, along with peace, comfort, and harmony.

'Cong. insults Biharis'

The BJP leader also accused the Congress of insulting Biharis and being a "parasitic' party that finishes off its junior alliance partners.

"When Congress leaders come seeking votes, ask them this – did their Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy not say that the DNA of Telangana's people is superior to that of Bihar's? The Congress is allied with [Tamil Nadu CM M.K.] Stalin's party, whose MP Dayanidhi Maran remarked that people from Bihar come to Tamil Nadu to clean roads and bathrooms. Tell me, is it right to vote for those who insult and question the dignity of Bihar and its people?" Mr. Nadda asked.

Talk of 'jungle raj' to continue for the next 100 years: PM

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said the people of Bihar would never forget the "jungle raj", nor forgive the Opposition regardless of how much it attempted to conceal its "sins".

The term 'jungle raj' is associated with the rule of Lalu Prasad and his Rashtriya Janata Dal in the State back in the 1990s.

During an audio-conference interaction with booth-level Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers, Mr. Modi said: "The discussion on jungle raj will continue even for the next 100 years... People can never forgive those associated with jungle raj."

He asked the workers to arrange meetings in which the elderly could share their experiences of those days with the youth.

Stating that people of Bihar considered the Opposition's "*gatbandhan*" (alliance) a "*lathbandhan*", Mr. Modi said its leaders in Delhi and Bihar were out on bail. "How will they work for the people of Bihar in such a situation," he asked, referring to the alleged land-for-jobs scam in which a special Delhi court has framed charges against Mr. Prasad, his wife, Rabri Devi, and their son Tejashwi Yadav, besides others.

The Prime Minister said that earlier Maoists would not allow infrastructure development, terrorise businessmen, and destroy school buildings in the State. Under the NDA rule, he said, the Maoists were now on the verge of complete eradication.

A party worker recounted that during the "jungle raj" days, children and women stayed indoors after 4 p.m., and basic facilities such as electricity, schools, roads, and transport were in a terrible condition. Today, he said, the State was witnessing unprecedented development under the NDA government.

"Nitish *ji* and NDA have worked hard to bring Bihar out of darkness. Today in Bihar, there is no 'jungle raj' but a rule of public trust. Today, every child of Bihar proudly says, 'I am a Bihari,'" said the Prime Minister. He accused the Opposition and its allies across the country of abusing the people of Bihar.



Narendra Modi

He asks BJP workers to arrange meetings in which the elderly could share their experiences of those days with the youth

INBRIEF



Over 100 hospitalised after use of carbide guns in Bhopal

More than 100 persons, most of them children aged between 8 and 14, were hospitalised in Bhopal and Vidisha district in Madhya Pradesh due to injuries sustained after using calcium carbide guns during Deepavali, officials said on Thursday. While 60 are admitted in government hospitals in Bhopal, 50 are recuperating in facilities in Vidisha, including five with eye injuries, they said. "These crude guns, made using a gas lighter, a plastic pipe, and calcium carbide, are in vogue this Deepavali. The calcium carbide in the gun produces acetylene gas when it meets water and explodes upon contact with a spark," an official said.

AICC appoints new in-charge for Indian Youth Congress

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday appointed Manish Sharma as the All India Congress Committee (AICC) in-charge of the Indian Youth Congress (IYC), replacing incumbent Krishna Allavuru. Mr. Allavuru, who has been in-charge of the IYC for the past seven years, is also the AICC in-charge for Bihar. A statement from party general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal thanked Mr. Allavuru for his contributions and said that he has been relieved of his IYC duties immediately. He continues to be the party's Bihar in-charge.

Tri-services to get systems, platforms for ₹79,000 cr.

The acquisitions are designed to enhance lethality, mobility and intelligence-gathering capabilities across the services; Defence Acquisition Council, chaired by Rajnath, approves the proposals

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI



The Anti Tank Guided Missile Nag Mk II being successfully tested from a light tank developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation. PTI

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, on Thursday approved a series of capital acquisition proposals worth around ₹79,000 crore aimed at strengthening the operational capabilities of the Army, Navy and Air Force.

The Defence Ministry said the approvals granted during a meeting at South Block would cover a wide spectrum of platforms and systems designed to enhance lethality, mobility, and intelligence-gathering capabilities across the Services.

For the Army, the DAC accorded Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for the procurement of the Nag missile system (tracked) Mk-II (NAMIS), ground-based mobile ELINT System (GBMES), and high-mobility vehicles (HMVs) with material handling cranes.

The NAMIS (Tracked) will bolster the Army's ability to destroy enemy armoured vehicles, bunkers, and other fortified positions, while the GBMES will provide round-the-clock electronic intelligence on enemy emitters. The induction of HMVs is expected to significantly enhance logistic support in challenging terrains.

For the Navy, the AoN was granted for the acquisition of landing platform docks (LPDs), 30 mm naval surface guns, advanced light weight torpedoes (ALWTs), electro-optical infrared search-and-track systems, and smart ammunition for 76 mm super rapid gun mounts.

The LPDs will augment the Navy's amphibious warfare capabilities and enable it to undertake joint operations with the Army and Air Force. They will also enhance India's capacity to conduct peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief (HADR) missions. The indigenously developed ALWT by the DRDO's Naval Science and Technological Laboratory is capable of engaging conventional, nuclear, and midget submarines.

For the Indian Air Force, the AoN was accorded for the collaborative long-range target saturation/destruction system (CLRTS/DS) and other related systems. The CLRTS/DS features autonomous take-off and landing, navigation, target detection and payload delivery capabilities, aimed at augmenting the IAF's long-range precision engagement capacity.

The approvals reflect the government's continuing emphasis on modernisation, self-reliance and indigenisation under the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiative, officials said.

90% of Gaganyaan development work done: ISRO chief

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU



V. Narayanan

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman V. Narayanan on Thursday said that about 90% of the development work on the Gaganyaan mission had been completed.

"The Gaganyaan mission is going on very well. A lot of technological development has to take place. Number one, the rocket has to be human-rated, the life support system, the crew escape system and of course, human-centric products. I can say today that approximately 90% of the development work has been completed," Mr. Narayanan told presspersons in Bengaluru. He added that the crewed mission to launch the Indian astronauts into space would take place in 2027 and prior to that, ISRO would undertake three uncrewed missions.

"Three uncrewed missions have to be accomplished, the first uncrewed mission with the humanoid Vyomitra is expected to take flight by the end of this year. We want to accomplish the crewed mission by 2027," he said.

The Gaganyaan project envisages demonstration of human spaceflight capability by launching a crew of three members to an orbit of 400 km for a three-day mission and bringing them back safely to Earth by landing in Indian sea waters.

On the NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite launched on July 30, 2025, Mr. Narayanan said that the satellite was healthy and it would be declared operational in another 10-15 days.

NISAR is the first satellite to observe the earth with a dual-frequency Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) – NASA's L-band and ISRO's S-band – both using NASA's 12-metre unfurlable mesh reflector antenna, integrated with ISRO's modified I3K satellite bus.

DCGI brings in stricter norms for tracking supply chain of high-risk solvents

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI



A digital monitoring system on the ONDLS portal has to be set up for monitoring the supply chain of the high-risk solvents. GETTY IMAGES

The Drugs Controller General (India) has directed digital monitoring on the Online National Drugs Licensing System (ONDLS) for tracking the supply chain of high-risk solvents.

The order, issued earlier this week, comes following serious safety concerns after the death of over 20 children under the age of five years allegedly due to contamination of cough syrups with diethylene glycol (DEG) recently in Madhya Pradesh. DEG is a toxic colourless and odourless liquid with a sweet taste, often used as an industrial solvent.

ONDLS is a single-window digital platform in India for processing drug- and cosmetic-related applications for manufacturing and sales licences, and various certificates.

In his letter, DCGI head Rajeev Singh Raghuvanshi noted, "It has been decided that a Digital Monitoring System on the ONDLS portal needs to be established for monitoring the supply chain as well as the quality of the high-risk solvents, including Propylene Glycol."

Dr. Raghuvanshi said that as per the latest order, all the manufacturers of pharma grade solvents should obtain manufacturing licence through the ONDLS portal. The letter noted that in case the manufacturer already held the manufacturing licence, he must register on the ONDLS portal and submit the data through Old Licence Management under ONDLS.

India, Bhutan review security cooperation, border management

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India and Bhutan reviewed border management and security in a meeting held at Thimphu from October 16-17, a statement by the Union Home Ministry said on Thursday.

The Ministry said the two countries had reviewed bilateral security cooperation and border management issues, including mobile signal spillover, future road map for integrated check posts, maintenance of boundary pillars, and cross-border movement.

Discussions covered capacity building for Bhutan's police. The delegations expressed satisfaction at the cordial and constructive discussions and reiterated their resolve to work together for a safe, secure and prosperous border, the Ministry said. This was the 14th India-Bhutan Border Management and Security meeting. The last meeting was held in 2019.

The Indian delegation was led by Rajendra Kumar, Secretary, Department of Border Management, Home Ministry, while the Bhutanese side was headed by Sonam Wangyel, Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs.

India shares a 699-km border with Bhutan, running along the States of Sikkim, West Bengal, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. "Reaffirming their strong friendship, India and Bhutan committed to deepening cooperation across traditional and emerging areas... Their enduring partnership, rooted in shared geography, culture, and people-to-people ties, continues to serve as a model for regional cooperation," the Ministry said.

Bengal police nab suspect after desecration of idol causes tension in Kakdwip

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

Two cases have been registered so far, one for road blockade and another for vandalism

The West Bengal Police have arrested one person in connection with the desecration of an idol at the Suryanagar gram panchayat in South 24 Parganas of the State. The arrest follows a protest by the local people and the BJP against the desecration and its transport in a prison van.

Superintendent of Police, Sunderbans, Koteswara Rao said on Thursday that Narayan Halder, a villager, was arrested. "We brought him to the police station for questioning... He admitted to desecrating the idol while drunk," Mr. Rao said.

On Wednesday evening, tensions flared in the Kakdwip region over the desecration of the idol of Goddess Kali at Uttar Chandannagar Naskarpara village. Protests erupted immediately after the idol was found broken, with people blocking the National Highway. Shortly after, the police force allegedly placed the idol inside a prison van, leading to a row.

"The police forces were trying to persuade them constantly to lift the blockade because ambulances were stuck. The idol also had to be taken into safe custody for the protection of its sanctity. Then we acted swiftly and placed the idol safely in our police van... We also did not want the stone throwing to further affect the idol," Mr. Rao said on Thursday.

In total, two cases have been registered – one for road blockade and another for vandalism. No arrests have yet been made in the road blockade case, but the probe is on. We are also examining the presence of CCTV footage from the area," the West Bengal Police said on social media on Thursday evening.

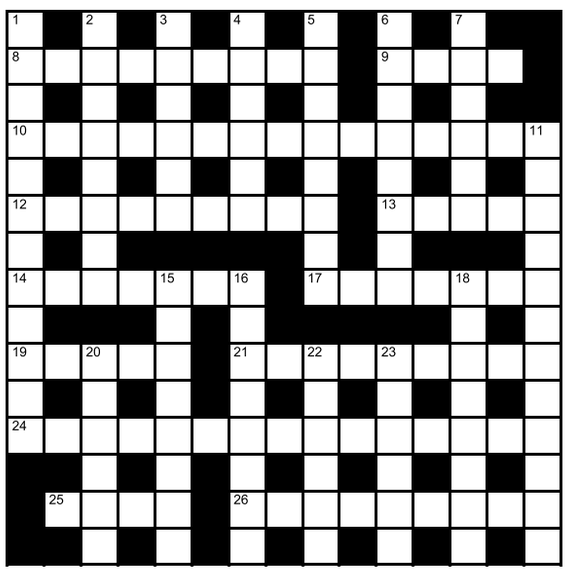
Shortly after the incident, the BJP's West Bengal unit had taken to social media protesting against the desecration and the shifting of the idol. The information and technology chief of the BJP, Amit Malviya, accused district police officers of "fleeing the scene with hundreds of policemen, taking away the idol of Maa Kali in a prison van."

TH CROSSWORD + 14621

(set by Crescent)

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

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

8 Conformity as soon as controls last long (9)
9 Viewed first person declared dead (4)
10 Rank highly appalling, a boy regrets test (3,5,5,2)
12 Avoid flagging sponge to wrap fine ring containing diamonds (4-5)
13 Sauce placed over gold dish (5)
14 Heraldic bearing League adopts ends in uprising (7)
17 Extent of length say a cart may be wheeled (7)
19 Private free quarters fixed (5)
21 Fruit taste of plums softly penetrating wine and beer (4,5)
24 A new take, worried about the Internet maybe (4,4,7)
25 Combination of parties pass bill originally sent back (4)
26 Sentry for one English queen filling drink, that lady's love? (9)

Down

1 Cuckoo rues singer's opening with 'Ah Poor Bird' (5,7)
2 Darling finally tiring of sex about to quibble (8)
3 Forward unit, section returning military status report (6)
4 Advanced operating room at hospital (6)
5 Sly Wellington circles it from behind (8)
6 Not satisfactory to live above means? (5,3)
7 Uncover cut red meat (6)
11 University in New York, one very liberal perhaps (3,5,4)
15 Boring without a spring clearance (8)
16 Not so much taking a rupee, good element of expansive generosity (8)
18 State accepts suggestion of pardon for informer (8)
20 Pest following chaps happily skipping line (6)
22 Jupiter's planet somewhat overshadowed by Mars in open-endedness (6)
23 Churches have these reforms broadcast (6)

SUDOKU

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

No.SS6679 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to previous puzzle

R	E	S	P	E	C	T	S	
E		O		V		I		
T	I	L	L	A	G	E	S	
Y		O		D		P		H
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T	I	D	I	E	R		E	C
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R	O	C	K	E	T		C	O

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Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Three types of people

Thanneerpalli Sri Krishnan Swamy said in a discourse that people can be divided into three types: Theists, Atheists, and Theist-cum-Atheists. Theists believe in the existence of God, rebirth, and similar ideas. They think God helps in distress and remain humble in happiness. Atheists do not believe in God and think events happen only by nature. They focus on reality, may believe people should stay as they are, and aim for the welfare of society. The last group believes in God but not in the Sastras, Vedantas, or other codes. They think the mind alone is enough for one's actions.

Tiruvalluvar says only those who attain the divine feet of God can be free from sorrows. Worldly desires are impermanent. Yet, our lives are filled with desires, which are the root cause of sorrows. Only the blessings of God are permanent. If people develop the thought that God exists, their worries and sorrows will lessen. The soul, also called life air or atma, is permanent. It dwells in our physical body, which is perishable. Just as the self with a body passes through childhood, youth, and old age, it passes into another body after death. A wise man is not deluded by that. The soul acts according to the deeds of previous births. The physical body contains Sattva, Rajas, and Tamo gunas in different amounts for each person. This is why people find it hard to understand God's attributes.

Nammazhwar says it is hard to understand the divinity of God, who is Omniscient and Omnipresent. God is the one who guides us all. Our deeds are obstacles to reaching Him. Lord Krishna advises us to surrender at His feet and leave everything. He promises to free us from all bonds.

Life after mastectomy: navigating challenges, heralding new beginnings

India has taken giant strides in creating breast cancer awareness and promoting early detection, and survival rates are improving significantly; but true healing includes emotional rehabilitation, body acceptance, and a compassionate support system that acknowledges the full weight of what women go through after a mastectomy

Shraddha Modi

When I meet a woman diagnosed with breast cancer, the first thing I notice is not fear, but determination. Beneath the disbelief, fear, and anger that follow later, lies quiet resilience. That strength becomes evident when we start discussing treatment options, particularly a mastectomy – the surgical removal of one or both breasts, either to treat or prevent breast cancer.

For most women, a mastectomy is more than just a procedure. It represents survival, and also a profound personal loss. The breast, associated with femininity, motherhood, and identity, holds an emotional significance that medicine cannot measure. When a woman agrees to part with it to save her life, she is making one of the bravest decisions imaginable.

The emotional landscape

The journey after a mastectomy is complex – it involves the mind and the body. While the physical scar is visible, the emotional one often is not.

Women may withdraw from daily activities, avoid social interactions, or decline invitations to family gatherings. They may fear judgement, feel self-conscious, or worry about how others – children, spouses, friends, colleagues – perceive their changed bodies. This self-consciousness can amplify feelings of isolation and anxiety.

One of the most profound challenges is intimacy. Cancer itself can disrupt relationships; but breast cancer and mastectomy often affect intimacy on an entirely different level. Women may feel disconnected from their partner or fearful of sexual rejection, and partners may struggle to understand the emotional and physical adjustments required.

Counselling, therefore, must extend beyond the patient. Involving spouses and close family members in therapy or support sessions is crucial. When couples communicate openly, with guidance from professionals, intimacy can gradually be rebuilt, and partners can become active allies in the healing process. Support groups for families also help loved ones understand the realities of recovery, fostering a compassionate environment at home.

The physical recovery

Physical recovery after a mastectomy requires patience. Some women experience stiffness, numbness, or swelling in the arm due to lymphoedema. Simple physiotherapy routines, arm elevation, and gentle stretching exercises can help restore strength and flexibility.

Lifestyle, too, becomes part of the healing process. A balanced diet, moderate exercise, adequate sleep, and regular follow-ups with the oncology team are essential not only for recovery but for preventing recurrence.



Health campaign: CanWalk, a breast cancer awareness walkathon organised by the Thrissur Obstetrics and Gynaecology Society in Kerala. K.K.NAJEEB

A balanced diet, moderate exercise, adequate sleep, and regular follow-ups with the oncology team are essential not only for recovery but for preventing recurrence

This is also a time to reflect on long-term wellness – to eat consciously, manage stress, and cultivate habits that nurture both physical and emotional health.

Practical tips

Reconnecting socially: Start small: Attend close family gatherings before larger social events. Bring a trusted friend or family member for support in public spaces. Give yourself permission to decline invitations until you feel ready – there's no timeline for comfort.

Navigating intimacy: Open communication with your partner is key. Share fears, needs, and feelings. Consider couple counselling to rebuild emotional and physical closeness. Take small steps to re-ignite intimacy with touch, conversation, or non-sexual affection before moving to sexual activity.

Family involvement: Educate family members about the physical and emotional aspects of recovery. Encourage loved ones to attend counselling or support group sessions with you. Empathy and patience from family members significantly boost emotional recovery.

Self-compassion and body acceptance: Practice self-care routines with gentle exercises, skincare, and mindful activities. Mirror exercises or journaling can help rebuild confidence. Reframe your "normal" as life after mastectomy as a new chapter.

Professional support: Physiotherapy, nutrition counselling, and mental health support are integral parts of recovery. Survivor networks can provide inspiration, guidance, and a sense of belonging.

Redefining normal

Advances in reconstructive surgery have transformed what life after a mastectomy can look like. Women can now choose from several options, from silicone implants to autologous reconstruction using their own tissue, allowing for a more natural look and feel. These procedures can be performed immediately during the mastectomy or at a later stage, depending on the treatment plan and patient preference.

But reconstruction isn't the only path to healing. Many women choose to "go flat," opting not to reconstruct; and that is equally empowering. This choice, when made freely and without societal pressure, reflects a powerful acceptance of one's new body and identity.

A mastectomy creates a new normal and I have seen many patients rediscover themselves in extraordinary ways – through art, writing, community service, or advocacy. Some become mentors for newly-diagnosed patients; others focus on simply living more intentionally.

One of my patients, a 38-year-old mother of two, once told me: "Cancer took my breast, but it gave me back my voice." That sentence has stayed with me because it captures what many survivors come to realise – that survival is not the end of the story, but the beginning of a different, deeper one.

