THURSDAY
November 20, 2025

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THE HINDU

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BJP LEADER'S MURDER

Anmol Bishnoi held, sent to NIA custody

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Hidden cost of polluted groundwater

India needs a real-time monitoring system

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INDIAN CHALLENGE ENDS

Wei stuns second seed Arjun in quarterfinals

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Nitish Kumar to take oath as Bihar's Chief Minister for record 10th time today

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Janata Dal (United) president Nitish Kumar was on Wednesday unanimously elected leader of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Legislature Party ahead of the formation of a new government under his leadership in Bihar on Thursday.

Mr. Kumar, who will take oath as Bihar Chief Minister for a record 10th time, was elected leader of the JD(U) Legislature Party during the meeting with the new MLAs held at his official residence in Patna.

Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha were elected leader and deputy leader of the BJP Legislature Party, respectively, during the meeting held at the party's State headquarters. Uttar Pradesh's Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, who had been appointed the central observer for the election of the BJP Legislature Party leader in Bihar proposed the names and the MLAs supported the proposal.

With this, it is almost certain that Mr. Choudhary and Mr. Sinha will continue as Bihar's Deputy Chief Ministers, as in the previous government.

Later, at a meeting of the NDA held at the Central Hall in the Assembly premises, Mr. Kumar was unanimously elected its Legislature Party leader.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Another innings: Janata Dal (United) president Nitish Kumar (second from left) after the NDA meeting in Patna on Wednesday. PTI

India's Russian oil cuts predate U.S. tariffs: data

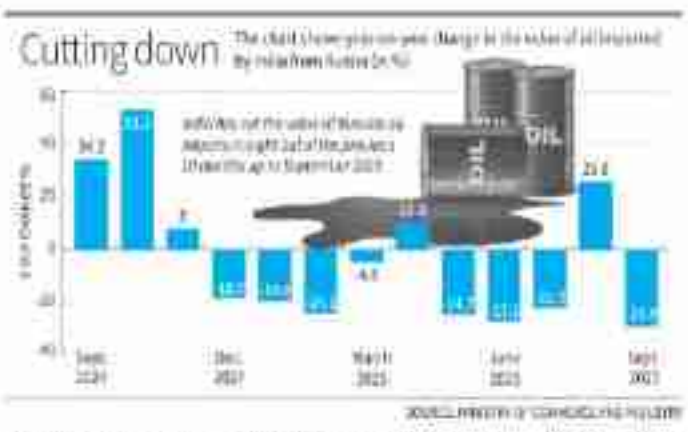
The 25% additional tariff by the U.S. came into effect on August 27 while government figures show a reduction in energy imports from Russia in the previous months compared with 2024

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

India is implementing a larger strategy to reduce its dependence on oil imports from Russia, with the higher tariffs imposed by the U.S. coming at a time when India was already cutting its Russian oil imports, according to an analysis of official data. This has been confirmed by government officials.

An analysis by *The Hindu* of government trade data shows India's oil imports from Russia in September 2025 — the first full month during which the U.S.'s 50% tariff on Indian imports were applicable — were 29% lower in value and 17% lower in volume than in September 2024.

However, the data shows that this is part of a larger strategy rather than a reaction to the tariffs, half of which were imposed as a "penalty" for importing Russian oil.



SOURCE: PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU

Bigger strategy

The additional tariff came into effect on August 27. However, data show that India had cut the value of Russian oil imports in eight of the previous 10 months up to September 2025, compared with the corresponding period of 2024. In five of these months — February, May, June, July and September — the cuts exceeded 20% each.

"India has known for a while now that its dependence on Russian oil imports had grown too high and so it was already working on a plan to reduce this," an official in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry told *The Hindu* on condition of anonymity.