Awareness, diagnosis, support

A mastectomy may change how a body looks, but it rarely diminishes the courage, grace, or spirit of the woman who lives through it.

Life after mastectomy is not one of loss, but of resilience – of women who emerge stronger, wiser, and ready to live again, on their own new terms.

(Dr. Shraddha Modi is associate consultant, breast oncology & oncoplastic surgery, Narayana Health City, Bengaluru. shraddha.modi.dr@narayanahealth.org)

THE GIST

The journey after a mastectomy is complex — it involves the mind and the body. While the physical scar is visible, the emotional one often is not

One of the most profound challenges is intimacy. Counselling, therefore, must extend beyond the patient. Involving spouses and close family members in therapy or support sessions is crucial

Advances in reconstructive surgery have transformed what life after a mastectomy can look like. Women can now choose from several options, from silicone implants to autologous reconstruction using their own tissue, allowing for a more natural look and feel

Comprehensive support after child's long stay at ICU is often missing: experts

Athira Elssa Johnson

Suchitra Ranjit, head, paediatric ICU, Apollo Children's Hospitals, Chennai, recalls a young patient who survived a severe episode of dengue complicated by multi-organ failure and a brain haemorrhage. A year after discharge, the child regained physical strength but continued to experience separation anxiety and struggled to reintegrate into the school routine. "Among ICU survivors, 10-20% exhibit features of post-intensive-care syndrome (PICS)," she notes. "The spectrum ranges from mild sleep or anxiety issues to ongoing medical problems or device dependence."

This case is emblematic of the challenges children face once an acute medical crisis is over – a phase often overshadowed by the relief of survival. Children who leave the ICU after a long stay often struggle to go back to 'normal' with recovery periods extending beyond the hospital ward and impinging into daily life.

Advances in paediatric intensive care have markedly improved survival rates; often above 95% in many centres. Yet surviving critical illness is only the first step; the longer-term consequences can be profound. PICS in children encompasses physical, cognitive, and psychological impairments. Krithika P., consultant paediatrician, says that children often face lingering weakness, feeding difficulties, or delayed returns to school and play, while parents contend with exhaustion, fear, and anxiety.



Lingering impact: Surviving critical illness is only the first step; the longer-term consequences can be profound. Post-intensive-care syndrome in children encompasses physical, cognitive, and psychological impairments. FILE PHOTO

Evidence underscores the prevalence of these issues. A Thailand study of children discharged from ICU found that 82.1% had at least one abnormal domain: 64.2% with physical morbidity, 26.3% cognitive issues, 13.7% with mental health problems, and 38.9% with social difficulties. A systematic review spanning 31 studies showed that between 5.3 and 88% of children experienced psychological challenges up to 15 years post-ICU, with many exhibiting lower IQ scores and more emotional or behavioural difficulties compared with peers.

Manimegalai T.O., consultant, paediatrics, SIMS Hospital, Chennai, points out that, for some children, PICS manifests as persistent fatigue, organ dysfunction, or long-term dependence on medical technology, while others experience memory lapses, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and post-traumatic stress. Socially, these children can feel isolated, and family dynamics may be strained.

Prompt identification of physical, cognitive, and psychological after-effects is essential. Weakness and fatigue often appear within days; cognitive challenges emerge with schoolwork, and emotional issues may surface weeks later.

Dr. Krithika emphasises that regular follow-ups, physiotherapy, developmental assessments, and emotional support enable children to gradually regain strength and confidence. Dr. Ranjit adds that structured post-ICU care remains rare, but awareness of PICS in children is vital to reducing long-term morbidity.

Scalable solutions

In settings with limited resources, the priority remains life-saving interventions. Yet models for post-ICU care are achievable. Dr. Ranjit suggests multidisciplinary teamwork, hybrid clinics, telehealth, and community education. Dr. Krithika recommends weekly PICU follow-up clinics, short rehabilitation plans, and caregiver training at discharge to prevent long-term complications. Teleconsultations can identify early warning signs, even for families living far from tertiary care centres.

Dr. Manimegalai emphasises formalised transitions, including detailed discharge summaries, phased follow-up at 2-4 weeks, 3, 6, and 12 months, virtual clinics, and training for primary care providers, ensuring continuity of care across settings.

Reintegration into school is one of the most significant hurdles. "The best outcomes occur when medical teams, school staff, and families collaborate closely," says Dr. Ranjit. Social workers or nurses can liaise between teachers, parents, and doctors, ensuring seamless support.

Dr. Krithika advises flexible attendance, shorter school days, and reduced academic load. At home, Dr. Manimegalai recommends that parents practise social skills, encourage communication, and stay actively involved in their child's school life to rebuild confidence and support emotional adaptation.

Policy-level interventions

Systemic interventions are key to bridging the gap between survival and true recovery.

National follow-up guidelines from the Indian Academy of Pediatrics and dedicated paediatric rehabilitation teams, including telehealth options, could ensure equitable access to care.

While advances in paediatric intensive care have dramatically improved survival, the journey to full recovery is nuanced and ongoing.

Addressing PICS requires early detection, structured follow-up, and active involvement of families and schools.

(athira.elssa@thehindu.co.in)

Synthetic media

The requirement of labelling AI-generated imagery is a good start

Artificial Intelligence (AI)-generated deepfakes, or synthetically generated images and videos, have been proliferating on social media ever since generative AI made photorealistic content as easy as typing a description of a given scene. As this technology developed rapidly over 2024, concerns were raised over electoral integrity and disinformation amplified with the aid of such AI-generated content. While those concerns did not reach the peaks of the feared outcomes, AI "slop" has become pervasive, from low-budget advertisements to high-budget political caricatures. In this context, the Union government's move to propose mandatory labelling of AI-generated content with an amendment to the IT Rules, 2021, advances the global conversation somewhat in navigating this phenomenon. It is unclear how big the problem of being unable to identify AI slop is for Internet users in India – also the world's second largest AI user base. Two key factors tilt the scales in favour of acting: as with pre-AI disinformation and misinformation, lies and misleading content may at any time explode into virality, granting them a disproportionate place in the democratic setup; and the technology to create photorealistic content that deceives many people is improving every week. Public personalities have frequently complained, sometimes in court, of the usurpation of their likenesses in the service of unscrupulous projects.

Unlike mandatory smoking warnings at the cinema and on OTT streaming services, an intervention that had little industry buy-in before being imposed on entertainment producers and consumers alike with nothing to reliably show for impact, labelling has been offered up by large social media and AI firms from the very beginning of synthetic content's increasing accessibility. Meta, Inc. decided last year to label AI-generated content on Facebook, while the Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity (C2PA) has brought industry players together for working on "digital provenance" issues, borrowing a concept from the art appraisal world. Subordinate legislation may not have been the ideal instrument to effect this change – the IT Rules already regulate streaming services, social media content removals and the now-prohibited real money gaming industry, all without being tested in Parliament. At some point, these rules need to be explicitly considered by people's representatives. Technology policymakers have mused throughout the Internet-era that regulation lags behind innovation. The government must be willing to dynamically follow up this proposal with agile action both in terms of relaxing rules that have outlived their utility, and introducing new ones according to requirement.

Good job

Factories must provide facilities for women employed in hazardous jobs

Small, incremental steps are what set a flywheel in motion. As far as labour laws go, the Tamil Nadu government's proposal to allow women to be employed in about 20 operations listed as 'dangerous', and from which they were prohibited from being employed in so far, is progressive. The government has proposed amendments to the Tamil Nadu Factories Rules, 1950, to allow women to take up even jobs titled hazardous or dangerous, when these Rules come into practice; only pregnant women and young persons will be barred from these jobs. Earlier, the government had amended the Rules to allow women to be deployed on the night shift in factories, changing the historic practice of keeping them out. In this recent amendment, which was hosted in the public realm for feedback in September, factories are also required to get the woman's consent in writing for the night shift. These are changes that have come literally, rule by rule, but in effect, the government has shrugged off its patriarchal stance here, freeing up women from the perception that they are vulnerable and weak and will have to be protected by the State. The operations which are set to be opened for women include electrolytic process, glass manufacture, manufacture and treatment of lead, generation of gas and petroleum, blasting, liming and tanning of raw hides and skins, graphite powdering, manufacture of dichromates and carcinogenic dye intermediates, fireworks and match factories, manufacture of manganese, dangerous pesticides, use of benzene, and operations involving high noise and vibration levels.

Removing legal barriers is the first step toward implementing progressive measures that will facilitate more equitable workplaces. However crucial this first step is in rectifying age-old patriarchy-reinforced assigned gender roles in society and industry, it is not enough. This should be followed up by provision of adequate amenities and facilities for women, including separate toilets, changing rooms, and closed areas for conducting medical checks which are mandated for such industries, besides drop home facilities in places that have hitherto had no women workers at all. This will clearly require some investment, close involvement of the management, and at least initially, active monitoring by State labour authorities. The government must also take care to ensure that women who are in circumstances that might not enable their participation in these jobs are not forced into them, or penalised for not opting for these tasks. Without this being set in place, any progressive measure to dismantle the barriers that keep Indian society from being a more equitable job market will turn out to be a damp squib.

The UN matters, as a symbol of possibility



Shashi Tharoor

is a fourth-term Member of Parliament (Congress) for Thiruvananthapuram, chair of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs and a former United Nations Under-Secretary-General

Eighty years ago, in the aftermath of the most devastating war in human history, the nations of the world came together to forge a new compact – one that would seek to prevent future conflict, promote human dignity and uphold the rule of law across borders. The United Nations (UN) was born not of triumph, but of tragedy; not as a monument to power, but as a mechanism for peace.

As someone who served the UN for nearly three decades, from 1978 to 2007, I witnessed first-hand its evolution from a Cold War battleground to a post-Cold War laboratory of global cooperation. I saw the UN falter in Rwanda and Srebrenica, and rise to the occasion in East Timor and Namibia. I saw it struggle with bureaucracy and politics, yet persist in its mission to feed the hungry, shelter the displaced, and give voice to the voiceless. The UN is not perfect – nor was it ever meant to be – but it remains indispensable.

At 80, the UN stands at a crossroads. The world it was designed to serve has changed beyond recognition. The bipolar order of 1945 gave way to American unipolarity, which in turn has yielded to a fragmented, multipolar landscape. New powers have emerged, old alliances have frayed, and transnational challenges –from climate change to cyber warfare – defy the boundaries of traditional diplomacy. The UN must adapt or risk irrelevance.

A shifting global landscape

The most striking transformation in recent years has been the erosion of the post-war consensus. The institutions built to uphold liberal internationalism are under strain, not only from authoritarian regimes but also from within democracies themselves. Multilateralism is increasingly viewed with suspicion, and nationalism –once a force for liberation – is now often wielded as a cudgel against cooperation.

In this context, the UN's foundational principles – sovereign equality, peaceful resolution of disputes, and collective security – are more vital than ever. But they are also more contested. The Security Council, for instance, remains frozen in time, reflecting the power dynamics of 1945 rather than the realities of 2025. Calls for reform have grown louder, especially from countries such as India, Germany, Japan, Brazil, and South Africa, which rightly seek a seat at the table commensurate with their global standing.

India's own case is compelling. As the world's most populous nation and largest democracy, a major contributor to UN peacekeeping, and a rising economic power, India embodies the spirit of the UN Charter. Despite all this, it remains outside the permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) – a glaring anomaly that undermines the Council's legitimacy and effectiveness.

The United Nations, at 80, is a work in progress, with a vital role in global affairs

Despite its shortcomings, the UN continues to play a vital role in global affairs. Its humanitarian agencies – UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF – deliver life-saving aid in conflict zones and disaster-stricken regions. Its peacekeepers, though stretched thin, provide a modicum of stability in fragile states. Its convening power allows nations to negotiate, deliberate, and sometimes even agree.

The UN's normative influence is perhaps its most underappreciated asset. Through its declarations, treaties, and resolutions, it has helped shape global norms on human rights, gender equality and sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, represent a bold vision for inclusive growth and planetary stewardship – one that transcends borders and ideologies.

Yet, the UN's ability to act is often constrained by the very member-states that it serves. When powerful nations flout international law or use their vetoes to shield allies (or worse, themselves), the UN is left hamstrung. When funding is politicised or withheld, its agencies struggle to deliver. The UN is not an abstract entity. It is a mirror of the world, reflecting its differences and inequities, and the will (or lack thereof) of its members.

The challenge of strategic autonomy

India's foreign policy has long emphasised sovereignty and strategic autonomy, resisting alignment with any single power bloc. This approach has gained renewed relevance in a world marked by great-power competition and regional instability. Alongside other rising and middle powers, India seeks to protect regional interests without being drawn into rivalries among the United States, China or Russia.

This posture reflects a broader critique of global governance structures, particularly the UNSC. India has consistently called for reform that reflects contemporary realities – one that is not merely powerful but principled, inclusive and representative. The current system, shaped by post-war hierarchies, remains inequitable and unresponsive to diverse perspectives.

A reimagined global order must embrace plurality – not just of power, but of experience and voice. India's vision is not of dominance, but of dignity: a world where sovereignty is respected, cooperation is valued and institutions are shaped by the many, not the few.

So what must be done? First, the UNSC must be reformed to reflect contemporary realities. This is not merely a matter of equity. It is a matter of efficacy. A UNSC that excludes key stakeholders cannot hope to command legitimacy or deliver results. Second, the UN must invest in agility. In a world of fast-moving crises, responsiveness is key. Streamlining decision-making, empowering field operations, and embracing digital tools are essential steps. Third, the UN must reclaim its moral voice. In an age of disinformation and polarisation, the UN's ability to speak truth to power – to uphold universal values and defend the vulnerable – is more important than ever. This requires courage, clarity and consistency.

Finally, member-states must recommit to the UN's mission. The organisation cannot function without political will and financial support. It needs champions, not just critics; partners, not just participants. Budgetary shortfalls, thanks to defaults by the U.S. and others of their dues, have forced the Secretariat to implement painful staff reductions, freeze hiring, and scale back core programmes. The irony is stark: the institution most needed to address global crises is being weakened by the very powers that helped create it.

A mandate for the future as renewal, reform

The UN at 80 is neither a relic nor a panacea. It is a work in progress – a reflection of our collective aspirations and contradictions. Its failures are real, but so are its achievements. To dismiss the UN is to abandon the idea that humanity can govern itself through dialogue rather than domination.

As someone who spent much of his adult life in its service, I remain convinced that the UN matters. It matters to the refugee seeking shelter, to the peacekeeper standing guard, to the diplomat negotiating a fragile truce. It matters to all of us who believe that cooperation is not weakness, and that justice is not a luxury.

The United Nations remains an indispensable symbol – not of perfection, but of possibility. As Dag Hammarskjöld said, it was meant "not to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell". The UN is both stage and actor: a stage for its member-states, and an actor when they empower it to defend our common humanity. Ironically, the actor is often blamed for the failures of the stage. As it marks its 80th anniversary, its challenge is to become more representative, responsive, and resilient in a world that needs principled global cooperation more than ever.

Immunity of international organisations is no free pass



Prabhash Ranjan

is Professor and Vice Dean (Research), Jindal Global Law School

International cooperation between countries often leads to the creation of international organisations (IOs) to administer the treaties that states sign and ratify. These IOs, or Intergovernmental Organisations, may operate at the multilateral level, such as the United Nations (UN), or at the regional level, such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

While the existence of these IOs is a fact of life, a question of contemporary relevance that has not attracted much attention is whether IOs are subject to the jurisdiction of the domestic courts of the host state where they are based, or whether they enjoy immunity from such jurisdiction. This question is particularly relevant for India as it is home to a number of IOs.

The immunities that different IOs enjoy differ. An IO's immunity is to be determined through a careful reading of the treaty establishing the IO, the headquarters agreement (an agreement between the IO and the host state), and the domestic legislation, if any, that created the IO. The theoretical basis for an IO's immunity from the jurisdiction of the host state's domestic courts is based on the 'functional necessity' thesis.

Accordingly, immunity to IOs is crucial to ensure that they can perform their functions smoothly. While this is generally true, the functional necessity thesis, as international lawyers such as Jan Klabbers point out, is not without its problems. For instance, what happens when an IO abuses its powers by acting in an arbitrary or discriminatory fashion? Can the IO still hide under the cloak of immunity in the name of functionality?

Judicial practice of other countries

In numerous countries, a typical case that their national courts have handled is whether they have jurisdiction to hear employment disputes between a staff member and the IO. In all such disputes, IOs have claimed immunity from the court's jurisdiction. If an IO wishes to claim immunity from domestic courts for employment disputes, it should provide an alternative mechanism to its staff to settle disputes that they may have with the organisation. The International Court of Justice, as early as 1954, in the *Effect of Awards Case*, upheld the creation of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal, a body created by the UN, for the purpose of providing an orderly judicial mechanism to settle staff disputes.

The issue acquires relevance as India is home to a number of international organisations

Traditionally, courts in several jurisdictions have dismissed claims brought by staff members against an IO on the principle of functional immunity. However, more recently, as international lawyer August Reinisch demonstrates, national courts have begun to assess the 'human rights impact' of their immunity decisions. The critical question is whether the court's denial of jurisdiction to hear a claim brought against an IO by a staff member will render the petitioner without remedies. If yes, it would constitute a denial of justice.

Alternative remedy

Arguably, if an IO provides for an alternative dispute settlement mechanism for its staff members, the domestic court should deny jurisdiction, upholding the IO's immunity. However, a mere theoretical possibility of an alternative dispute settlement is not enough. As the Italian Supreme Court held in *Drago vs International Plant Genetic Resources Institute*, the alternative remedy should be an independent and impartial judicial remedy to settle staff disputes.

Likewise, a Belgian court in *Siedler vs Western European Union* abjured the IO's immunity because the alternative remedy did not promise a fair trial. In *Banque africaine de développement vs Degboe*, a French court rejected the immunity argument of the because no alternative remedy existed. The bank had created an alternative remedy after the petitioner's dismissal, which the petitioner could not access. In short, what courts worldwide are increasingly assessing is not just the availability of the IOs' alternative dispute settlement but also its adequacy, judged by the principles of natural justice. To better understand this point, let us assume that the domestic legislation creating the IO or the headquarters agreement between the IO and the host state provides for arbitration as an alternative method to resolve employment-related disputes. Will this be sufficient for the IO to claim immunity from the domestic court's jurisdiction? The answer is no. The theoretical availability of arbitration is a starting point.

Vital questions

The key question is about what steps the IO has taken to effectively implement this alternative remedy. For example, has the IO established a precise mechanism for conducting arbitration to address employment disputes within its rules, regulations and by-laws? Has it appointed a panel of independent arbitrators? Has the IO been affiliated with any arbitral institution and adopted its rules? Moreover, has it expressly waived its immunity regarding the supervisory jurisdiction of domestic courts in the arbitration of employment disputes? If not, arbitration will not be an effective remedy.

In other words, has the IO taken steps to ensure that this alternative remedy provides reasonable and effective access to a dispute settlement mechanism that is fair for the adjudication of employment disputes? If the answer is no, the IO cannot reasonably claim immunity in employment disputes before domestic courts.

In sum, the immunity of IOs should be respected. Nonetheless, immunity should not become a licence for an IO to abuse public power, leading to grave injustice.

The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'A great conversation'

Every speech or conversation by the President of the U.S., Donald Trump, is becoming a cause for embarrassment for India (Front page, "Modi, Trump speak; U.S., India call accounts differ", October 23). But in the fluid geopolitical scenario, India does not have many diplomatic choices. However, Mr. Trump's frequent statements about Russian oil and the India-Pakistan conflict should be countered with facts. India needs to take an active part in the resolution of geopolitical issues that are transforming the global order.

Kosaraju Chandramouli,
Hyderabad

Lokpal and luxury cars

The Lokpal's decision to 'look for' seven luxury BMW cars is shocking. The urge for extravagant spending by an institution that has the mandate to expose corruption is ironic. At a time when people expect transparency, accountability and frugality from public institutions, such ostentatious spending sends out a wrong message.

Kurian Mathew,
Kochi, Kerala

Govardhan Asrani

The passing of veteran actor and comedian Govardhan Asrani on October 20 is a loss. His craft influenced the evolution of comedy — there was dignity, subtlety and art. His contribution to Indian cinema lies not just in laughter but also in consistency — the mark of a true entertainer who evolved with time yet stayed rooted in charm and simplicity.

Jubel D'Cruz,
Mumbai

Govardhan Asrani's take on Hitler, in the epoch-making *Sholay*, where he was cast as a British jailor, was a laugh riot. His gravelly voice, facial contortions and body language endeared him to audiences.

C.V. Aravind,
Bengaluru

The veteran actor leaves behind a legacy filled with humour, talent and unforgettable moments.

K. Chidanand Kumar,
Bengaluru

From his iconic comic roles in *Sholay*, *Chupke Chupke*, and *Aaj Ki Taaza Khabar* to his memorable character parts, he brought laughter and life to every frame. His natural charm and perfect timing made him a legend.

Mani Ramani Jayanthi,
Nerul, Navi Mumbai

Corrections & Clarifications

A correction to a correction. The headline of a Front Page report (October 22, 2025) was right — "Deepavali fireworks send Delhi air quality inching to a five-year *low*".

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

Should India take global leadership on climate change?

PARLEY



Hisham Mundol
Chief Adviser, India, Environmental Defense Fund



Ulka Kelkar
Executive Program Director - Climate, Economics and Finance, WRI India

Ahead of Conference of the Parties (COP)30 in November in Belém, Brazil, global headwinds have left many developed countries in the West increasingly reluctant to take on the mantle of climate leadership. India, like other countries, is expected to update climate commitments and present an adaption plan. Should India take global leadership on climate change? Hisham Mundol and Ulka Kelkar discuss the question in a conversation moderated by **Jacob Koshy**. Edited excerpts:

This seems to be a very unusual lead-up to a COP. The U.S. has withdrawn from the Paris Agreement, the European Union is reluctant to assume leadership on climate, and Brazil, which is hosting COP30, appears only to be stressing on implementation. Are we heading towards a washout?

Hisham Mundol: I am by nature a 'glass half full' person. Before most COPs, there is often a lack of direction. We live in particularly turbulent geopolitical times and I imagine we may not get sweeping new outcomes like we did in 2015, with the Paris Agreement. Despite the U.S.'s exit (from the Paris Agreement), I see the emergence of an 'Axis of Good' – a number of countries working with one another consistently on climate change. We're seeing Europeans and Indians working on climate technology. I wouldn't be surprised if Brazil and India work on areas where there is common ground, such as forests. India has never been the most glamorous player on international climate negotiations, but it has something far more valuable than glamour, and that is a steady hand. Climate change is not a politically divisive issue in India. We have made commitments and are working towards them. Finally, an 'implementation COP' may not sound ambitious but it we manage to implement the promises already made, that would be real progress.

Ulka Kelkar: First, I expect that this COP will emphasise the need for finance for climate adaption and not just for (mitigation) actions where there is already private sector revenue. So, not just (finance for) solar power or electric vehicles, but also for adaptation to potential climate impacts in sectors such as agriculture and water resources.

Second, the emphasis on implementation means that developing countries like ours need to create a pipeline of projects that we can invest in – not just sectors but specific projects.

And third, this big number of $1.3 trillion (an annual figure that must be raised by 2035 as climate finance) should feature in the title of the 'Baku to Belém' road map that will come up for discussion at this COP. This road map should include the entire financial system – not just public finance, but also the private sector, multilateral development banks, and philanthropies – to discuss how the finance flows can become greener.



A man rides a motorcycle along the solar panels in Gujarat Solar Park in Patan district, Gujarat. REUTERS

Isn't implementation something that countries ought to be doing locally? Why do we need a COP for that?

UK: Many COPs end up reaching a point where there is a near-breakdown of negotiations and attempts are made to salvage it in the last minute. But that drama aside, the process continues and each COP is an incremental development over the previous one.

Implementation cannot happen without discussing the means of implementation, which is primarily finance. It can also mean technology and skilling. We hope that there will be discussions on innovative new sources of finance that can be added to the pool of money required for adapting to and mitigating climate change. Once these discussions happen, on the means of implementation, countries can go back and implement (projects) on some practical basis. Otherwise, it (implementation) is left to just how much public funding countries can raise domestically; and how much private investment businesses and banks can bring in based on profit considerations alone.

The scientific reality is that even official commitments by countries to cut carbon emissions are unlikely to reduce global emissions enough to keep them below the Paris Agreement target of a 2°C rise by 2100. This is partly because of the high costs involved, as we had earlier discussed. How do we ensure that countries don't get stuck in a blame game, and instead evolve creative solutions regarding funding adaptations?

> India has never been the most glamorous player on international climate negotiations, but it has something far more valuable than glamour, and that is a steady hand.
> HISHAM MUNDOL

HM: International cooperation has worked best when driven not by largesse but by individual, national, strategic, and security interests. When the world responded to HIV-AIDS, it was because it realised that if large parts of sub-Saharan Africa were going to be ravaged by the epidemic, it would cause unrest. The cost of a security intervention is dramatically more than a developmental intervention. China is not building a green economy because it loves the environment, but because it realises that that this is the future. Big industrial conglomerates in India, such as the Adani Group and Reliance Group, are investing as much as they are in green energy because they see that there is shareholder value to be created. Consider carbon pricing: many countries are looking at establishing some form of carbon market (where individual reductions in carbon emissions can be traded for profit).

UK: Often, I think that the scale of the challenge for India is not always understood in the West and sometimes the opportunity that that scale offers is also not fully appreciated. So, one thing that has come out in the news recently is that for the first time, emissions from India's power sector have actually stopped growing because there is so much more renewable energy now in the electricity system. If you look at model projections for the future, you will see that even decades into the future, despite being a growing economy where houses have to be built, manufacturing jobs have to be created, and power has to supplied for a variety of applications from transport to cooking, India's power sector emissions are actually not projected to grow. So, there is a kind of decoupling that has already happened between energy and emissions. The scale of this is not really always appreciated by those in the West.

On the adaptation side, the scale really matters. Innovative aggregated solutions, such as the PM-KUSUM scheme, which uses solar energy in the agriculture sector, or electric buses for public transport, can drive down costs and make services and public goods cheaper.

Second, we really need to actively look for projects where there are both adaptation and mitigation benefits. For example, projects that would not only help counter the impacts of heat or flood risks but also bring down emissions. An example would be cold-chain storage systems in agriculture that are solar powered.

Ahead of COP30, India, like other countries, is expected to submit updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). India is also expected to submit a National Adaptation Plan (NAP). According to you, how should these look?

HM: India already has an ambitious target of drawing 50% of its electricity mix from non-fossil sources by 2030. A lot of progress has happened on this front: renewables account for about half of the country's installed power capacity. Since green hydrogen production relies on renewable energy, explicitly codifying this link, such as by recognising renewable energy for green hydrogen, would be a good move. Even if such a move is incremental in terms of national commitments, incorporating it into the NDCs would send a signal of intent.

UK: The biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions is industry. This is a hard-to-abate sector because a lot of emissions come not from the use of energy where you can switch the fuel, but from process emissions. Unless you have a different way of making cement or a different way of making steel, it is going to be very difficult to change those process emissions. So, it might be time to consider as a long-term signal, some kind of new NDC target for the industry sector. It can mean bringing in more electrification, which itself can come from renewable or cleaner sources.

Second, we can look at ways of prioritising certain projects. Sometime ago, India had come up a list of projects where it would be willing to participate in the international carbon market. It said, for example, we don't want to sell credits based on just solar; we would like to consider solar plus storage (by using batteries). So why not have a wish list of priority projects like that for adaptation as well, which could, of course, be modified by each State in the country? And with that, indicate certain types of models where finance can be 'blended' (partly funded by private and public sector)?

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

NOTEBOOK

When even good news is not forthcoming

The Indian government was strangely tight-lipped about Kier Starmer's visit even though there was plenty to share

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan

As a reporter, one has to quickly get used to the fact that the government is not a friend. It isn't an adversary, per se, but it certainly is not predisposed to help the media. If you are one of the few journalists that the government chooses to speak to, you have to remember that the 'exclusive' titbits shared with you are still those that the government wants you to know. The real secrets are just that: secrets.

For those not in the government's favour, dealing with the government is like dealing with a brick wall: you can hammer away trying to get information, but more often than not, it's you who will be left sore and dejected. Yet, the one thing governments across the country and across time can be relied upon to do is to blow their own trumpets. If they have good news to share, they will make available a deluge of information. This is what makes the U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer's visit to India an odd one.

Here is the background: India and the U.K. concluded a free trade agreement (FTA) in May 2025. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal visited the U.K. in June. The FTA – the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement – was signed in July, which was followed by a warm outpouring of optimism and bonhomie on both sides. Mr. Starmer came to Mumbai in October on his first official visit to India.

What surprised the Indian media was how remarkably tight-lipped the Indian government was over Mr. Starmer's visit. There were press releases about the meeting of the two Prime Ministers and about Mr. Goyal's meeting with Mr. Starmer, but these were fluff releases, with more sensation than substance.

Astonishingly, if an Indian reporter wanted anything of substance from the visit, they had to refer to the U.K. government's website rather than India's Press Information Bureau (PIB). It was the U.K. government that issued a press release saying that 64 Indian companies had committed to invest a collective £1.3 billion in the U.K. over the next few years as a result of the trip. The release was detailed, naming each of the 64 companies, which sector and region of the U.K they would be investing in, and how many jobs would be created from each investment. The Indian government volunteered no such information, and didn't even provide it when asked. Announcing how much investment has been brought in would have been good news to publicise, but the government did not do so.

It was also the U.K. government that issued a release about the £350 million deal to sell missiles to the Indian Army and about the fact that Yash Raj Films had agreed to make three new films in Britain over the next few years. The PIB issued no releases.

This episode of unexpected reticence about good news also offers some insight into the delicate tightrope that Indian reporters must walk. One implication of the lack of information about British companies investing in India is that there were none or very few commitments made. The other possibility is that there were commitments made, but that the administration lacked the wherewithal to put together a list and share it. However, if a reporter were to highlight either possibility, they would immediately be branded 'anti-government' and lose the little access they have to officials. It is our lot to quietly accept what is offered to us.

The third possibility is that the government has decided to go silent. However, the media blitz it orchestrated over the positive impact of the GST rate cuts showed that the machinery is still working well. From press conferences to press releases, off-the-record notes and social media trends, it spared no tool.

One can only conclude then that the general attitude of the government is that information of substance is not the media's right; rather, it is a boon to be granted whenever it desires.

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PICTURE OF THE WEEK

'Your food is on its way'



Residents use rubber tubes as a float to transport food, arranged by the Revenue Department, to the doorsteps of families marooned across Vellore city in Tamil Nadu. Heavy rainfall caused waterlogging on Thursday. VENKATACHALAPATHY C.

FROM THE ARCHIVES The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO OCTOBER 24, 1975

Italian poet gets Nobel Prize for Literature

Stockholm, Oct. 25: Mr. Eugenio Montale, a shy and modest Italian poet, to-day won the 1975 Nobel Prize for Literature for his "distinctive" works which have interpreted human values under an outlook on life with no illusions. The 15-man Nobel Prize Selection Committee of the Swedish Academy of Letters said the 79-year-old native uof Genoa was "one of the most important poets of the contemporary West."

Mr. Montale, who will receive a cash award of 630,000 kronors (Rs. 11.44 lakhs) belongs to the Hermetic school of poetry, begun in the 1930s in Italy. It advocates a modernistic structure and freedom of word choice and rhyme.

The Nobel Committee said by joining this school, Mr. Montale rejected "the melting tones and the rhetorical fanfares that most poets had an ear for." Mr. Montale's name is not widely known outside Italy, but the committee said the fact that his modest production of poems continued to interest young people "is sufficient proof of its sterling qualities and lasting efforts."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO OCTOBER 24, 1925

A home for nurses

Lady Goschen has issued the following appeal: A Nurses' Association was started in Madras during the year 1920 and as Patroness, I am most anxious to provide a Home, with quarters where Nurses may reside, and also to have a club to provide them with recreation when not on duty. There are now 160 members, living all over the city without any place of meeting in which they can get the relaxation, which I am sure you will deem as necessary, in view of their arduous duties.

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Estimated amount needed to rebuild Gaza health system

7 In $ billion. The World Health Organization said on Thursday it expected that at least $7 billion would be needed just to rebuild the broken health system in Gaza. "There are critical shortages of medicines, equipment and health workers," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters. AFP

Cost of procurement proposals approved by the Defence Ministry

79,000 In ₹ crore. The proposals were cleared at a meeting of the Defence Acquisition Council chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. It is the second major decision on procurement following Operation Sindoor. PTI

Nigerians rescued by police in a human trafficking crackdown

57 Police in Ghana rescued 57 Nigerians trafficked to the West African country and arrested five people suspected of operating a human trafficking ring. Police raided a building where the victims were forced to engage in online romance scams, the Criminal Investigations Department said. AP

Number of people arrested in Kolkata for bursting fireworks

153 Of the total arrests made on Wednesday, 146 were for disorderly conduct, while seven persons were picked up for bursting prohibited firecrackers, an officer said. During the drive, officers also seized 16.95 kg of prohibited fireworks and 14.4 litres of illicit liquor. PTI

Number of farmers registered for paddy procurement in U.P.

1.37 lakh. Farmer registration for paddy sales began on September 1, and by October 23, 1,37,166 farmers registered, and since October 1, over 35,630 metric tonnes have been purchased across these divisions, an official statement said. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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How do monsoons affect Tamil Nadu?

How are heavy rains affecting cities, farmland, and infrastructure? What are the health and environmental risks of prolonged heavy rainfall? What role is the Mullaperiyar Dam playing in rising flood risk? Can Tamil Nadu manage simultaneous inflows from Kerala and local monsoon rains?

EXPLAINER

Vasudevan Mukunth

The story so far:

The northeast monsoon has kicked in early this year, at least four days sooner for the second year running, over Tamil Nadu. Last year, this phase of the monsoon ended with the State recording 33% more rain than the long-period average, and forecasters expect this year to go the same way.

Historically, policymakers and State authorities have consistently interpreted excess rain as a positive. Climate change is complicating this calculus because while rainfall volumes increase, they are often concentrated in short and localised bursts, delivering over-large quantities of water in places that often can't absorb them in full. As a result, it might be time to reconsider the idea that "excess is good".

Why is excess rainfall a concern?

In urban areas, surfaces paved with concrete and asphalt keep them from absorbing heavy rainfall, leading to rapid runoff that overwhelms drainage systems, leading to flash floods, low-lying areas being inundated, property damage, and disrupted transportation.

As seen during Cyclone Michaung and Tamil Nadu in 2023, urban power authorities are also prone to cutting power supply in such circumstances, citing loose cables. The sheer volume of water can also lead to sewage overflows, where untreated wastewater is discharged into streets and waterbodies, unleashing significant health and environmental hazards.

The agricultural sector's vulnerability to excessive rainfall is well-known: waterlogged soil suffocates plant roots, washes away seeds and young crops, sheds the nutrient-rich topsoil over time, and ultimately loses its long-term fertility.



Raging flow: Surplus water being released from the Mullaperiyar Dam. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Too much moisture can also ease the spread of fungal diseases and pests that devastate crops and undercut yield, leading to significant financial losses for farmers. Intense bursts can also wash fertilizers, pesticides, and other agricultural debris into waterbodies, including reservoirs, degrading water quality. Finally, stagnant water becomes a breeding ground for mosquitoes, increasing the risk of vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever and zoonotic diseases like leptospirosis, Japanese encephalitis, and scrub typhus.

What are the wider impacts?

Prolonged periods of rainfall also raise the water table, the level below which the ground is saturated with water. And a persistently high water table can compromise the stability of building foundations, roads, and other infrastructure; it can also exert pressure on basement walls, leading to cracks, leaks, and the growth of mold. Saturated soil also loses its load-bearing capacity and causes foundations to shift or settle, potentially leading to significant structural damage over time.

The cumulative impact of these issues translates to significant economic and social costs. Damage to buildings, public infrastructure, and agricultural land warrants substantial investments in repair and rebuilding solutions. Disruptions to businesses and transport networks hamper economic activity. Flooding and landslips can also displace communities, injure people, and even kill them if they are particularly vulnerable. The psychological toll on affected populations, including stress and anxiety, is another significant and often overlooked consequence.

Why is Tamil Nadu particularly vulnerable?

Tamil Nadu, in particular, needs to consider the Kerala factor as well. The two States receive rain from two different monsoon patterns: Kerala's primary rainy season is the southwest monsoon from June to September, whereas Tamil Nadu receives most of its rain during the northeast monsoon from October to December. An important problem arises when these monsoon periods overlap or when both States experience intense rainfall simultaneously. This is currently the case with the early onset of the northeast monsoon.

At the heart of the issue is the Mullaperiyar Dam, which, while it is located in Kerala's Idukki district, is operated by the Tamil Nadu government to divert water to irrigate farmlands. There is, as a result, a 'direct' link between the rainfall in Kerala's catchment areas and the water levels in Tamil Nadu's river systems.

When the catchment areas of the Mullaperiyar Dam receive heavy rainfall, the reservoir fills up rapidly. To ensure the dam's safety and to manage the rising water levels, Tamil Nadu's authorities are compelled to open the dam's shutters. The released water flows in two directions and risks creating a double whammy. One portion flows down the Periyar river within Kerala, potentially flooding the low-lying areas of Idukki district and creating an inter-State issue while the primary flow is diverted to Tamil Nadu's Vaigai Dam. And this influx may arrive precisely when Tamil Nadu's own rivers and reservoirs are already swollen from the ongoing northeast monsoon.

What is happening on the ground now?

This simultaneous influx thus turns Kerala's "excess" water from a potential resource into an immediate flood risk for Tamil Nadu. Instead of just managing the rainwater falling within its own borders, Tamil Nadu must also handle a massive, concentrated inflow from its neighbour. The State is currently keeping all 13 shutters of the Mullaperiyar Dam open, releasing thousands of cusecs of water to make room for the incessant influx. As a result, both farmland and residential areas in Theni are already submerged even as the district is being battered by its own monsoon rains.

For these reasons, it may be time for Tamil Nadu and other States like it, including Kerala, to reconsider the "excess is good" notion vis-à-vis rainfall.

THE GIST

- The northeast monsoon has arrived at least four days earlier for the second consecutive year, bringing heavy rainfall that is expected to exceed the long-period average.
- Excess rain is overwhelming urban areas, waterlogging farmland, and straining infrastructure, while the Mullaperiyar Dam inflow adds a "double whammy" to Tamil Nadu rivers and reservoirs.
- Waterlogged soil, overflowing rivers, and stagnant water create crop damage, health hazards, and threats to buildings, roads, and public safety, emphasising the need to rethink the 'excess is good' notion.

Is Punjab's stubble burning problem really declining?

Are fewer fires hiding larger burnt areas? How do satellite limitations affect the accuracy of fire detection?