CONTINUED ON
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IN BRIEF

'Pressure' of SIR behind BLO's death: Mamata

NEW DELHI
Highlighting the death of another Booth Level Officer (BLO) in West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday blamed the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls for the incident. » Page 9

Churn in Oppn. bloc ahead of Mumbai poll

MUMBAI
As the local body elections approached in Mumbai, the internal dynamics within the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) are heating up as partners struggle over alliances and arrangements. » Page 9

Tech Shankar among seven Maoists shot dead in A.P.

Raghavendra Srinivas
VISAKHAPATNAM

Seven Maoists of the banned CPI (Maoist) were shot dead during an exchange of fire with the police in the Marredumilli forests of Alluri Sitarama Raju district in Andhra Pradesh early on Wednesday.

This was the second encounter within 24 hours in the forests near G.M. Valasa of the district.

Top Maoist leader Mettur Jogu Rao, alias Tech Shankar, who was the CPI (Maoist) central committee member in charge of the Andhra-Odisha boundary, was among those killed, the police said.

FULL REPORT ON
» PAGE 10

Fresh from farm

Wide variety: Prime Minister Narendra Modi visiting one of the stalls put up as part of an exhibition during the inauguration of the South India Natural Farming Summit 2025, in Coimbatore on Wednesday. ANI

Taliban Industry Minister begins India visit to boost ties, cut reliance on Pakistan

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Against the backdrop of continued hostilities between Pakistan and Afghanistan, Minister of Industry and Commerce of the Taliban administration Alhaj Nooruddin Azizi started a five-day tour of India on Wednesday. Official sources said the visit, which highlights Afghanistan's desire to avoid Pakistani ports for its commercial requirements, will help Afghanistan bypass Pakistan for enhanced connectivity.

The visit is being viewed as a significant outreach by the Taliban administration as it is taking place a month after External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar hosted Taliban's Acting Foreign Minister Khawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi when both sides reaffirmed the air freight corridor to enhance direct trade and commerce.

Alhaj Nooruddin Azizi

Mr. Azizi, who has come with a large business delegation, visited the India International Trade Fair (IITF) 2025 to strengthen bilateral trade and investment. The visiting Afghan team met Neeraj Kharwal, Managing Director of India Trade Promotion Organisation, who explained opportunities for greater participation of Afghanistan in future trade events in India. Mr. Azizi met a number of Indian business representatives after his arrival. He visited stalls set up by Afghan traders in the IITF that are showcasing Afghan agriculture products.

The visit by the Afghan trade Minister, a first since 2021 when the Taliban took charge of Kabul, is expected to boost key Indian exports to Afghanistan such as pharmaceuticals, textiles, machinery, sugar, tea and rice.

India is keen to import Afghan farm products and minerals that have a sizable market in the country.

SC strikes down provisions of Tribunal Reforms Act, tells govt. to set up panel

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday struck down provisions of the Tribunal Reforms Act of 2021, a law designed to alter the tribunal system and give the Union government a dominant role in appointments and functioning, and even fixing the salaries of chairpersons and members.

"When Parliament designs or alters the tribunal system, it must do so in a manner consistent with the constitutional requirements of independence, impartiality, and effective adjudication. A law that undermines these foundational values, such as by enabling executive control over appointments, curtailing tenure arbitrarily, or weakening institutional autonomy, does not merely offend an 'abstract principle', it strikes at the core of the constitutional arrangement," Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai, heading a two-judge Bench comprising Justice K. Vinod Chandran, observed.

The Bench directed the Centre to establish the National Tribunal Commission in four months. It held that the commission was sorely needed as an "essential structural safeguard" to ensure independence, transparency, and uniformity in the functioning, appointment procedure, and administration of tribunals.

The Chief Justice termed the 2021 law a "repackaged version" of the Tribunal Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance. The law was enacted just days after the ordinance was struck down by the Supreme Court in a July 2021 judgment.

> When Parliament designs or alters the tribunal system, it must do so in a manner consistent with the constitutional requirements of independence, impartiality, and effective adjudication
>
> CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA B.R. GAVAI

CONTINUED ON
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Apex court allows CAQM to take 'proactive' steps to keep air pollution in check in Delhi

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday gave the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas (CAQM) a free hand to take "any proactive measure" to curb air pollution threatening Delhi-NCR after the statutory body proposed to include choice Stage IV curbs of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) like work from home and 50% of office attendance in the ongoing Stage III of GRAP itself.

"Any proactive measure of CAQM to reduce air pollution is always welcome," Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai, heading a Bench comprising Justice K. Vinod Chandran, observed in an order. The court said the CAQM must, however, consult stakeholders and take everyone on board.

Remedial measures: Water being sprinkled to control air pollution in the national capital on Wednesday. SHIVA KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

The court was responding to a note submitted by the CAQM proposing short-term and long-term measures against air pollution choking Delhi-NCR.

Amicus curiae, senior advocate Aparajita Singh, highlighted a CAQM recommendation to exempt BS-III emission vehicles from the protection of an August 12 court order, which barred authorities from taking any coercive steps against owners of 10-year-old diesel and 15-year-old petrol vehicles. The CAQM also proposed including the Stage III restriction of staggered office timings in Stage II.

Sports events in schools

The court also directed the CAQM to look into the issue of schools conducting sports events in November and December. Ms. Singh said such events virtually amount to putting children in a gas chamber. The court made it clear that the CAQM must pass the necessary directions to the States concerned on this issue. The court posted the next hearing for December 10.

Government of Tamil Nadu
Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department

The Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department has published a tender on the official portal **https://tntenders.gov.in/nicgep/app** inviting applications from eligible Caterers for cooking and supplying three meals a day to students residing in **38 Social Justice Hostels** functioning in Chennai District.

For further details, please contact 73388 01253.

District Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Officer
Chennai

DIPRO/238/Tender/2025

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POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP-2026

The Defence Institute of Advanced Technology is an autonomous institution fully funded by the Department of Defence Research & Development, Ministry of Defence. It aims consolidated to create unprecedented advancement in Engineering and applied sciences with a thrust area relevant to Defence, Industries, R&D and to conduct research in core areas of Defence Technologies.

DIAT invites applications for the Post-Doctoral Fellowship 2026, interested and eligible candidates may apply for the position of Post-Doctoral Fellow. The application should be submitted to the Joint Registrar (Academic), DIAT (DU), Ginegaon, Pune-411 025, on or before January 31, 2026.

For more details, kindly visit www.diat.ac.in

CORRIGENDUM - PhD ADMISSION NOTICE: JANUARY 2026

In continuation with the earlier PhD Admission Notification dated 05.11.2025, the eligibility criteria for the Industrial scholarship category have been relaxed and the last date for receiving the hard copy of the application has been extended, and 5th December 2025. The candidates who have submitted their applications, no need to resubmit again.

Joint Registrar (Academic), DIAT (DU)

छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल
सेक्टर 19, बिलासपुर, जिला - बिलासपुर (छ.ग.)

// सभी संबंधित को सूचना //

[illegible]

अध्यक्ष
छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल,
बिलासपुर (छ.ग.)

DDA receives 1,500 applications for 1,026 Karkardooma flats

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Development Authority's (DDA) premium "Towering Heights" project in Karkardooma has already received more registrations than the number of available flats, according to an official statement issued on Wednesday.

The project is part of the city's Transit Oriented Development (TOD) policy and is located near to the Karkardooma metro station.

As per the statement, around 1,500 bidders have registered for the e-auction, surpassing the 1,026 premium 2-BHK flats available in the 40-storey, 155-metre-high tower.

The project forms a key part of the upcoming 30-hectare East Delhi Hub, which is being developed as a mixed-use urban centre with residential, commercial and civic spaces, the statement said.