Vikas Vasudeva

The story so far:

Paddy harvesting has picked up momentum in Punjab, the country's key grain-producing State, and so have stubble burning incidents. This year, stubble burning has been relatively fewer because the State faced one of its worst floods in decades, leaving vast stretches of farmland inundated. Close to the autumn season every year, paddy stubble burning is considered to be one of the contributing factors of air pollution across the country's northern region, including New Delhi. The paddy crop, harvested using combine harvester machines, leaves behind a stubble of stalks. To destroy this stubble, the farmers consider setting the crop residue on fire the most 'effective' method, as they need to prepare the fields for sowing the next winter crop. The short time window between paddy harvesting and wheat sowing – roughly three weeks – is a key reason why farmers resort to stubble burning.

Are stubble burning incidents declining?

The governments, including the State and the Centre, have claimed that incidents of paddy stubble burning have significantly declined over the years, thanks to a range of measures, including stricter enforcement, access to subsidised machinery for crop residue management. Punjab government data, based on satellite aggregation, shows that in 2024, there were 10,909 cases of farm fires in the State, compared to 36,663 in 2023, marking a 70% decline.

While Punjab has reported a significant drop in farm fire incidents since 2021, the total area scorched by these fires has largely expanded. Satellite data from the Punjab Remote Sensing Centre and the Punjab Pollution Control Board show that in 2024, the area under 'residue burning for paddy', which gives a relatively stronger sense of farm fire menace, stood at around 19.17 lakh hectares, compared to around 19.14 lakh hectares in 2023.

In 2022, it was nearly 15.40 lakh hectares, while in 2021, it was approximately 15.60 lakh hectares.

Why do the data differ?

Although the number of stubble fire counts has significantly declined, experts believe that the total burnt area could have increased for several reasons. Fire count measurements often miss smaller, low-intensity, or partial burns.

Farm fire incidents in Punjab, and in other States as well, are recorded by satellites using thermal imaging based on temperature differences. A recent study conducted by the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Mohali, published in *Science of the Total Environment*, highlights several limitations of satellites in collecting fire emissions. The study notes that satellites like MODIS and VIIRS pass over the region only a few times a day, and since most fires are lit in the late afternoon or evening, many events are missed. Haze or clouds can obstruct satellite detection of fires, leading to underreporting. Moreover, north-west States have small landholdings, and farmers often burn crop residue in fragmented, short-duration fires, which are harder for satellites to detect compared to large-scale forest fires. The study also points out that farmers are increasingly aware of satellite monitoring and may cover up burnt areas before the next satellite overpass.

Senior scientist and Professor Ravindra Khaiwal at Environmental Health, Department of Community Medicine and School of Public Health in Chandigarh-based Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, points out that burnt-area estimation has become more precise with advancements in remote sensing. He says, "While thermal sensors may miss fires due to heat signal blockage, optical sensors like Sentinel-2 can identify post-fire discolouration and burn scars, providing a more accurate assessment of the total burnt area."

What is the way forward?

Asserting that for accurate assessment of incidents, fire data should be generated by integrating thermal and optical satellite observations and validated through systematic ground verification through ground surveys, Dr. Khaiwal says: "increased burnt area does not necessarily imply higher stubble burning 'emissions'. Many of these burns are low-intensity, partial, or short-duration fires, releasing relatively less particulate matter and gaseous emissions compared to widespread fires. Hence, emissions must be assessed using fire intensity, fuel load, and duration, not burnt area alone."

THE GIST

- While farm fire incidents in Punjab have declined significantly in recent years, the total area scorched by stubble burning remains high, highlighting a discrepancy between fire counts and actual burnt land.
- Satellite limitations, short sowing windows, and farm practices — like burning residual stubble from combine harvesters — contribute to under-detection and continued environmental impact despite government measures.

EXPLAINER



Air hazard: A municipal worker sweeps Delhi streets as authorities announce potential cloud seeding to tackle rising pollution. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Why cloud seeding is not a solution to Delhi's air pollution crisis

Delhi's air remains polluted due to emissions from vehicles, construction, power plants, waste burning and agricultural fires; cloud seeding cannot create rain without clouds, provides only temporary relief at best, and diverts attention from evidence-based solutions that address the root causes

Shahzad Gani
Krishna AchutaRao

The story so far:

Delhi's plan for cloud seeding is being sold as a bold solution to air pollution. In reality, it is a textbook case of science misapplied and ethics ignored.

Why is Delhi's air fouler in winter?

Across North India, air quality is poor throughout the year, but it reaches extreme levels in the post-monsoon and winter months. After the monsoon withdraws, dry continental air masses from the northwest dominate the region. The winds weaken and the air becomes stagnant, keeping pollutants from being dispersed efficiently.

Cooler air holds less absolute water vapour and the stable, high-pressure systems that prevail during these months suppress the upward motion needed for clouds to form. The sky may look hazy, but that haze comes from trapped pollution, not from rain-bearing clouds. Rain cannot be conjured out of thin air. It needs water vapour.

For most of the highly polluted cooler months, the atmosphere is too dry and stable to support significant rainfall. Rain does occur occasionally during these months, but these brief spells are typically caused by western disturbances, weather systems that originate in the Mediterranean region and can bring moisture from that region or interact with local systems drawing up moisture from our neighbouring seas. These events can be predicted a few days in advance, but are not a reliable or consistent source of rainfall for North India.

Does cloud seeding help?

Cloud seeding depends on natural clouds; it can't create them. And even when clouds exist, the evidence that seeding reliably increases rainfall remains weak and contested. And when it rains and reduces pollution, the respite is temporary at best. The overwhelming evidence is that pollution levels go back up within a day or two.

The air pollution problem is not just confined to Delhi. Across North India, air quality is dangerously poor year-round. Yet public debate often treats smog as a seasonal nuisance, normalising pollution and noticing it only when it becomes unbearable. Cloud seeding is just another gimmick in a series of similar unscientific ideas, like smog towers, suggesting that flashy interventions can substitute for serious, structural solutions.

What are the risks of cloud seeding?

The temptation to engineer a shortcut to fix air pollution is understandable – but it raises deeper ethical questions about how science is used, what risks are justified, and who bears responsibility when things go wrong.

Even if the science behind cloud seeding were robust, which it is not, it still involves dispersing compounds such as silver iodide or sodium chloride into clouds to trigger condensation. Silver iodide works for cloud seeding because its crystal structure is very similar to that of ice, so it 'tricks' water droplets in the clouds into freezing onto it. These newly formed ice crystals then grow heavy and fall as rain or snow. While generally considered low risk in small doses, repeated use can accumulate in soils and water bodies. The long-term effects on agriculture, ecosystems, and human health remain poorly understood.

Beyond these environmental risks, there is the question of accountability. If cloud seeding coincides with intense rainfall that leads to flooding, causing damage to infrastructure, crops, and livelihoods, or loss of life, who will be responsible? Even if the rainfall and flooding are unrelated to seeding, public perception could still link the two, undermining trust in both science and governance.

What can 'fix' the air?

Science has long identified the real cause of North India's hazardous air: the lack of effective control over emissions from vehicles, industry, construction, power plants, waste burning, and seasonal agricultural fires, compounded by unfavourable meteorology during the cooler months. The solutions are equally clear but remain largely unimplemented: cleaner transport, sustainable energy, better waste management, and urban planning that actually reduces pollution sources. Yet, instead of reinforcing these priorities, parts of the scientific ecosystem – researchers, advisors, and institutions – are lending credibility to a costly spectacle that will do little to address the sources of the crisis. By attaching their authority to the illusion of quick fixes, they risk wasting scarce public resources, undermining trust, and diverting attention from systemic changes that could make a real difference.

Snake-oil solutions will not clear the air in Delhi or the rest of North India. Instead, courage is required on the ground: to reduce the sources of pollution and pursue equitable, evidence-based action. Anything less is not just misplaced science – it is an ethical failure, a diversion from the patient, unglamorous work needed to ensure clean air throughout the year.

(Shahzad Gani is an Assistant Professor at the Centre for Atmospheric Sciences, IIT Delhi. Krishna AchutaRao is a Professor at the Centre for Atmospheric Sciences, IIT Delhi)

THE DAILY QUIZ

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

Let us celebrate the chemistry constant that connects atoms to the cosmos with a Mole Day quiz

Prathmesh Kher

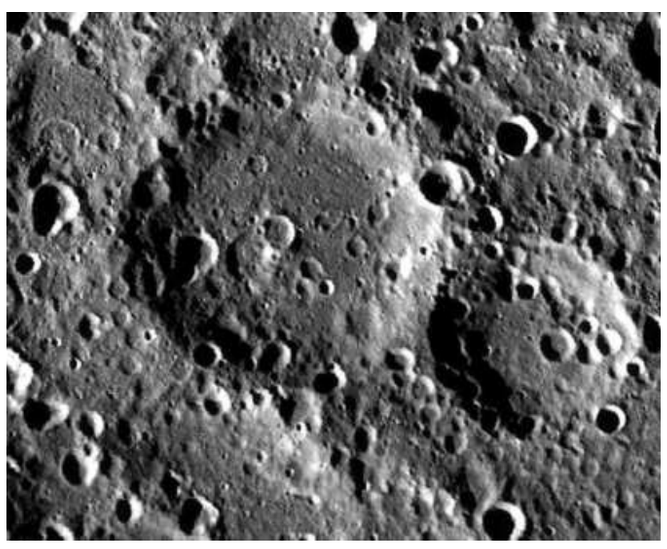
QUESTION 1
What is the exact date and time during which Mole Day is celebrated?

QUESTION 2
What is the numerical value of the constant commemorated on Mole Day, and what does it represent?

QUESTION 3
Who is the scientist after whom the constant is named, and what did he propose in 1811?

QUESTION 4
What is a mole in chemistry?

QUESTION 5
Which Italian scientist revived Avogadro's hypothesis at the Karlsruhe Congress in 1860?



Visual Question:
What is the connection between this lunar crater and Mole Day? LUNAR RECONNAISSANCE ORBITER CAMERA

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. In 1939, Gerhard Domagk was not allowed by his government to accept the prize, but he later received a medal and diploma. Which government prevented him? **Ans: Nazi government**
2. There were years in which the prize was not awarded, such as during World Wars I and II. How many years went by without the Prize for Medicine being announced? **Ans: 9 years**
3. Of the 14 women who received the Nobel Prize in Medicine, only one did not have to share it with others. Name this independent woman Nobel Laureate. **Ans: Barbara McClintock**
4. Who was the youngest ever awardee of the Nobel Prize for medicine, and what was he awarded for? **Ans: Frederick G. Banting, for the discovery of insulin**
5. This Nobel laureate entered France's Institut Pasteur quite by accident as a volunteer. She went on to complete her PhD and was among three people who were awarded the Prize in 2008, for discoveries that helped the world understand viruses wreaking havoc. Who is she? **Ans: Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, for the discovery of the human immunodeficiency virus**
Visual: What makes this pair of Nobel Medicine laureates unique? **Ans: Gerty and Carl Cori — the first married couple to share the Nobel for Medicine, in 1947. Gerty was also the first woman to be awarded a Nobel Prize in Medicine.**
Early Birds: Parimal Das | Sukdev Shet | Siddhartha Viswanathan | Sunil Madhavan | Rownak Mondal | Jyoti



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

Upendran

"What did your boss say when you asked him for a raise?"
"Nothing! He merely knit his eyebrows and..."
"...I have heard of people knitting sweaters, not eyebrows!"
"When you knit your eyebrows you bring them close together. This happens when you frown. Most people frown when they are angry or worried."
"I know that!"
"During the French Open final, Sujatha sat in front of the T.V. with knitted brows."
"My mother walks around with knitted brows the day before I receive my report card. Can I say that?"
"You certainly can. And once your mother sees the report card, her furrowed forehead tells you..."
"Her what forehead?"
"F...u...r...r...o...w. The 'u' in the first syllable is pronounced like the 'u' in 'cut', 'but' and 'hut'. And the 'ow' in the second syllable rhymes with 'cow', 'now' and 'no'. The stress is on the first syllable 'fur'."
"I see. But what does 'furrow' mean?"
"When you say somebody's forehead was furrowed, it means there were deep lines on it. Our forehead furrows when we frown."
"When my father read the headlines this morning, his forehead furrowed. How's that?"
"Sounds good. When I saw my cousin's furrowed forehead, I knew that he was in terrible pain."
"Years of worry has furrowed my brother's face. Does that sound O.K.?"
"It certainly does. What you are saying is that your brother's face is full of wrinkles."
"So, did your boss hesitate before turning down your request?"
"He said 'No' without batting an eyelid."
"'Batting an eyelid'?"
"When you do something without 'batting an eyelid', it means you do it without showing any surprise or concern."
"In other words you don't show any feelings?"
"That's right. It's an informal expression. For example, Gopa heard the horrible news without batting an eyelid."
"In most of our movies, the villain kills innocent people without batting an eyelid."
"When my cousin was told that he had won the lottery, he didn't bat an eyelid. He continued to eat his masala dosa."
"Why wasn't your cousin excited?"
"He doesn't care about money. He thumbs his nose at those who do."
"First, it was somebody knitting his eyebrows, then furrowing..."
"...when you 'thumb your nose' at someone or something, you show your contempt for that person or thing. For example, your favourite hero thumbs his nose at journalists."
"My classmate is an atheist. He thumbs his nose at those who believe in god."
"As a teenager, I used to thumb my nose at classical music. Now I don't."
"My friend Karthick still continues to thumb his nose at carnatic music. Tell me, how do you actually thumb your nose at someone?"
"You place your thumb on the tip of your nose and then point the remaining four fingers at the person/persons you're making fun of."
"You mean like this? Hey, I wasn't thumbing my nose at you. So please don't knit your brows."

Published in The Hindu on July 7, 1998

Word of the day

Sycophant:
a person who tries to please someone to gain a personal advantage

Synonyms: adulator, fawner

Usage: *He is a sycophant who always praises the boss.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/sycophantpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /sɪkəfənt/

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

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	THURSDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	84,556	0.15
US Dollar	87.88	0.05
Brent oil	66.09	-----

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter	2545.80	-4.10
Adani Ports	1453.10	-20.40
Apollo Hosp	7968.50	-43.50
Asian Paints	2502.40	-2.20
Axis Bank	1258.80	21.50
Bajaj Auto	9047.00	-71.00
Bajaj Finserv	2176.60	7.50
Bajaj Finance	1094.15	7.65
Bharat Elec	418.65	0.95
Bharti Airtel	2007.90	-35.60
Cipla	1645.10	-18.50
Coal India	392.65	1.55
Dr Reddys Lab	1279.40	-9.30
Tata Motors CV	260.75	0.00
Eicher Motors	6884.50	-134.00
Eternal Ltd.	328.35	-9.75
Grasim Ind	2864.60	-6.10
HCL Tech	1523.90	37.90
HDFC Bank	1008.80	1.10
HDFC Life	743.65	-0.05
Hindalco	792.40	7.45
Hind Unilever	2601.60	9.90
ICICI Bank	1363.70	-18.30
IntGlobeAvi	5789.00	-124.00
Infosys	1528.50	56.10
ITC	415.95	3.10
Jio Financial Services Ltd.	309.05	-2.75
JSW Steel	1138.20	-14.30
Kotak Bank	2225.60	28.60
L&T	3918.70	30.50
M&M	3623.60	2.40
Maruti Suzuki	16393.00	-3.00
Max Healthcare	1211.00	7.00
NestleIndia	1272.80	-14.50
NTPC	342.65	0.65
ONGC	252.31	4.19
PowerGrid Corp	289.65	1.05
Reliance Ind	1448.40	-16.80
SBI Life	1852.70	11.70
State Bank	911.55	3.70
Shriram Finance Ltd.	709.65	14.40
Sun Pharma	1689.90	-0.60
TataConsumerProduct	1161.00	-13.60
Tata Motors	405.85	4.00
Tata Steel	174.16	1.38
TCS	3073.20	66.50
Tech Mahindra	1463.40	14.70
Titan	3772.30	43.30
Trent Ltd.	4783.30	-7.80
UltraTech Cement	12145.00	-197.00
Wipro	244.30	2.94

‘UPI leads in payment volume, RTGS value; debit card deals dip’

In the half year ended June 2025, payment transaction volume was 12,549 crore, amounting to ₹1,572 lakh crore, according to a RBI report

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI



Small but big: Lower average size of UPI transactions indicates it is used mainly for small value transactions. GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCK

In terms of volume, payment transactions grew from 3,248 crore in Calendar Year (CY) 2019 to 20,849 crore in CY 2024 and in terms of value from ₹1,775 lakh crore to ₹2,830 lakh crore during this period, according to Payment Systems Report, a bi-annual publication released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

In the half year (HY) ended June, transaction volume was 12,549 crore, amounting to ₹1,572 lakh crore. Almost all of the growth in payments was attributable to digital payment transactions.

“In CY19, digital payments accounted for approximately 96.7% of the total payment transactions by volume and 95.5% by value,” as per the report.

By CY24, these figures had risen to 99.7% in terms of volume and 97.5% in terms of value.

The volume of UPI transactions has increased significantly from 1,079 crore transactions in CY19 to 17,221 crore transactions in CY24. The total value of transactions grew from ₹18.4 lakh crore in CY19 to ₹246.8 lakh crore in CY24.

In H1 of CY25, the volume of UPI transactions stood at 10,637 crore amounting to ₹143.3 lakh crore in value. During the period CY19 to CY24, NEFT transactions more than tripled in terms of volume, from 262.2 crore to 926.8 crore. However, during the same period, in terms of value, they grew from ₹232.9 lakh crore to ₹432.8 lakh crore.

In H1 of CY25, NEFT already processed 490.5 crore transactions, worth ₹237 lakh crore, indicating sustained growth and widespread adoption.

RTGS surges

Large value payment system RTGS transactions volume grew from 14.8 crore in CY19 to 29.5 crore in CY24, while transaction value rose from ₹1,388.7 lakh crore to ₹1,938.2 lakh crore during this period.

In CY25, by H1 alone, RTGS recorded 16.1 crore transactions amounting to ₹1,079.2 lakh crore, indicating sustained growth and usage.

Debit cards dip

Transactions in debit cards witnessed a decline since 2019, both in volume and value. In volume terms, debit card transactions declined from 495.32 crore in CY19 to 173.80 crore in CY24, while in value terms, they declined from ₹6.83 lakh crore to ₹5.15 lakh crore during this period.

In H1 2025, debit cards recorded 69.09 crore transactions valued at ₹2.22 lakh crore. While Prepaid Payment Instrument (PPI) transaction volume rose from 516.2 crore in CY19 to 698.9 crore in CY24, transaction value remained almost at the same level of ₹2.23 lakh crore during this period. During H1 of 2025, PPIs recorded transaction volume of 404.7 crore and value of ₹1.23 lakh crore.

India’s Russian crude imports in October remain ‘robust’: Kpler

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Russian oil accounting for 34% of India’s overall share: Kpler

India’s imports of Russian crude oil remain ‘robust’, tracking at approximately 1.8 million barrels per day at present, provisionally up by 2,50,000 barrels per day from September, maritime data and analytics provider Kpler mentioned in a blogpost on Tuesday.

The blogpost added Russian barrels remained the ‘largest single source of crude for India accounting for about 34% of the overall share and entailed ‘compelling discounts’ which were ‘too significant for refiners to ignore’.

Thus, it sought to infer U.S. President Donald Trump’s remarks initially made on October 15 suggesting India would reduce Russian crude imports, are “likely pressure tactics linked to trade negotiations.” India’s Russian oil-purchases have been the single major point of contention in the talks for a favourable U.S. trade deal.

‘Cutting imports costly’

With Moscow accounting for 30-35% of the Indian basket off late, the blog held, “substitution would require rapid scaling from multiple suppliers at higher costs.”

Kpler also observed though there has been a stronger push for diversification, Russian contracts are typically signed 6-10 weeks before arrival. “Rewiring all that takes time.”

WazirX to restart operations today

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

WazirX, the Singapore-based cryptocurrency platform that has not been operational since it was hit by a ₹2,000 crore hack last July, has announced that it would be restarting operations on October 24.

WazirX, owned by the Singapore-based Zettai, and one of India’s larger cryptocurrency exchanges at the time, on July 18 said it had been a victim of a hack and lost about $230 million in funds, amounting to 45% of its assets.

INBRIEF



Tata Trusts seeks to reappoint Mehli Mistry as lifetime trustee

Tata Trusts has circulated a proposal to reappoint Mehli Mistry as a trustee for three of its key philanthropic bodies, a move that would make him a lifetime trustee, according to people familiar with the development. The circular, issued by the CEO of Tata Trusts to other trustees on Thursday, seeks Mr. Mistry’s reappointment to the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and Bai Hirabai Jamsetji Tata Navsari Charitable Institution. PTI

SEBI eyes KYC verification for completion of new MF folios

Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) proposed to standardise the process of opening new mutual fund openings, according to its consultation paper released October 23. The regulator said under the new standardised process, once a folio is opened by the asset management company, the KYC documents will be first sent to the KYC Registration Agency, verified, the investor marked as KYC compliant and only then can he or she can begin investing.

Laurus Q2 net up on CDMO, generics, low base effect

Pharmaceutical and biotech company Laurus Labs reported consolidated net profit for September quarter surged to ₹193.75 crore from ₹17.72 crore a year earlier on the back of improved show in both CDMO and generics segments besides low base year effect. The manifold increase in net profit came as revenue from operations rose 35% to ₹1,653.47 crore (₹1,223.70 crore). The company has declared an interim dividend of ₹0.80 per equity share of ₹2.

Power Grid buys 2 units

Press Trust of India

State-owned Power Grid Corporation of India said it acquired two key projects worth ₹3,375 crore, which will strengthen energy transmission network.

HUL Q2 net up 4%, to pay ₹19 interim dividend

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) major Hindustan Unilever Ltd. (HUL) for the second quarter ended September 30 reported 4% growth in net profit to ₹2,694 crore primarily driven by one-off positive impact.

Exceptional items in the quarter included one-off positive impact pursuant to resolution of prior years’ tax matters between the U.K. and Indian tax authorities of ₹273 crore, restructuring expenses of ₹51 crore and acquisition and disposal related costs of ₹38 crore.

Total sales for the quarter at ₹16,061 crore grew by 2%. The board declared an interim dividend of ₹19 per equity share.

Wheeling into future



Wngs on the road: A Hyptec model car is displayed at a booth along a business street in Beijing . AFP

Cipla to sell Eli Lilly’s weight loss drug in a different brand

Reuters

Eli Lilly signed an agreement with Cipla, allowing the Indian drugmaker to sell its blockbuster weight-loss drug under a separate brand in the country, the companies said on Thursday.

Under the agreement, Lilly will manufacture the drug and Cipla will market it under the brand name Yurpeak, the drugmakers said.

Yurpeak will be available as a once-weekly prefilled injector pen, same as Lilly’s Mounjaro Kwikpen, allowing healthcare providers to personalise treatment plans to individual patient needs.

The medication will be available in six dose strengths and be priced the same as Mounjaro.

‘Ethanol tender order may hit 350 makers’

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE



At least 350 distilleries are deprived of adequate orders.

Ethanol producers have raised concerns on the recent ethanol tender order for the 2025-2026 ethanol supply year that reportedly favours new entrants in deficit zones.

The published allocations indicate at least 350 distilleries are deprived of adequate procurement orders from Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs). Many of the units were set up on an understanding with the OMCs or were part of earlier policy steps, as per the Grain Ethanol Manufacturers Association (GEMA).

GEMA said in a release that according to the “Allocation Methodology and Criteria” in the tender document, “The zones where the offers from the distilleries located in the zone are less than the requirement of the zone, this has been considered as deficit zone. For these zones, offers from vendors shall be considered in full for allocation.”

The policy, which appears to support local sourcing in deficit areas, ignores surplus capacity promoted by the OMCs in neighbouring States. The allocation method bypasses distilleries established with understandings such as long-term off-take pacts and expression of interest.

Vedanta to invest ₹1 lakh cr. in Odisha

The Hindu Bureau
BHUBANESWAR



Fresh footing: The global mining major has proposed to set up two new aluminium parks in Odisha. AFP

Global multinational mining major Vedanta Group has proposed investments to the tune of ₹1 lakh crore for developing downstream industries in Odisha.

Vedanta Chairman Anil Agarwal on Thursday met Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and discussed the group’s proposed industrial projects in the State. According to the Chief Minister’s Office, the State government assured full support for these investments, including provision of required land and other infrastructure facilities. “The group proposed that an ultra-modern ferro-alloys plant will be established in Keonjhar to enhance Odisha’s standing in the global metal value chain. Vedanta will invest ₹2,000 crore in this project,” the CMO said.

Moreover, Vedanta would set up two new Aluminium Parks in Odisha. “One of these parks will be located near its aluminium plant at Jharsuguda, while another will come up at a site identified by the State government,” it said.

These state-of-the-art parks will produce high-grade aluminium alloys suitable for use in aerospace, electric vehicles, and defence sectors. This will attract large-scale downstream investments and significantly boost the MSME sector in Odisha.

“The State government is committed to realising the Prime Minister’s vision of Viksit Bharat. Through infrastructure development and industrial investments by companies like Vedanta, Odisha will achieve this goal,” Mr. Majhi said.

He further stated that such initiatives would not only accelerate economic growth, but also create vast opportunities for the youth, empower people, and set the ground for Odisha to become a $500 billion economy by 2036.

Aurobindo Pharma arm establishes subsidiary in Chile

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Eugia Pharma B.V has incorporated a new wholly owned subsidiary Eugia Pharma Chile SpA

Aurobindo Pharma, through a wholly owned stepdown subsidiary, has incorporated a company in Chile to expand the pharmaceutical products business in the Latin American country. Eugia Pharma B.V, the wholly owned stepdown subsidiary, has incorporated a new wholly owned subsidiary Eugia Pharma Chile SpA in that country with an initial subscription to the share capital of Chilean Peso 10,00,000 ($1,050) divided into 100 shares. Last month, Aurobindo Pharma had set up a subsidiary in Malta through subsidiary CuraTeQ Biologics B.V. with the objective of expanding pharmaceutical products business.

Bondada secures ₹1,050-crore contract from Adani Group

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Hyderabad-based Bondada Engineering has received a letter of intent (LOI) from Adani Group for a ₹1,050 crore contract related to a solar power project.

Scope of work

The scope of work pertains to supply of goods for the Balance of System (BOS) for the 650 MW project at Khavda Renewable Energy Park in Gujarat.

The work includes complete design, engineering, manufacturing, procurement, quality assurance, packing, and delivery of materials at site.

Adani Green Energy and Adani Green Energy Six have awarded the contract, Bondada said in a filing on Thursday.

The LOI reaffirms its continued participation and recognition in the renewable energy infrastructure domain, further strengthening order book and execution pipeline, the company said.

U.S. shutdown pay plan prioritises security forces



Uneasy calm: The Capitol is seen at nightfall on another day of government shutdown in Washington. AP

NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters

President Donald Trump has ensured that federal immigration agents, U.S. Border Patrol officers, FBI special agents and active-duty military personnel continue receiving paychecks during the government shutdown, even as hundreds of thousands of civilian federal workers are furloughed or are working without pay.

This selective funding strategy offers a revealing glimpse into Mr. Trump's governing philosophy as the shutdown enters its fourth week - one that prioritizes jobs that advance his core national security and immigration goals.

Political analysts and eight federal employees interviewed by *Reuters* said this approach risks creating a two-tiered federal workforce divided by function, potentially undermining public services handled by civilians as the shutdown continues.

May erode morale

The employees said the tactic could also erode morale across the government at a time when Trump's wholesale overhaul of the federal workforce has posed huge challenges for historically non-partisan agencies.

Illustrating the administration's partisan stance, Vice President JD Vance told Marines at an event in California on Saturday that Mr. Trump was doing all he could to compensate them,while casting congressional Democrats as indifferent to a shutdown that could delay troops' pay.

Julian Zelizer, a professor of history and public affairs at Princeton University, said more than any other modern president, Mr. Trump is using a shutdown to prioritsze pay to a subset of workers to advance his agenda. His attempt to fire workers during a shutdown was also a first, he said.

'Partisan response'

"It's like a really fine-tuned partisan response to the shutdown that's different than in previous years," said Zelizer.

Mr. Trump signed an order last week directing the Pentagon to make sure that the country's 1.3 million active-duty military personnel continue to be paid. The administration said it woul dtap unused research and development funds to cover their October15 paycheck; funding for the next payday on November 1 remains unclear.

The administration has also established carve-outs to pay more than 70,000 law enforcement officers across the Department of Homeland Security, including those at Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Secret Service and the Transportation Security Administration.

That decision protects the gun-carrying agents who are implementing Mr. Trump's immigration crackdown, his top domestic priority, while leaving roughly 1.4 million federal workers -including some 700,000 furloughed - without a paycheck.

What France and others can learn from Sweden's hard budget lessons

Sweden's public finances among the best in Europe; fiscal strength built on belt-tightening after crash in1990s; among the most critical changes was a shift in pension system political polarisation makes lessons hard for Europe to follow; deeper crisis need prompt action from debt-heavy nations

NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters
STOCKHOLM



Trial by fire: Former Swedish PM Goran Persson during his visit to Tallinn, Estonia. REUTERS (FILE)

When Sweden's then-Finance Minister Goran Persson dashed to New York during the country's early 1990s financial crisis to plead with Wall Street investors to keep buying its debt, he stayed in a budget hotel infested with cockroaches.

That reflected the Finance Ministry's strict "absolutely no extravagance" policy, Mr. Persson, who later became PM ,wrote in his 1997 book "Those Who Are in Debt Are Not Free". Penny-pinching on Ministerial travel was one small part of a decades-long austerity drive, which has created fiscal leeway much of the belt-tightening Europe is lacking, allowing Sweden this year to pledge billions for defence, energy and tax cuts in its largest public spending package in decades.

The lessons for other countries, especially France, deep in its own budget crisis, are simple, if not easy. First, things may need to get really bad before politicians are ready to act. Secondly, buy-in from voters, unions and opposition parties is crucial for long-term success.

Finally, a strong global economy and a slice of luck on timing really help.

Living beyond means

After decades of living beyond its means, Sweden's debt had by 1994 roughly doubled to around 80% of gross domestic product from 44% in 1990. At worst, the budget deficit hit 12% and investor confidence collapsed and the Riksbank briefly hiked interest rates to 500%.

The government responded with cuts in spending on welfare, defence and education worth 8% of GDP. The economy shrank more than 1% three years in a row, unemployment soared and bank credit losses piled up in Sweden's worst downturn since the 1930s Great Depression.

> After decades of living beyond its means, Sweden's debt had by 1994 roughly doubled to around 80% of gross domestic product from 44% in 1990

"We had a banking crisis, a foreign exchange crisis and a debt crisis," said Stefan Ingves, a former central bank governor who oversaw the clean up of Sweden's "bad banks" after the crash.

"In some sense, we were at the end of the road," he told *Reuters*.

The government set a spending ceiling and budgeted for surpluses over the economic cycle. Pensions were reformed to encourage private savings and deepen capital markets, while labour unions and employers agreed to limit wage growth.

Gradually those reforms, helped by the fact that a weakened currency was boosting exports, started to work: the economy grew4.1% in 1994, and debt fell below 50% of GDP within a decade.

"In an open economy, structural change pays," Ingves said.

Among the most critical changes was a shift to a pension system where payments are adjusted for market returns and life expectancy, easing the pressure on the budget from the ageing population and passing the shortfall risk onto individuals.

France, where the retirement age remains a hot-button issue, spends just over 13% of its GDP on pensions compared with 10.7%in Sweden, according to Eurostat data, and the gap gets bigger when healthcare and other social benefits are included.

No free lunch

To be sure, it came at a price: thousands of public employees lost their jobs and Sweden was left with a legacy of underinvestment in infrastructure, from energy and transport networks to hospital beds. But painful memories of the crisis have ensured there has been no backsliding.

"Government after government has held the line," Finance Minister Elisabeth Svantesson told *Reuters*. "There is a consensus, which is a strength for Sweden."

Decades of frugality are now paying dividends. With public debt now at just over a third of GDP, Sweden was able to hike defence spending to 3.5% of GDP, pump up to 440billion crowns ($46.73 billion) into nuclear power expansion and provide 105 billion crowns to support Ukraine.

At the same time, the government cut income taxes and VAT on food and raised spending on job measures and yet its borrowing costs remain lower than Germany's. Unlike many other developed nations, Sweden also managed to ride out the financial crisis of 2008-2009 and the COVID pandemic without piling on much new debt. Replicating Sweden's path, however, will be hard for France and other euro zone countries faced with rising debt.

Sweden's exporters operated in a buoyant 1990s world economy fuelled by an IT boom and rapid globalisation – a far cry from the protectionist tilt seen from Washington to Beijing now. "Sweden was not okay, but the rest of the world was reasonably okay," noted Ingves.

Moreover, since the 1990s the political landscape has become more fragmented with the rise of far-right parties across Europe- including in Sweden - making it much harder to build consensus on unpopular measures, such as tax hikes or welfare cuts. Ultimately, some argue, France has not yet reached a tipping point like Sweden did in the 1990s and Ireland, Portugal, Italyand Greece two decades later during the euro zone sovereign debt crisis, which forced them to repair their public finances.

Despite all its woes, France still has access to borrowing at a reasonably affordable 3.35%, allowing it to muddle through.

Tesla's big gamble no longer matters

Reuters



Slow drive: Tesla has not fully redesigned any model in 2 decades in an industry where models often have short shelf lives. REUTERS

Tesla's groundbreaking 2017 Model 3electric sedan, followed by a taller Model Y variant, ushered in the era of mass-market electric cars, made Tesla the world's most valuable automaker and CEO Elon Musk the world's richest man. But years later, Tesla's stalling car business remains almost entirely dependent on that one breakthrough - and it may continue to be for years to come.

The automaker's only model since then, the Cybertruck,flopped. Tesla now has next to nothing in the product pipeline for human drivers as Mr. Musk refocuses the company on self-driving technology and humanoid robots.

A new Roadster supercar, unveiled in 2017 as a prototype, has yet to arrive and would serve only a super-wealthy niche. The automaker last year killed a project to make a $25,000 EV and instead, earlier this month, introduced stripped-down versions of the Model 3 and Model Y costing $37,000 and $40,000,respectively.

And that's it - Mr. Musk has promised no other new or redesigned human-driven vehicles. Tesla's apparent neglect of its core car business poses major risks for investors and will test whether the U.S. electric-vehicle pioneer can sustain growth without regular new-model launches, analysts say.

Tesla did not respond to requests for comment.

No new model

Tesla has not fully redesigned any model in two decades in an industry where models often have short shelf lives - and where Tesla's leading EV rivals in China are launching new vehicles at a dizzying pace in every conceivable segment. Instead, Tesla continues to treat its models much like iPhones that need only incremental improvements delivered in software updates to stay competitive. Some industry observers see no reason why that cannot work.

While traditional automakers spend heavily on regular hardware and styling overhauls, Tesla has succeeded in delivering a "high-margin product with no frills" serving customers who care more about its updatable technology than its appearance, said Adrian Balfour, founder of Envorso, a technology consulting firm.

'Like any other brand'

Others argue that Tesla cannot indefinitely defy the automotive industry's law of gravity - that sales fall as models age.

Tom Libby, an S&P Global Mobility analyst, said Tesla's customer loyalty rate plunged last year and improved only after Tesla doubled its average spending on product incentives.

"The data show that Tesla is like any other brand," Libby said. "Over the long term, there's going to have to be some major product actions or the brand will keep going down." Tesla vehicle sales fell 6% through the first three quarters of this year. Now it faces steep challenges from U.S. President Donald Trump's sweeping rollback of government support for EVs, including a $7,500-per-vehicle tax credit for consumers that expired last month.

The pending tax-credit expiration boosted Tesla vehicle sales in the third quarter as customers hurried purchases to get the subsidy. That boosted revenue in qu But profit nonetheless fell by 37% because of higher costs from Trump's tariffs, increased research and development spending and falling revenue from the sale of government regulatory credits to other automakers.

Boom to bust: Beyond Meat struggles to stay relevant

NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters

Once a Wall Street darling worth roughly $14 billion, Beyond Meat is now a meme stock.

While the company's decline started after the pandemic when rising inflation made its expensive products unattractive, a consumer shift toward healthier foods amid the "Make America Healthy Again" movement and the rise of weight-loss drugs expedited its demise.

"There have been lots of questions raised about how plant-based meat is produced in an age when many people are choosing to seek out simple alternatives like beans and pulses," said Danni Hewson, a financial analyst at AJ Bell.

The stock has slumped to 50 cents from its July 2019 peak of$239.71, but has logged a near sevenfold increase in the past four sessions. On Thursday, the shares were down about 20% at $2.90 in volatile pre-market trading.

'Short squeeze'

This is not a sign of recovering demand, analysts said, but rather an indication of a short squeeze, fuelled by a wave of buying among retail traders that has forced bearish investors to rush to cover their short positions.

After years of phenomenal growth, Beyond Meat has recorded declining annual sales since 2022. It has never turned an annual profit.



No taste: Since 2022, refrigerated plant-based meat alternatives sales saw double-digit dips. REUTERS

Dead cat bounce

The company's survival hangs in the balance. Though it has never flagged a going-concern risk, Beyond Meat last month launched a debt-for-equity swap to help it avoid near-term default on its credit. The move hugely diluted its stock.

It also hired a chief transformation officer and announced layoffs in August.

Buying more time to pay off its debt may have helped put bankruptcy concerns to rest for now, but restoring investor confidence will require a serious reboot, restructuring experts said.

"They've got liquidity to go for the next year, but they have to figure out their growth prospects," said Tim Hynes,global head of credit research at Debtwire. The company was not immediately available for comment on itsliquidity position and its plans to revive sales.

Murky future

Founded in 2009, Beyond Meat was born out of concerns over climate change, human health, and animal welfare. A decade later, the company made a blockbuster market debut, with shares jumping 65% in its first year as restaurants like McDonald's added faux-meat burgers to menus.

The craze didn't just boost Beyond Meat – it fuelled investor appetite for alternatives like cow-free milk. Rival Impossible Foods inked similar deals with Burger King while expanding retail distribution.

In 2019, the global faux-meat market was forecast to generate $140 billion in annual sales over the next decade,according to data from Barclays. But since 2022 sales of refrigerated plant-based meat alternatives have seen double-digit year-over-year drops, falling to $279.3 million over the last 12 months, according to data from market research firm Circana.

Beyond Meat CEO Ethan Brown has blamed the drop in its popularity on unfounded concerns about the ingredients used and processes followed in making plant-based meat alternatives.

Transparency steps

In response, the company has been more transparent about its ingredients list. It has highlighted healthier elements such as avocado oil and plant-based protein sources, including yellow peas and fava beans.

"What the company needs to do now is explore options such as equity buyback by the insiders or getting a large activist investor onboard who can credibly certify that the firm is still a viable business. Absent that, I don't see a bright future," said Amiyatosh Purnana dam, a professor at McCombs School of Business.