[illegible]

HIMACHAL PRADESH
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
No. PWD(P)-CE/TAN/E-2025-26/F.87-487 Dated: 19-11-2025
"E-Procurement Portal"
Invitation for Bids (IFB)

[illegible]

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money	Time Limit	Cost of Tender Document
1	Construction of Kharah Lane [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] Days	500/-

[illegible]

Key Official Dates		
1.	Publish Date of Tender	[illegible]
2.	Document Download Start Date/Time	[illegible]
3.	Bid Submission Start Date/Time	[illegible]
4.	Bid Submission End Date/Time	[illegible]
5.	Bid Opening Date/Time	[illegible]

[illegible]

Executive Engineer,
Electrical Division
[illegible]
On behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh

MCD to buy new sweeping machines to curb pollution

Two proposals to procure 14 machines passed; BJP, AAP councillors demand accountability from officials on anti-pollution measures; govt. waging a war against pollution: Environment Minister

Suruchi Kumari
NEW DELHI

Two proposals to procure new mechanical road sweeping machines (MRSMs) were passed during a Municipal Corporation of Delhi's (MCD) Standing Committee meeting on Wednesday as part of the civic body's push to tackle dust on city roads and combat air pollution.

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) councillors jointly raised concerns over rising pollution levels in the meeting. They demanded accountability from officials on the progress of anti-pollution measures.

Smoke screen: A view of Karkardooma Pulli [illegible] amid the winter smog and of demonstrating air quality in New Delhi [illegible] Wednesday. [illegible]

The committee cleared the proposals to procure 14 new MRSMs with comprehensive operation and maintenance (O&M) for three years, sanctioned through the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) fund and municipal funds. The MRSMs plan to curb dust pollution shows that a major portion of its budget for the purpose has been allocated to expanding MRSMs and undertaking road repairs under its jurisdiction.

The MCD has also drafted a ₹565.33-crore estimate to procure 60 more MRSMs with 10 years of O&M for the roads it oversees, a senior official said. "We have estimated ₹293.92 crore for 60 vacuum based, battery operated litter picker machines for eight years and for upgrading primary C&D waste collection centres by adding water sprinklers and air quality sensors," the official added. The Delhi government has granted in-principle approval of ₹180.27 crore for these three projects.

Currently, the MCD operates 52 MRSMs, 487 water sprinklers, and 28 anti-smog machines on roads, as well as 15 anti-smog guns installed on high-rise buildings, in line with the Lieutenant Governor's directions. The committee also rejected a pending proposal to standardise salaries of multitasking staff (public health workers) at ₹27,900 per month, a key demand during their month-long protest in October.

New pollution hotspots

Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said on Wednesday that the government is waging a war against pollution and urged people to join its efforts to improve the city's air quality. The Minister said that nearly 62 additional pollution hotspots have been identified and tackling them could significantly reduce overall pollution levels. "The dust that accumulates on roads and emissions from vehicles are major contributors. To address this, specific hotspots have been identified across Delhi, and we are working to mitigate them," Mr. Sirsa told the media.

"This is a war against pollution waged by the Delhi government. For the sake of future generations and cleaner air, we are taking to the streets to fight this battle. Today, we are inspecting this area in Pitampura, a known hotspot, to ensure the absence of traffic jams and to keep traffic flowing smoothly," he said.

Delhi's overall air quality remained in the 'very poor' category on Wednesday and is expected to deteriorate to 'severe' by Saturday, according to official data.

Meanwhile, the Delhi High Court on Wednesday ordered the Directorate of Education (DoE) to submit a status report on a plea by school students seeking a ban on outdoor sports tournaments and trials in the Capital during the peak pollution period from November to January.

'Shirking responsibility'

The court asked the School Federation of India Games (SFIG) to file a status report in the matter while observing that the DoE was "shirking its responsibility". The counsel for the DoE submitted that changing the calendar was SFIG's responsibility, and if the SFIG changes it, the DoE will follow suit.