BEIRUT

Two persons killed in Israeli strikes in east Lebanon: Health Ministry



REUTERS

Two persons were killed in Israeli air strikes on mountainous areas in eastern Lebanon on Thursday, according to the Health Ministry. The Israeli military, meanwhile, said it had targeted Hezbollah sites in east and north Lebanon, including "a military camp and a site for the production of precision missiles" in the Bekaa valley. AFP

MOSCOW

Explosion at central Russia factory kills 10, leaves 12 others missing



ISTOCKPHOTO

An explosion at a factory in the central Russian city of Kopeysk late Wednesday killed 10 people and left 12 others missing, the region's governor said. "According to the latest information, 10 people were killed in the explosion at the plant in Kopeysk. The whereabouts of another 12 employees are being clarified." AFP

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan bans Islamist party TLP after deadly clashes kill 5 persons



AFP

Pakistan banned the Islamist party Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) for the second time in four years after deadly clashes killed five persons. The Cabinet said the TLP engaged in terrorism. The group said it rejected the ban, calling it "illegal". It was previously banned in 2021 for violent protests. REUTERS

SEOUL

North Korea says it tested a new 'cutting-edge' weapon system



REUTERS

North Korea said on Thursday it had tested a "cutting-edge" new weapon system using hypersonic missiles. The launch was detected by Seoul's military on Wednesday. It came a week before world leaders, including U.S. President Donald Trump, are set to descend on South Korea for a major regional summit. AFP

Malnutrition to have 'generational' impact on newborns in Gaza: UN

70% of newborns are premature or underweight, compared to 20% before Hamas's October 2023 attack on Israel kicked off the war; UN Population Fund director calls for a surge of aid to help prevent potential lifelong health issues in the enclave

Agence France-Presse
UNITED NATIONS

A senior UN official warned on Wednesday of "generational" impacts in Gaza from malnutrition among pregnant women and babies, urging a surge of aid to help prevent potential lifelong health issues.

"The sheer extent of the devastation looked like the set of a dystopian film," Andrew Saberton, deputy executive director of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), told presspersons after his visit to the war-torn enclave.

He said a quarter of Gaza's population is "starving".

"That includes 11,500 pregnant women for whom starvation is particularly catastrophic for both mother and newborn," said Mr. Saberton, whose agency leads reproductive and maternal health programs around the world.



Humanitarian crisis: Wedad Abdelaal, her 9-month-old son Khaled who suffers from malnutrition, with the rest of her children who show signs of malnutrition, in their tent at a camp in Khan Younis. AP

As a result, 70% of newborns are premature or underweight, compared to 20% before Hamas's October 2023 attack on Israel kicked off the war.

"Malnutrition will have generational effects, not on the mother, but on the newborn, likely to result in ever longer lasting care and problems throughout the life of the baby," he said at UN headquarters in New York.

The recent ceasefire has allowed more freedom of movement for humanitarian workers, said Mr. Saberton, but only a "trickle of aid" is being allowed in, that is "nowhere near enough".

The lack of medical supplies and facilities is also a major factor, he said, with over 94% of hospitals damaged or destroyed, and only 15% of operational facilities offering emergency obstetric care.

"Maternal death rates are high, partly due to the fact that simple things like contraception are no longer available," he said, noting some potential mothers are "looking for and doing unsafe abortions".

In addition, some 7,00,000 women and girls struggle each month with a lack of privacy, water and sanitary pads during their menstrual cycle.

'Unmapped minefield'

Separately, an aid group said that clearing the surface of Gaza of unexploded ordnance will likely take between 20 to 30 years. An official with aid group Humanity & Inclusion described the enclave as an "unmapped minefield".

"If you're looking at a full clearance, it's never happening, it's subterranean. We will find it for generations to come," said Nick Orr, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal expert at Humanity & Inclusion, comparing the situation with British cities after the Second World War.

"It's going to be a very small chipping away at a very big problem."

Trump to pull U.S. support if Israel annexes West Bank

Reuters
CAIRO/TEL AVIV

U.S. President Donald Trump said Israel would lose its crucial backing from the United States if it annexes the occupied West Bank, in a *Time* magazine interview published on Thursday.

Mr. Trump's comments, which *Time* said were made by telephone on October 15, were published as both Vice President J.D. Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned against any annexation.

"It won't happen. It won't happen because I gave my word to the Arab countries. And you can't do that now. We've had great Arab support," Mr. Trump said when asked what the consequences would be for Israel if it did so. "Israel would lose all of its support from the United States if that happened."

Mr. Trump also told *Time* that he believed Saudi Arabia would join the Abraham Accords, which normalise relations between Israel and Arab states, by the end of the year.



Change of terms: Donald Trump, with Marco Rubio, speaks at the White House in Washington D.C. REUTERS

"Yes, I do. I do," he said when asked if he thought Riyadh would join in that time-frame.

"See they had a problem. They had a Gaza problem and they had an Iran problem. Now they don't have those two problems," he said, referring to Israel's war in Gaza and Iran's nuclear program, which U.S. airstrikes targeted earlier this year.

Mr. Trump then said that he would be "making a decision" on whether Israel should release high-profile Palestinian prisoner Marwan Barghouti as part of peace moves.

Barghouti – from Hamas's rival, the Fatah movement – was among the Palestinian prisoners Hamas wanted to see released as part of the Gaza deal, according to Egyptian state-linked media.

Mr. Trump has dispatched a stream of top officials to Israel in recent days to shore up the fragile Gaza ceasefire he brokered earlier this month.

But as Mr. Vance wrapped up his three-day visit and Mr. Rubio arrived, Israeli lawmakers advanced two Bills paving the way for West Bank annexation. Mr. Vance said it was a "very stupid political stunt".

Chinese Communist Party elite body replaces 11 members

Reuters
BEIJING

The elite Central Committee of China's ruling Communist Party replaced 11 members at a key meeting, *Xinhua* reported on Thursday, its highest personnel turnover since 2017 amid an ongoing military corruption purge.

Veteran Chinese general Zhang Shengmin, 67, was promoted to second-ranked vice chair of the powerful Central Military Commission, *Xinhua* said, quoting a party statement.

The statement was released on the last day of a key closed-door meeting of the 300-plus member body in Beijing known as the Fourth Plenum, which also discussed a five-year economic development plan to achieve technological self-reliance amid an intensifying rivalry with the United States.

Mr. Zhang, who currently serves on the Central Military Commission, replaces He Weidong, the former second-ranked vice chair who was expelled from the Communist Party last week on corruption charges along with eight other People's Liberation Army generals.

Bloodied streets



Relatives and supporters of the victims of the 1972 Bloody Sunday massacre march to Belfast Crown Court ahead of the verdict on the trial of a British soldier identified only as Soldier F, in Northern Ireland, on Thursday. The soldier was acquitted due to lack of evidence. AP

White House's iconic East Wing to be torn down, says Trump

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump confirmed on Wednesday that the White House's iconic East Wing is being torn down in its entirety to make way for a huge $300-million ballroom – a far more extensive demolition than previously announced.

Mr. Trump told presspersons at an Oval Office event that he had decided after consulting architects that "really knocking it down" was preferable to a partial demolition.

Mr. Trump says the new 90,000-square-foot ballroom with a capacity of 1,000 people is needed to host large state dinners and other events that currently have to be held in a tent.



Demolition of the East Wing of the White House under way on Wednesday. AP

Saudi Arabia names conservative grand mufti despite sweeping social change

Agence France-Presse
RIYADH

Saudi Arabia has appointed a conservative cleric in his nineties as its top religious leader, state media said, sticking with tradition even as rapid social changes upend the previously cloistered kingdom.

Sheikh Saleh bin Fawzan bin Abdullah Al-Fawzan was named the grand mufti of Saudi Arabia by royal decree, the official *SPA* news agency reported late on Wednesday.

Mr. Fawzan, who has made controversial comments on child marriage and minority Shia Muslims, succeeds the conservative Abdulaziz al-Sheikh, who died in September after more than 20 years in the role.

In 2011, Mr. Fawzan publicly opposed a minimum age for marriage, after the Justice Ministry moved to stamp out the practice of marrying off pre-pubescent girls. In 2017, Human Rights Watch cited the Sunni cleric as calling Shia Muslims " brothers of Satan" in a recorded question-and-answer session.



Sheikh Saleh bin Fawzan bin Abdullah Al-Fawzan

He was appointed on the recommendation of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the de facto Saudi ruler who has ushered in sweeping reforms in a bid to diversify the economy of the world's biggest oil exporter.

Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam and is home to its holiest sites. However, the conservative kingdom has sought to modernise since Prince Mohammed was appointed heir to the throne.

U.S. blockade aims at isolating Cuba, says envoy, seeking stronger ties with BRICS

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Ahead of a crucial vote at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) condemning the U.S.-imposed economic and financial blockade of Cuba, the Cuban envoy in New Delhi said the blockade imposed by the Trump administration is "most painful" for Cuba and that his country would like to explore possibilities of greater financial integration with the BRICS economies.



Juan Carlos Marsán Aguilera

"The U.S. blockade aims to isolate Cuba and discourage investors and businessmen from travelling to the country. Earlier, we had around one million tourists every year, but now barely three hundred thousand visit. On October 28-29, we will submit this resolution to the UN General Assembly," said Ambassador Juan Carlos Marsán Aguilera at a press conference at the Press Club of India.

"Had the blockade and trade restrictions not prevented U.S. tourists from travelling to Cuba, our country would receive 1-2 million U.S. visitors every year, representing nearly $2 billion in revenue for the Cuban economy," Mr. Aguilera said

Mr. Aguilera said the Trump administration has heightened tensions between the U.S. and Cuba by including Cuba on the list of state sponsors of terrorism, adding, "For decades, it is the United States that has sponsored terror attacks targeting Cuba."



Ill fate: A wind turbine near Swellendam. An average of 4.25 birds are killed per wind turbine every year. AFP

South Africa seeks to save birds in path of wind turbines

Agence France-Presse
SWELLENDAM

Powerful gusts shook an observation post perched on a hill at a wind farm in South Africa as two monitors scanned the landscape through binoculars.

The Overberg mountains stretched along the horizon, but the monitors – bundled in scarves – were focused on activity much closer: around a giant wind turbine, a small, dark silhouette had appeared. "Stop turbine 11, please. Cape vulture," one said into a walkie-talkie. "Stopping turbine 11," came the reply.

BirdLife South Africa estimates that every year an average 4.25 birds are killed per wind turbine, most often when they fly into blades that can reach speeds of up to 280 km per hour. With more than 1,400 turbines operating across South Africa, an estimated 6,000 birds die this way a year, the group says. Ten percent are endangered species.

To mitigate the impact, Excelsior Wind Farm has implemented a Shutdown on Demand Protocol that prioritises six vulnerable species, including the Cape vulture and endangered black harrier.

When monitors spot one, "they inform the control room via radio and that's when they will turn off the turbine," said conservationist Clarissa Mars, who oversees the programme at the farm 200 km east of Cape Town.

Despite the efforts, around 13 black harriers have been killed at South Africa's more than 30 wind farms in the past decade, according to University of Cape Town professor Rob Simmons.

Hospitals in Gaza struggle with rise in multidrug-resistant infections

The depletion of broad-spectrum antibiotics and cross-transmission within crowded conditions could be the cause, according to a new paper in *The Lancet;* tests on 1,317 samples collected last year reveal that multiple antibiotic resistance was reported in over two-thirds of the samples, it adds

Divya Gandhi
BENGALURU



Since October 2023, one of Gaza's only functioning microbiology service centres is a small laboratory at Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City. FILE PHOTO

Ever since Israel intensified its attacks on Palestine in October 2023, sparing not even hospitals, more than 66,000 Palestinians have been killed, according to the latest bulletin from the Gaza's Health Ministry. But nearly three times that number of people, some 1.6 lakh, have been left grievously wounded.

In this crisis comes a worrying report on Gaza's health crisis in the latest edition of *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*: according to the paper, disease outbreaks have proliferated in the area, and now the infections are becoming multidrug resistant as well, imposing a new challenge on an already beleaguered population.

Multi-drug resistance is defined "as non-susceptibility to at least one drug in three or more classes". In the study, the researchers calculated the multiple antibiotic resistance (MAR) index for each isolate. The index is equal to the number of antibiotics to which an organism is resistant divided by the number of antibiotics to which it was exposed.

Tests on 1,317 samples collected from al-Ahli hospital in Gaza revealed that MAR was reported in over two-thirds of the samples (in the form of pus, wound swabs, and urine) collected last year, "reflecting the overwhelming burden of ballistic and crush trauma," the paper, authored by scientists including faculty at the Islamic University of Gaza, read.

Pseudomonas aeruginosa, a bacteria already known to be associated with serious illnesses, including hospital-acquired infections such as ventilator-associated pneumonia, dominated, followed by*Staphylococcus aureus*, common cause of skin abscesses and respiratory infections; *Klebsiella*, known to cause pneumonia, urinary tract infections, and meningitis; and *Escherichia coli*, which can causeserious food poisoning.

The study also found that two-thirds of all isolates were multidrug resistant.

Children targeted

"We found high resistance among *Enterobacterales* spp. isolates, with more than 90% of wound isolates resistant to amoxicillin-clavulanate, cefuroxime, and cefotaxime. Resistance to ceftriaxone and ceftazidime was also alarmingly high in wound isolates," the paper noted.

Gaza's healthcare system has been progressively devastated by Israel's onslaught. Since October 2023, one of Gaza's only functioning microbiology service centres is a small laboratory at Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City, which retained power largely via diesel generators and battery inverters.

"The hospital has treated large volumes of traumatic injuries despite frequent air strikes in the northern two governorates of the Gaza Strip," the paper read.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), between October 7, 2023, and July 30, 2024, Israel carried out 498 attacks on healthcare facilities in the Gaza Strip. "A total of 747 persons were killed directly in those attacks and 969 were injured, and 110 facilities were affected," the Independent International Commission of Inquiry for the U.N. reported. As many as 500 medical staff were killed while Israeli security forces also blocked access by humanitarian agencies.

"Direct attacks on healthcare facilities, including those offering sexual and reproductive health care and services, have affected about 540,000 women and girls who are of reproductive age in Gaza," it added.

The U.N. report also said the high number of child deaths is likely attributable to the fact that "children represent a majority of the patients treated in hospitals for blunt and penetrating trauma".

Vulnerable to disease

Medical professionals told the Commission they had treated children with direct gunshot wounds, meaning the kids had been targeted.

"Children were operated on without preoperative and post-operative care, increasing the risk of wounds becoming infected resulting in complications and in some cases death," the report said.

"A major finding is that about 76% of that sample did come from blast- or trauma-related injuries, which speaks to the volume of blast-related injuries that are coming in as a result of the Israeli military assault on Gaza," Bilal Irfan, a coauthor of the study and a global health scholar with an interest in bioethics, conflict medicine, and trauma systems, with the Centre for Bioethics at Harvard Medical School, said in an interview. We don't even know the true scale "because of the destruction of almost all the laboratories and the killing of a lot of the medical staff, so to even get a small insight into what is happening in Gaza is extremely important," Mr. Irfan said.

Al-Ahli Arab Hospital has also been reporting an increasing number of daily admissions with little sterile irrigation fluid, wounds remaining undressed for days, and only ad-hoc donations of broad-spectrum antibiotics, per the paper. "Long-term sheltering of displaced families outside the hospital might also have contributed to transmission of infectious diseases," it added.

The international medical community "has a duty" to act and respond to this crisis, the paper's authors wrote.

How the EU wants to use frozen Russian assets to fund Ukraine

Agence France-Presse
BRUSSELS



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Brussels on Thursday. The EU froze some 200 bn euros of Russian central bank assets. AP

EU leaders on Thursday look set to give a preliminary green light to a mammoth new "reparations loan" for Ukraine funded by Russian frozen assets.

The move is seen as crucial to helping keep Kyiv in the fight against Moscow and making the Kremlin pay – but it is fraught with legal and political perils.

To get around them, the European Commission has floated a complex scheme it says could hand $162 billion to Kyiv over the next few years.

The EU froze some 200 billion euros of Russian central bank assets after Moscow's tanks rolled into Ukraine in 2022. The vast majority of those funds are held in international deposit organisation Euroclear, based in Belgium. G7 countries have already used the interest of the frozen assets to fund a $50-billion loan for Ukraine. But as Russia's war drags on through a fourth year – and support dries up from Washington – Kyiv's backers are now looking to go further to help plug its Budget.

While more hawkish countries in the EU have called to just seize the Russian assets outright, that is a red line for many others.

To get around that, the European Commission has floated a financial switcheroo that it insists does not touch the Russian sovereign assets.

Instead, under the proposal the EU would borrow funds from Euroclear that have matured into cash.

That money would then in turn be loaned to Ukraine, on the understanding that Kyiv would only repay the loan if Russia coughs up for the damage it has wrought.

The scheme would be "fully guaranteed" by the EU's 27 member states – who would have to ensure repayment themselves to Euroclear if they eventually decided Russia could reclaim the assets without paying reparations.

Belgium has been the most vocal sceptic of the plan, as it fears the move could open up the country to costly legal challenges from Russia.

Officials say they hope to have a detailed proposal ready next month.

Freedom rising



Demonstrators take part in a rally organised by the Opposition TISZA party in Budapest on Thursday during celebrations marking the 69th anniversary of the outbreak of Hungary's 1956 revolution against communist rule and the Soviet Union. AP

Greek government riles critics with military monument protest ban

Agence France-Presse
ATHENS

Every hour on the hour, day and night, Greek soldiers change the guard in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Athens.

The elaborate practice of the "evzones", elite infantry conscripts wearing skirts, white stockings and clogs, routinely draws a wall of tourist smartphones.

But the near-century-old monument they guard has become a political battleground after the conservative government's contentious decision to ban demonstrations there.

The government majority approved the amendment on Wednesday, causing fissures among even the ruling party.

Anyone found guilty of demonstrating at or damaging Greece's top military monument, located just below Parliament, may now face up to one year in prison.

Observers noted that the defence minister, now tasked with protecting the monument, was absent from the debate on the issue on Tuesday.

Inaugurated in 1932, the marble cenotaph honours the memory of Greek soldiers fallen in combat.

Dissent against PM

Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis's critics accuse him of trying to silence protests, which have been growing since the Tempi train collision of February 28, 2023 – Greece's worst rail tragedy.

In the square leading to the cenotaph, relatives and friends have written the names and ages of the disaster's 57 victims in red paint.

Determined not to let the names fade, they returned on Sunday to refresh the paint.

"The names of the dead will remain there until final justice is served," Maria Karystianou, head of the Tempi Victims' Relatives Association, said in a post last week.

Two and a half years later, the tragedy still provokes anger and calls for justice amid widespread distrust of political leaders accused of negligence.

Surrounded by pots of basil, stuffed animals, lanterns and religious icons, this improvised tribute is maintained by a citizens' collective claiming to be apolitical.



Loud voices: Protesters gather outside Greek Parliament after memorial protest ban, in Athens on Tuesday.

Every evening, at 11:18 p.m., the moment the two trains collided head-on, the collective reads out the names of the dead, most of them young students returning from a long weekend.

Critics say Mr. Mitsotakis was spurred to action after the father of one of the victims, Panos Ruci, set up a tent near the monument in a 23-day hunger strike.

Breaking for health tests, Ruci stayed there until October 7, when judicial authorities agreed to exhume his son's body for toxicology tests.

The 48-year-old's protest drew daily visits from politicians, artists, school children and other Greeks wanting to express solidarity.

'Not a billboard'

Addressing Parliament, Mr. Mitsotakis emphasised the need to "preserve the sanctity" of a place "of memory for the dead... who allowed us to be free and to offer this freedom to our children".

The cenotaph "is not a billboard for claims, however respectable they may be," he said.

Referring to collision victims' relatives, Mitsotakis stressed: "None of us can grasp their grief or their anger... But activism of this kind, in a sacred and historical place, does not serve their cause".

The main left-wing party, Syriza, has called the amendment a "Trump-inspired" measure that is "a direct attack on democracy".

The government insists that only the space in front of the monument is affected – about 4,500 square metres (50,000 square feet) compared to Syntagma Square's 25,000 square metres just opposite.

"Everywhere else, gatherings remain obviously free," the Prime Minister said.

Heated demonstrations also occurred on Syntagma Square during the 2009-2018 debt crisis, when evzone sentry boxes were set alight several times during violent clashes between police and protesters.

Historians are divided, with Athens' Benaki Museum's head archivist Tasos Sakellaropoulos calling the tomb a "place of silent collective memory and respect, not of pain or anger" in *Kathimerini* daily.

But Giorgos Mavrogordatos, emeritus professor at the University of Athens criticised the evzone display as "extravagant figures resembling ballerinas for the pleasure of tourists".

"This has nothing to do with historical memory: it is a purely arbitrary invention of recent years," Mavrogordatos wrote in *Kathimerini*.

RECORDS GALORE

Smriti draws level with Lanning for most international hundreds



EMMANUAL YOGINI

Smriti Mandhana equalled Meg Lanning for most international centuries (17) in women's cricket. She also broke the record for most sixes (29) in a calendar year in the ODI format, a mark previously held by Lizelle Lee. Smriti and Pratika Rawal also registered the highest partnership (212) for India in World Cups.

ELITE CLUB

Pratika joint-fastest to 1,000 runs in women's one-dayers



EMMANUAL YOGINI

Pratika Rawal became the joint-fastest (23 innings) alongside Australia's Lindsay Reeler to reach 1,000 runs in women's ODIs. The 25-year-old's maiden World Cup century was the 41st individual ton in ODIs this year. Pratika also has the joint-most 100-run stands (seven) with Smriti Mandhana in the 50-over format.

CLIMBING THE LADDER

Rohit is third-highest run-getter for the Men in Blue in ODIs



AFP

Rohit Sharma surpassed Sourav Ganguly to become the third-highest run-getter for India in ODIs. Rohit has 11,249 runs from 275 matches. Sachin Tendulkar leads the tally (18,426 runs in 463 games), followed by Virat Kohli (14,181 in 304). Rohit is also the first Indian to score 1,000 ODI runs against Australia Down Under.

GOING PAST STEVE WAUGH

Zampa becomes seventh-highest wicket-taker for Australia in ODIs



AFP

Adam Zampa overtook Steve Waugh to become the seventh-highest wicket-taker for Australia in ODIs. Zampa, who claimed four for 60 against India in the second ODI at the Adelaide Oval, has 196 scalps in 115 matches. Pacers Glenn McGrath and Brett Lee top the charts with 380 wickets from 249 and 221 matches, respectively.

Pratika, Smriti and Jemimah dazzle as India enters semis

The openers smash hundreds and put on a record 212-run stand; the No. 3 sustains the momentum with an unbeaten 76 off 55 balls; end of the road for the White Ferns as they fall short despite spirited efforts by Halliday and Gaze

ODI WORLD CUP

Shayan Acharya
NAVI MUMBAI

India couldn't have hoped for a better way to storm into the semifinals of the Women's ODI World Cup.

The pressure mounted on the home team following three successive defeats, but as it returned to its cherished hub – the D.Y. Patil Stadium – more than 25,000 spectators braved the rain and cheered for the Women in Blue.

And adding to the festive fervour, India thumped New Zealand by 53 runs via DLS method on Thursday to book a spot in the last-four stage after eight years as it rode on centuries by openers Pratika Rawal and Smriti Mandhana to put up a mammoth 340 for three in 49 overs.

In the last few outings, Pratika's strike rate had come under the scanner. However, she broke the shackles when it mattered.

As the White Ferns put the host in on a batting-friendly surface, Smriti (109, 95b, 10x4, 4x6) and Pratika (122, 134b, 13x4, 2x6) laid the foundation with a record 212-run stand – the highest for India in World Cups.



Solid foundation: After a rather sedate start, Smriti and Pratika took the attack to the Kiwi bowlers. EMMANUAL YOGINI

Struggle

As the New Zealand bowlers struggled to make inroads, a determined Smriti and Pratika took things in their stride and cut loose after a slow start.

With the surface offering nothing to the bowlers, Pratika put her head down and batted through. In the process became the joint-fastest to 1,000 runs in the women's ODIs, alongside Australia's Lindsay Reeler, reaching the milestone in just 23 innings.

Smriti grew in confidence and dominated with a brisk knock as she brought up her 17th international century.

Pratika too gradually bettered her strike rate and brought up her second ODI ton.

Promotion comes off

However, after Smriti fell to Suzie Bates, the team management's decision to elevate Jemimah Rodrigues (76 n.o., 55b, 11x4) to No. 3 paid off as she added 76 runs with Pratika and ensured India continued to bat in top gear. With rain halting play for long, New Zealand's target was revised to 325 in 44 overs, but with none of the top-order batters blossoming, it was never in the chase.

Kranti Gaud and Renuka Thakur struck early and the White Ferns struggled big time as both Georgia Plimmer and Amelia Kerr failed to convert starts.

Though Brooke Halliday and Isabella Gaze scored fifties, it was the end of the road for the Kiwis.

Points table

	M	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
Australia (Q)	6	5	0	1	11	1.704
South Africa (Q)	6	5	1	0	10	0.276
England (Q)	6	4	1	1	9	1.024
India (Q)	6	3	3	0	6	0.628
New Zealand	6	1	3	2	4	-0.490
Sri Lanka	6	1	3	2	4	-1.035
Bangladesh	6	1	5	0	2	-0.578
Pakistan	6	0	4	2	2	-2.651

Q: Qualified

SCOREBOARD

INDIA
Pratika Rawal c sub (Rowe) b Amelia Kerr 122 (*134b, 13x4, 2x6*), Smriti Mandhana c sub (Rowe) b Bates 109 (*95b, 10x4, 4x6*), Jemimah Rodrigues (not out) 76 (*55b, 11x4*), Harmanpreet Kaur c Carson b Mair 10 (*11b, 1x4*), Richa Ghosh (not out) 4 (*1b, 1x4*); Extras (lb-11, nb-2, w-6): 19; Total (for three wkts. in 49 overs): 340.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-212 (Smriti, 33.2 overs), 2-288 (Pratika, 42.6), 3-336 (Harmanpreet, 48.5).

NEW ZEALAND BOWLING
Mair 8-1-52-1, Jess Kerr 8-1-51-0, Devine 6-0-34-0, Carson 6-0-46-0, Tahuhu 4-0-37-0, Amelia Kerr 10-0-69-1, Bates 7-0-40-1.

NEW ZEALAND
Suzie Bates c Pratika b Kranti 1 (*6b*), Georgia Plimmer b Renuka 30 (*25b, 5x4, 1x6*), Amelia Kerr c Smriti b Sneh 45 (*53b, 4x4*), Sophie Devine b Renuka 6 (*9b, 1x4*), Brooke Halliday c Sneh b Shree Charani 81 (*84b, 9x4, 1x6*), Maddy Green c Kranti b Pratika 18 (*20b, 2x4*), Isabella Gaze (not out) 65 (*51b, 10x4*), Jess Kerr c Smriti b Kranti 18 (*13b, 2x6*), Rosemary Mair c Smriti b Deepti 1 (*3b*); Extras (lb-4, w-2): 6; Total (for eight wkts. in 44 overs): 271.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-1 (Bates, 1.3), 2-51 (Plimmer, 9.3), 3-59 (Devine, 11.3), 4-115 (Amelia, 20.5), 5-154 (Green, 27.6), 6-226 (Halliday, 38.4), 7-266 (Jess, 42.6), 8-271 (Mair, 43.6).

INDIA BOWLING
Renuka 6-0-25-2, Kranti 9-0-48-2, Sneh 8-0-60-1, Shree Charani 9-0-58-1, Deepti 8-0-57-1, Pratika 4-0-19-1.

Toss: New Zealand; **PoM:** Smriti.
India won by 53 runs (DLS Method).
India's next match: Oct. 26 vs Bangladesh, Navi Mumbai, 3 p.m.





The architects: Zampa took the fizz out of India's innings before Short anchored the chase. AFP, AP

Short, Connolly seal series after Zampa's four-for

INDIA IN AUSTRALIA

Agence France-Presse
ADELAIDE

Matt Short's composed 74 (78b, 4x4, 2x6) and Cooper Connolly's unbeaten 61 (53b, 5x4, 1x6) steered Australia to a two-wicket win over India on Thursday, sealing the three-match ODI series with a game to go.

After India made 264 for nine at a sold-out Adelaide Oval on the back of Rohit Sharma's 73 (97b, 7x4, 2x6) and Shreyas Iyer's 61 (77b, 7x4), the host reached the target with 22 balls remaining.

Short, who was twice dropped, led the charge before Connolly and Mitch Owen (36, 23b, 2x4, 3x6) finished the job.

"We had just enough runs on the board... it's never easy to defend those totals when you drop a couple of catches"
GILL
India captain

never easy to defend those totals when you drop a couple of catches," said India skipper Shubman Gill. "There was a little bit in the wicket initially, but as the ball got older it got better to bat on."

Earlier, quick Josh Hazlewood opened with 13 dot balls, but it was Xavier Bartlett who got the breakthrough for Australia. In the team for Nathan Ellis, he tempted Gill down the pitch only to chip an easy catch to Marsh at mid-off.

That brought Virat Kohli to the crease, and after an eight-ball duck in Perth, the 36-year-old was keen for runs. But he lasted just four deliveries with Bartlett trapping him lbw to leave India reeling at 17 for two.

It was the first time Kohli had been dismissed for consecutive ducks in his long ODI career.

Rohit weathered the storm, reaching a 59th half-century. Shreyas ably played a supporting role until Mitchell Starc broke their 118-run partnership. Starc removed Rohit in the first over of his second spell, with Hazlewood collecting a mis-timed pull shot in the deep.

Shreyas fell three overs later to Adam Zampa (four for 60), who also accounted for K.L. Rahul, Axar Patel (44, 41b, 5x4) and Nitish Kumar.

Zampa's superb spell restricted India before the Australia batters sealed the deal.

SCOREBOARD

INDIA
Rohit Sharma c Hazlewood b Starc 73 (*97b, 7x4, 2x6*), Shubman Gill c Marsh b Bartlett 9 (*9b, 1x4*), Virat Kohli lbw b Bartlett 0 (*4b*), Shreyas Iyer b Zampa 61 (*77b, 7x4*), Axar Patel c Starc b Zampa 44 (*41b, 5x4*), K.L. Rahul b Zampa 11 (*15b, 1x4*), Washington Sundar c Hazlewood b Bartlett 12 (*14b*), Nitish Kumar st. Carey b Zampa 8 (*10b, 1x4*), Harshit Rana (not out) 24 (*18b, 3x4*), Arshdeep Singh b Starc 13 (*14b, 2x4*), Mohammed Siraj (not out) 0 (*1b*); Extras (b-2, lb-2, w-5): 9; Total (for nine wkts. in 50 overs): 264.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-17 (Gill, 6.1 overs), 2-17 (Kohli, 6.5), 3-135 (Rohit, 29.3), 4-160 (Shreyas, 32.4), 5-174 (Rahul, 36.2), 6-213 (Washington, 41.5), 7-223 (Axar, 44.1), 8-226 (Nitish, 44.6), 9-263 (Arshdeep, 49.5).

AUSTRALIA BOWLING
Starc 10-0-62-2, Hazlewood 10-2-29-0, Bartlett 10-1-39-3, Owen 2-0-20-0, Zampa 10-0-60-4, Connolly 3-0-11-0, Short 3-0-23-0, Head 2-0-16-0.

AUSTRALIA
Mitchell Marsh c Rahul b Arshdeep 11 (*24b, 1x4*), Travis Head c Kohli b Harshit 28 (*40b, 1x4, 1x6*), Matthew Short c Siraj b Harshit 74 (*78b, 4x4, 2x6*), Matt Renshaw b Axar 30 (*30b, 1x4, 1x6*), Alex Carey b Washington 9 (*17b*), Cooper Connolly (not out) 61 (*53b, 5x4, 1x6*), Mitchell Owen c Arshdeep b Washington 36 (*23b, 2x4, 3x6*), Xavier Bartlett c Gill b Arshdeep 3 (*5b*), Mitchell Starc c Axar b Siraj 4 (*7b, 1x4*), Adam Zampa (not out) 0 (*1b*); Extras (lb-3, w-6): 9; Total (for eight wkts. in 46.2 overs): 265.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-30 (Marsh, 7.2), 2-54 (Head, 12.2), 3-109 (Renshaw, 21.4), 4-132 (Carey, 26.6), 5-187 (Short, 35.6), 6-246 (Owen, 42.3), 7-255 (Bartlett, 44.3), 8-260 (Starc, 45.5).

INDIA BOWLING
Siraj 10-0-49-1, Arshdeep 8.2-0-41-2, Harshit 8-0-59-2, Washington 7-0-37-2, Nitish 3-0-24-0, Axar 10-0-52-1.

Toss: Australia; **PoM:** Zampa.
Australia won by two wickets with 22 balls remaining to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.
Third and final ODI: Oct. 25, Sydney, 9 a.m. IST.

Sri Lanka and Pakistan hope for clear skies



Chamari. AFP

Kavita Menon
COLOMBO

As the Women's ODI World Cup 2025 winds down in Colombo, Pakistan and Sri Lanka enter their final league stage clash at the R. Premadasa Stadium, eager to close their campaigns on a high.

Pakistan will chase a last-ditch win, while the host will hope to salvage pride at home and lift the spirits of its sparse local support.

It has been over three years since these sides last met in a 50-over game, when Pakistan claimed a 2-1 series victory.

Sidra Amin led the charge, amassing 218 runs across three games, including a century and a fifty.

In the consolation win, Sri Lanka captain Chamari Athapaththu stood out with her all-round brilliance – skills that remain ever present, most notably in the recent seven-run win over Bangladesh earlier this week.

In a tense finish, Athapaththu's final over produced four wickets, a single, and a dot ball as the Tigresses collapsed chasing nine with five wickets in hand.

That composure will again be central to Sri Lanka's hopes, although sharper fielding remains an area for improvement.

The priority, however, will be greater middle-order stability against Pakistan's disciplined bowling.

Fatima Sana has led the attack with characteristic aggression, while the spinners have been highly effective, often compensating for the side's inconsistent batting performances.

It will be the final opportunity for Sri Lanka's highly backed top-order to come good.

A complete team effort – something the players have emphasised throughout – will be vital if they are to finish on a positive note.

Both sides endured bruising, rain-hit defeats to South Africa in their previous outings at this venue.

This time, they will hope for clear skies and a result that restores belief before they bring their World Cup journeys to a close.

Today's match

Colombo, 3 p.m.

H2H IN ODIs
Played: 33
Sri Lanka 22 | Pakistan 11

IN WORLD CUPS
Played: 2
Sri Lanka 1 | Pakistan 1

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 (SD & HD) & JIOHOTSTAR

SNAPSHOTS

Nishu, Pulkit, Srishti lose in the semifinals

NOVI SAD (SERBIA): Three Indian women wrestlers – Nishu (55kg), Pulkit (65kg) and Srishti (68kg) – exited in the semifinal stage after good starts in their respective categories and were left to fight for bronze at the U23 World Championships here on Thursday.

Turkiye's Tuba Demir beat Nishu 6-4 in a close last-four bout, Pulkit lost her semifinal 6-9 to UWW's Elizaveta Petliakova, and Alina Shevchenko, also sporting the UWW singlet, posted a 10-6 win over Srishti.

Earlier results: Women: Repechage: 76kg: Priya bt Nyla Burgess (Can) 10-0.
Quarterfinals: 55kg: Nishu (55kg) bt Kira Solobchuk (UWW) 10-1; **57kg:** Akari Fujinama (Jpn) bt Neha Sharma 10-0; **65kg:** Pulkit bt Beyza Akkus (Turk) 18-8; **68kg:** Srishti bt Manola Skobelska (Ukr) 6-3.

Bangladesh crushes West Indies

MIRPUR: Bangladesh thrashed West Indies by 179 runs in the series decider on Thursday, sealing the three-match ODI series 2-1.

After posting a strong total of 296 for eight, the hosts bowled out the visitors for 117, wrapping up the innings inside 30.1 overs, all with spin.

The scores: Bangladesh 296/8 in 50 overs (Saif 80, Sarkar 90, Shanto 44, Hosein 4/41) bt West Indies 117 in 30.1 overs (Nasum 3/11, Rishad 3/54).

Toss: Bangladesh; **PoM:** Sarkar; **PoS:** Rishad.

Bulls tame Giants, seal top-four spot

NEW DELHI: Bengaluru Bulls was at its dominant best as it crushed Gujarat Giants with a massive 54-26 victory at the Thyagaraj Indoor Stadium on Thursday.

With this win, Bulls not only secured two crucial points but also confirmed their place in the top four of the standings. Later, UP Yoddhas beat U Mumba 35-32 while Patna Pirates defeated Jaipur Pink Panthers 33-18.

INBRIEF



England wins T20I series against NZ after washout

England won its three-match T20I series against New Zealand 1-0 on Thursday after the third match in Auckland was washed out after only 3.4 overs. The first match at Hagley Oval in Christchurch also was rained out and England won the second game at the same venue on Monday by 65 runs.

Unnati Hooda exits from French Open badminton

Unnati Hooda's run at the French Open Super 750 came to an end when she was beaten by World No. 2 Wang Zhiyi 14-21, 11-21 in pre-quarterfinals, in Cesson-Sevigne on Thursday. In mixed doubles, India's Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani Gadde lost 23-21, 8-21, 17-21 to Thom Gicquel and Delphine Delrue of France.

Ranjana bags silver in 5,000m walk at Asian Youth Games

Ranjana Yadav clinched silver in the girls' 5,000m walk at the Asian Youth Games at Riffa (Bahrain) on Thursday. The Indian clocked 23m, 25.88s to finish behind China's Liu Shiyi, who took the gold in 24:15.27. Korea's Jeong Chaeyeon bagged bronze in 25:26.93. This was India's first medal in athletics at the AYG.

National sub-junior & junior squash from Oct. 25

The Indian Squash Academy in Chennai will host the National sub-junior & junior squash championships from October 25 to 31. The tournament kicks off with qualification rounds on Oct. 25, followed by the main draw from Oct. 28. The categories are u-11, 13, 15, 17 and 19 boys' and girls' events. While the tournament will feature almost all the top players, 17-year-old Anahat Singh has chosen to skip the tournament choosing instead to focus on the PSA tour with a view to improving her international rankings, said a release on Thursday.



Punjab Kings names Bahutule as new spin bowling coach

Indian Premier League side Punjab Kings has roped in former India cricketer Sairaj Bahutule as its new spin bowling coach ahead of the league's next season. The 52-year-old Bahutule, who played two Tests and and eight ODIs for India, has replaced Sunil Joshi, who was serving in the role since 2023.