"Do you recognise that there is a problem from November to January? Do you accept that children should not be subjected to outdoor activities?" Justice Sachin Datta really told the DoE counsel.

Jharkhand Education Project Council
J.S.C.A Stadium Road, Jagannathpur, Sector-3,
Dhurwa, Ranchi - 834004 Phone - 0651-2444302 E-mail: jepcranchi1@gmail.com
E-Tender for Printing and Supply of notebooks (copy) for Class I to XII for 2026-27
BID No. MHE/33285/2025-26/4820

Jharkhand Education Project Council invites online bids through e-tender from prospective Bidders for manufacturing, printing and supply of notebooks for class I to XII for 2026-27. [illegible]

Sl. No.	Activity	Start Date	Time	End Date	Time
1	Online availability of bid document	19.11.2025	10.00 am	09.12.2025	03.15 pm
2	Pre Bid Meeting	25.11.2025	02.30 pm	-	-
3	Online Bid Submission	19.11.2025	10.00 am	09.12.2025	03.15 pm
4	Submission of Paper sample	09.12.2025	10.00 am	09.12.2025	03.00 pm
5	Opening of Technical Bid	10.12.2025	03.15 pm	-	-

Sd/-
(Shashi Ranjan)
State Project Director

PH-35846/Jharkhand Education Project Council/25-26/D

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD(ROADS)
ASSAM, CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI - 3
No. CE/STBR/SOPD-G/NIT/07/2025-26/47-2025
CANCELLATION NOTICE

It is for information to all concerned that the under noted bids vide the office Press Notice No. CE/STBR/SOPD-G/NIT/07/2025-26/[illegible] Dt. 20.09.2025, Package No. - STBR/SOPD-G/Bypass-0116, Package No. - STBR/SOPD-G/Bypass-0211, Package No. - STBR/SOPD-G/Bypass-0312, Package No. - STBR/SOPD-G/Bypass-0414, Package No. - STBR/SOPD-G/Bypass-0515, Package No. - STBR/SOPD-G/Bypass-0616, Package No. - STBR/SOPD-G/Bypass-0817, Package No. - STBR/SOPD-G/Bypass-0918, Package No. - STBR/SOPD-G/Bypass-1015, Package No. - STBR/SOPD-G/Bypass-1120, Package No. - STBR/SOPD-G/Bypass-1516, Package No. - STBR/SOPD-G/Bypass-1601, Package No. - STBR/SOPD-G/Bypass-2100 of Bypass LAC under SOPD-G for the year 2026-28 has been cancelled due to technical reasons.

Executive Engineer, PWD(Roads),
State Bridge Design Branch,
O/o the CE, PWD(R), Assam, Chandmari,
Guwahati - 03

CORR/CE/[illegible]/25-26

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE

[illegible]

Sl. No.	Description	Quantity Required	Quantity Allotted	Date Upload
1	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

[illegible]

Sl. No.	Description
1	[illegible]

[illegible]

Sr. DME/C&W/Danapur
East Central Railway

बिहार सरकार
[illegible]
"शुद्धि पत्र"

[illegible]

क्र. सं.	विवरण	पूर्व में प्रकाशित तिथि एवं समय	संशोधित तिथि एवं समय
1.	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
2.	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
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4.	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
5.	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

[illegible]

कार्यपालक अभियंता,
भवन प्रमंडल, [illegible]

PH-01/2025 (B C D) 2025-26

नहीं की गई, कार्यालय को सूचनी परिणाम।

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
(Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Division)

[illegible]

Divisional Railway Manager
East Central Railway, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Division

PR/1/2025/DDU/TUNDIA/25-26/03

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-OPEN TENDER NOTICE

[illegible]

Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer
E.C. Railway Danapur

PR/1/2025/[illegible]

Red Fort blast: doctors with foreign degrees come under police scrutiny

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Doctors with medical degrees from foreign universities have come under the scanner as the Delhi police sought their details from healthcare centres in the Capital on Wednesday.