Ruth Chepngetich gets three-year doping ban

Kenya's marathon world record holder, Ruth Chepngetich has been banned for three years for doping, the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) announced on Thursday. The 31-year-old, a former world marathon champion and a three-time winner of the Chicago Marathon, tested positive for the banned diuretic hydrochlorothiazide in March. She had been provisionally banned from July.

Saudi Arabia to host Masters 1000 event from 2028

The ATP announced on Thursday the creation of a new Masters 1000 event, which will take place annually in Saudi Arabia from as early as 2028. The new event will be played on hard courts and take place "at the start of the season" in a city yet to be determined and will last "one week", ATP chairman Andrea Gaudenzi said in Paris. The long-expected move marks the first-ever expansion of the top-tier category of men's tennis since its creation in 1990. The Saudi tournament will join the nine existing Masters events, which take place in Indian Wells, Miami, Monte Carlo, Madrid, Rome, Toronto/ Montreal, Cincinnati, Shanghai and Paris.

Liverpool rerails its floundering campaign with big win over Frankfurt

Bayern and Chelsea cruise past Club Brugge and Ajax while Real Madrid sweats it out in a narrow one-goal result against Juventus



Off we go: Ekitike scores Liverpool's opener against Eintracht Frankfurt. AP

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

Hugo Ekitike scored against his old club as Liverpool got back on track with a 5-1 victory at Eintracht Frankfurt in the Champions League on Wednesday while Chelsea, Real Madrid and Bayern Munich were among the night's other winners.

Liverpool came into this trip after a run of four consecutive defeats including a 1-0 loss to Galatasaray in its last Champions League outing.

It bounced back in style by coming from behind to hammer Eintracht.

Chelsea won by the same scoreline against Ajax at Stamford Bridge, in a match which featured an early red card and three first-half penalties.

Chelsea has now won its last two European outings since beginning its campaign with a 3-1 defeat at Bayern.

Bayern is one of five teams with the maximum nine points as Harry Kane scored his 20th goal in 12 club appearances this season in a 4-0 cruise against Club Brugge at the Allianz Arena.

Real also has nine points following a hard-earned 1-0 victory against Juventus at the Santiago Bernabeu as Jude Bellingham scored for the first time this season.

The results:

Galatasaray 3 (Osimhen 3, 33, Akgun 60) bt Bodo / Glimt 1 (Helmersen 76); Athletic Bilbao 3 (Guruzeta 40, 88, Navarro 70) bt Qarabag 1 (Andrade 1).

Chelsea 5 (Guiu 18, Caicedo 27, Fernandez 45-pen, Estevao 45+6-pen, George 48) bt Ajax 1 (Weghorst 33-pen); Atalanta 0 drew with Slavia Prague 0.

Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Kristensen 26) lost to Liverpool 5 (Ekitike 35, Van Dijk 39, Konate 44, Gakpo 66, Szoboszlai 70).

Sporting Lisbon 2 (Catamo 69, Santos 86) bt Marseille 1 (Paixao 14).

Monaco 0 drew with Tottenham 0; Real Madrid 1 (Bellingham 57) bt Juventus 0.

Bayern Munich 4 (Karl 5, Kane 14, Diaz 34, Jackson 79) bt Club Brugge 0.

Harmer does the star turn as Proteas win second Test, share the honours

SA IN PAKISTAN

Agence France-Presse
RAWALPINDI

South Africa beat Pakistan by eight wickets in the second Test in Rawalpindi on Thursday to draw the series 1-1 with Simon Harmer taking a maiden five-wicket haul.

The 36-year-old off-spinner finished with six for 50, taking his 1,000th First Class wicket in the process, on a deteriorating pitch.

South Africa eased to the 68-run target for the loss of captain Aiden Markram (42) and Tristan Stubbs (nought), both to spinner Noman Ali, who finished with two for 40.

Ryan Rickelton, who scored an unbeaten 25, hit Sajid Khan for a six to seal an emphatic win minutes before the lunch break for the World Test Championship holder.

Markram was delighted by his side's display after losing the first Test by 93 runs.



Memorable day: Harmer finished with six for 50, taking his 1,000th First Class wicket in the process. AP

"It was a great response after Lahore," said Markram, standing in for regular skipper Temba Bavuma, who missed the tour with a calf injury.

Like Lahore, it was a battle of the slow bowlers.

Pakistan made 333 in their first innings before the South African tail wagged to help them pile up 404 for a crucial 71-run lead, with Senuran Muthusamy and Kabiso Rabada putting on 98 for the final wicket.

Thursday's morning session saw the Pakistan batters crumble, adding just 44 runs after resuming the fourth day on 94 for four.

Harmer torpedoed Pakistan's hopes of saving the Test when he trapped Babar Azam leg-before with the fifth ball of the day after the batsman had reached his 30th Test half-century.

Markram said the performance of the South African spinners, especially Harmer and Keshav Maharaj, gave them a big boost with two Tests in India next month.

"In South Africa you'd think just seamers and some spinners, but we are a work in progress heading to India," he said.

Pakistan captain Shan Masood said some of his side's batting was ''not up to the mark".

"You have to give credit to South Africa," he said.

"They have kept fighting and our lower-order batting, finishing innings off, third-innings collapses are not up to the mark".

The scores: Pakistan 333 & 138 in 49.3 overs (Babar 50, Harmer 6/50) lost to South Africa 409 & 73/2 in 12.3 overs (Markram 42). **PoM:** Maharaj; **PoS:** Muthusamy.



In the mix: Babar and Naseem are back in the team after nearly a year. FILE PHOTO

Babar, Naseem recalled to Pakistan T20I squad

Associated Press
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has recalled Babar Azam and fast bowler Naseem Shah to the Twenty20I squad after nearly a year for next week's home series against South Africa and a subsequent tri-series involving Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe.

Pakistan had mixed results in T20Is in Babar's absence. It won the tri-series in the UAE before the Asia Cup, where it lost three times to India.

The squads:

T20I: Salman Ali Agha (Capt.), Abdul Samad, Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Hasan Nawaz, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Wasim, Salman Mirza, Naseem Shah, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Usman Khan and Usman Tariq.

ODI: Shaheen Shah Afridi (Capt.), Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Faisal Akram, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah, Hasan Nawaz, Hussain Talat, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan, Mohammad Wasim, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub and Salman Ali Agha.

Lakshya, Diksha and Jagsher advance

BADMINTON

Press Trust of India
CHENGDU

Lakshya Rajesh and Diksha Sudhakar reached the girls' pre-quarterfinals while Jagsher Singh Khangurra made the same stage in the boys' section in the Badminton Asia u-17 and u-15 Championships here.

In under-17 girls' singles, Lakshya eased past Chinese Taipei's Kuan Yi Lin 21-17, 21-11 while Diksha beat China's Luo Ya Ru 17-21, 21-16, 21-11. Jagsher scored a 21-14, 21-17 win over China's Zhang Yu Feng.

The girls' doubles pair of Aditi Deepak Raj and P. Vriddhi overcame Malaysia's Sue Mei Teoh and Zi Qing Wan 22-20, 21-12, while the under-15 mixed duo of Sri Sammetla Hemanth and Sharayu Ranjane cruised past the fifth-seeded Singapore pair of Ng Yu Ze and Loo Kit Rei Chara 21-9, 21-11 to move into the round-of-16.

The top-seeded girls' singles player Shaina Manimuthu registered a 21-6, 21-10 victory against Malaysia's Jing Er Tan.

India looks to continue its dominance

ATHLETICS

Press Trust of India
RANCHI

A second string team, made up of several juniors, will look to continue India's dominance in the South Asian senior athletics championships, which make a return after 15 years, here on Friday.

The fourth edition of the championships will mark the revival of the regional event after Kochi hosted the last one in 2008.

The meet is being held in India for the third time, after the inaugural edition in 1997.

Sri Lanka hosted the second edition in 1998.

This time, 206 athletes from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and Maldives will compete across 37 medal events over three days. Pakistan is not taking part.

FIDE to probe Kramnik's comments on Naroditsky

CHESS

Sports Bureau

World chess governing body FIDE will look into former World champion Vladimir Kramnik's statements on American Grandmaster Daniel Naroditsky, who died at the age of 29 on Sunday. The Russian had come under fire for his accusations of cheating against Naroditsky.

Some in the chess fraternity have blamed Kramnik for the death, the cause of which has not been made public yet, though.

FIDE president Arkady Dvorkovich said in a statement that the organisation would take appropriate action where a lack of respect, public harassment, or bullying was observed within the chess community. "I, along with the FIDE Management Board, will formally refer all relevant public statements made by Kramnik – both before and after the tragic death of GM Daniel Naroditsky – to the FIDE Ethics and Disciplinary Commission for independent consideration," he said.

"The chess community has long respected the achievements of Kramnik, and his contributions to our sport are undeniable.

"The same high standards that accompany great achievements, however, also confer a responsibility to uphold the principles of fairness and respect and to be ambassadors for the sport."

Messi extends contract with Inter Miami

Associated Press
FORT LAUDERDALE

Lionel Messi has finally agreed to a new contract with Inter Miami, a deal that required several months to complete and ensures that the sport's biggest icon will be with the Major League Soccer club for its planned move into a new stadium next year.

The deal was announced on Thursday, one day before Inter Miami's playoff opener against Nashville. "He's very, very competitive and he tries to translate that to the team," Miami coach Javier Mascherano said on Thursday.

In-form Verstappen will look to chase glory

FORMULA ONE

Agence France-Presse
MEXICO

Max Verstappen chases a fourth win in five starts this weekend as he bids to heap more pressure on the McLaren duo Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris at Mexican Grand Prix, one of his most rewarding tracks.

Red Bull's four-time World champion, who has won five times in seven years at the high-altitude Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez, has cut Piastri's lead ahead of him, in third place, from 104 points to 40 since August with a scintillating burst of form.



No stopping now: Verstappen who has won five times in seven years at Mexico will be eager to snatch his fourth win this season. AP

Piastri still leads teammate Norris by 14 points, while Norris has struggled for consistency, but finished second behind Verstappen in US Grand Prix.

He remains without a win since the Hungarian race in August.

While the Red Bull bid to snatch glory from McLaren in Mexico's thin air and the final races, Ferrari travel in hope of an unlikely repeat of their last victory, claimed by Carlos Sainz a year ago.

The ‘forgotten’ craftsman: why Kuldeep still waits for his turn

The left-arm wrist spinner, a genuine threat and a master of all formats, has time and again found himself on the sidelines; only nine Indians have more ODI wickets than his 181 and yet he hasn’t been included in the XI in the ODI series in Australia, the coach and the captain preferring batting depth to a bowling match-winner

R. Kaushik



REUTERS

It’s been eight and a half years since, putting into practice tips garnered from Shane Warne, Kuldeep Yadav made a stirring Test debut against Australia in Dharamsala in March 2017. It’s been nearly seven years since the left-arm wrist spinner was installed as the country’s No. 1 Test spinner by then head coach Ravi Shastri, after picking up his maiden overseas five-for in Sydney in January 2019. But such is his lot that, despite terrific returns whenever he has been pressed into service, the 30-year-old from Kanpur has featured in just 15 Tests.

If you thought it was in Test cricket alone that Kuldeep hasn’t got his due, think again. Of all the active Indian bowlers except Ravindra Jadeja but including Jasprit Bumrah - assuming that Mohammed Shami, who hasn’t represented the country since March, doesn’t fall in the ‘active’ category - no one has more One-Day International wickets than Kuldeep who, in normal course, would have been the teams’ lead bowler on their ongoing three-match series in Australia. Yet, Kuldeep is sitting on the sidelines, watching the action from the outer after being considered superfluous because he is only a single-skilled cricketer.

Never was Kuldeep’s absence more deeply felt than in Thursday’s second game at the Adelaide Oval, when India rallied from a poor start to post a competitive 264 for nine. There was a marked lack of experience about Australia’s middle order, seriously weakened by the retirements from the 50-over game of Steve Smith, Marcus Stoinis and Glenn Maxwell. At various stages during the run-chase, India had them on the ropes - 132 for four, then 187 for five - but the home side got out of jail through their rookie duo of Cooper Connolly and Mitchell Owen, the former in his seventh ODI and the latter in his second.

The left-handed Connolly and Owen, the powerful right-hander, batted beautifully and without fear, undoubtedly. Unfazed by the situation, they came hard at India’s pace-heavy attack, itself short on ODI caps with the exception of Mohammed Siraj, playing his 45th game. Arshdeep Singh (11th outing) and Harshit Rana (7th) tried gamely, but Connolly and Owen are used to the kind of wares these two young guns possess. Kuldeep? One is certain he would have put them through a stern examination, but you can’t do that from the outside, can you?

Only nine Indians have more ODI wickets than Kuldeep’s 181. Just two of his contemporaries are ahead of him – Jadeja with 231 and Shami with 206. Of the top ten, Shami (25.85) alone has a better strike-rate than Kuldeep’s 31.79. Heading into Australia, Kuldeep had two and a half times as many scalps as the next highest, Siraj (70), in the 15-man party. Why then wasn’t he in the playing XI in Adelaide? Why did he not start the series in Perth?

The obvious answer

The answer is obvious - the perceived need for batting depth. India are comfortable with a trade-off they can’t afford at the moment, a few extra runs for a match-turning bowler, a trade-off that nearly hurt them during the Test series in England and which has undoubtedly contributed to their second successive overseas ODI series defeat.

To term the treatment being meted out to Kuldeep ‘shabby’ will be no exaggeration. His brand of bowling still holds tremendous novelty factor even though there are more left-arm spinners in international cricket right now than at any stage previously. Kuldeep isn’t a ‘mystery’ bowler with a carrom ball here, a cleverly named delivery there. His unconventionalism is steeped in orthodoxy, if that makes sense.

He is the mirror image of the more prevalent right-arm leg-spinner, his stock ball spinning into the right-hand batter and a wicked wrong ‘un breaking in the opposite direction. For batters primarily used to seeing a left-arm spinner operate in a diametrically opposite way, Kuldeep has taken some getting used to. And even the most accomplished aren’t quite used to him, as his impressive numbers across formats will testify.

Just extraordinary

Despite his sporadic appearances in the last eight and a half years, Kuldeep boasts 68 wickets from 15 Tests at an average of 21.69, taking a wicket every 36.9 deliveries. His 181 ODI wickets have stemmed from 113 appearances, economy 4.99 and strike-rate 31.7; the corresponding numbers in T20Is are 6.70 and 11.7 respectively, courtesy 86 wickets from 47 outings. In all, he has amassed 335 sticks at the international level despite not being an absolute regular in any format. Extraordinary.

It's amazing how, despite being more off than on, Kuldeep has been able to rise to the challenge whenever he’s got an opportunity. At the 50-over Champions Trophy in Dubai in February-March when he was part of a history-scripting four-pronged spin attack for the last three matches, Kuldeep picked up seven wickets, including two for 40 in the final against New Zealand. He backed it up with 15 wickets in 14 matches for Delhi Capitals in IPL 2025 and was therefore in great rhythm when India travelled to England in June for a five-Test series.

It was an unusual English summer with temperatures consistently hovering in the early 30s and the notorious rain staying away. Bumrah, India’s lead bowler in all formats, had been earmarked to play only three Tests to manage his fragile body but even in Bumrah’s presence, there was a case for Kuldeep to play the fourth Test in Manchester, if not the opener at Headingley and the second game in Birmingham (for which Bumrah was rested). The pitches at these three venues were drier than normal and Kuldeep would have been more than a handful. But in their infinite wisdom, new captain Shubman Gill and head coach Gautam Gambhir were convinced India would be better off batting till No. 8 than having a proven match-winner who could have made a massive impact.



AP

The folly of that line of thinking was exposed in the first Test itself when, despite producing five centuries and upwards of 800 runs, India were well beaten. England marched untroubled to a fourth-innings target of 371, cruising home by five wickets. Would Kuldeep have bowled India to victory? Hard to say with absolute certainty. But would his presence have given India a greater chance of eking out victory? Without a shadow of doubt.

India managed to avoid the ultimate punishment for repeatedly ignoring Kuldeep as Siraj and Prasidh Krishna joined hands to conjure a remarkable series-levelling victory at pace-friendly Oval in the final Test. When, within weeks of that epic showdown, the team travelled to the UAE for the T20 Asia Cup, Kuldeep’s pre-eminence came to the fore. Bringing his immense tricks honed over numerous solitary hours in the anonymity of nets into play, he finished with 17 wickets from seven games.

Unlike at the Champions Trophy when end-of-season surfaces played into the hands of the spinners, the early-season pitches weren’t always a tweaker’s ally, but Kuldeep is the kind of bowler who doesn’t need too much assistance from the deck.

Taking flight

He loves defeating batters in the air; in the last couple of years, he has consciously become quicker through the air, attacks the crease better and uses his body more. Coupled with the control that is still a work in progress (as it will be for any bowler, but especially for a wrist spinner), he is a genuine threat anywhere in the world in any format, as he reiterated earlier this month in the two Tests against West Indies.

In Ahmedabad, where an unusually green deck was laid out for the first Test, Kuldeep played second fiddle to Bumrah and Siraj in the first innings, and to Siraj and Jadeja in the second. His four wickets went under the radar even though he beat Shai Hope on the inside edge in the first innings and Roston Chase on the outside in the second to hit each right-hander’s off-stump. Kuldeep was needed to bowl only 14.2 overs in the whole Test but as the teams moved to the singularly unresponsive Arun Jaitley Stadium deck, Kuldeep’s full repertoire was on view.

Edges didn’t carry, the ball didn’t break and nor did the surface even in the 13th session of the game. This wasn’t the kind of pitch where batters could be blasted out or spun to their doom. Patience was the need of the hour; patience, and the ability to keep plugging away, to unearth methods to deceive batters, to negate the slowness of the surface, to use the air to one’s advantage.

No bowler was unplayable, which alone brought his eight-wicket match haul into sharper focus. Somehow, he coaxed pace out of the surface, especially with his wrong ‘un that hastened through to the left-handers. And when John Campbell and Hope led a terrific second-innings counter-attack, Kuldeep showcased a big heart, kept his wits around him and recovered from a poor start to finish with a merited three-for.

Kuldeep is a proven all-format master but despite 29 wickets from nine international outings over two vastly different iterations, he hasn’t got a go in Australia. India have stacked their middle order with all-rounders - Axar Patel, Washington Sundar and Nitish Kumar Reddy - who precede the three specialist quicks, Siraj, Arshdeep and Rana. It’s the way Indian teams in all three formats seem headed uncompromisingly, to bat till No. 8 even if it leaves them light on wicket-taking resources.

Especially with Bumrah rested for the ODIs, there was a compelling case for Kuldeep to be given the opportunity to weave his magic in the meandering middle overs. As parsimonious as they might be, Axar and Washington aren’t in the same league as Kuldeep when it comes to taking wickets. But if India do continue to invest in their multidimensional abilities, they must find another avenue to get Kuldeep into the mix.

That might happen in Sydney on Saturday, and/or at home against South Africa and New Zealand over the next three months. Or it might not. Kuldeep might make an immediate impression, or he might not. But is India’s bowling more threatening with the left-arm wristie in the mix? What do you think?

THE GIST

- Kuldeep, who made his Test debut in March 2017, was touted by Shastri as the country’s No. 1 spinner after his maiden five-for in Sydney in January 2019. And yet, he has appeared in just 15 Tests
- The 30-year-old’s absence was felt strongly in the second ODI against Australia at the Adelaide Oval on Thursday. Undoubtedly, he would have put the young guns, Connolly and Owen, through a stern examination
- Kuldeep has risen to challenges whenever he’s got the opportunity. Even though there was a compelling case for him to work his magic in the middle overs with Bumrah rested, the think-tank has continued to believe that it is better off having batting till No. 8