The move comes amid the police probing the doctors' links with terror networks. Four doctors have been taken into custody for their suspicious involvement in the Red Fort bomb blast. Officials said both government and private healthcare facilities have been asked to provide comprehensive information on medical staff who obtained qualifications abroad, specifically from Pakistan, Bangladesh, the UAE, and China.

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TERRITORIAL J.D. [illegible]
CIVIL JUDGE CUM [illegible]
CONTROL LED EAST [illegible]
NO. 10, NEW DELHI [illegible]
KARKARDOOMA COURTS, DELHI

[illegible]

TENDERS

[illegible]

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF [illegible]
TERRITORIAL J.D. [illegible]
CIVIL JUDGE CUM [illegible]
CONTROL LED EAST [illegible]
NO. 10, NEW DELHI [illegible]
KARKARDOOMA COURTS, DELHI

[illegible]

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, TAMATAM [illegible] Tamatam [illegible] Tamatam [illegible] Tamatam

Interim bail for activist in Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday allowed interim bail to activist Jyoti Jagtap, who was arrested in 2020 in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case.

A Bench of Justices M.M. Sundresh and Satish Chandra Sharma passed the order following a submission by Ms. Jagtap's counsel, senior advocate Aparna Bhat, that her client had been in jail for five years.

Ms. Jagtap had moved the apex court against an October 17, 2022 order of the Bombay High Court, which refused her bail under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The High Court reasoned that the National Investigation Agency's case against her was "prima facie true" and that she was part of a "larger conspiracy" by the banned outfit – CPI (Maoist).

'Unbearable pressure' of SIR behind BLO's death in West Bengal: Mamata

28 lives lost since rollout of exercise in State, says CM; cites fear, uncertainty, stress, workload as causes; urges EC to 'act with conscience'; deaths have no link with revision of electoral rolls, BJP

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Highlighting the death of another Booth Level Officer (BLO) in West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday blamed the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls for the incident.

"A process that earlier took three years is now being forced into two months on the eve of elections to please political masters, putting inhuman pressure on BLOs. I urge the EC to act with conscience," Ms. Banerjee posted on X.

Shanti Mini Ekka, a BLO in Jalpaiguri's Mal block, allegedly died by suicide in the early hours of the day. Her family members claimed that they had requested the joint Block Development Officer to relieve her from BLO duty, but she was told to continue.

Ms. Banerjee said she was "deeply shocked and saddened" over the death and claimed that it was due to "unbearable pressure of the ongoing SIR work".

She claimed that 28 people have lost their lives since the SIR was rolled out in the State – some due to "fear and uncertainty, others due to stress and overload". "Each precious loss are being lost because of the unplanned, relentless workload imposed by the so-called Election Commission (EC)," the CM added.

Even in the run-up to the launch of the SIR in the State, which will go to the polls next year, the ruling Trinamool Congress had highlighted incidents of unnatural deaths and linked them to the exercise.

'No cure for disease'

Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Suvendu Adhikari said the deaths had nothing to do with the SIR.

"The exercise is going on in 12 States and Union Territories. This [allegations by the CM] is nothing but a disease that has gripped the Trinamool Congress. We don't have any cure for that," he said.

On Tuesday, two weeks after the second phase of the SIR began in nine States and three Union Territories, the EC said more than 50.25 crore of the nearly 51 crore electors had received the enumeration forms.

The enumeration phase began on November 4 and will continue till December 4. The draft list will be published on December 7, followed by a claims and objections period, and the final list will be released on February 9.

(Those in distress can contact Tele MANAS at 14416 or toll-free 1800-89-14416.)

Strong opposition: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addressing a rally against the SIR exercise in Kolkata on November 18, 2025. PTI

BLO on SIR duty dies of cardiac arrest in Rajasthan

The Hindu Bureau
JAIPUR

A government school teacher working as a Booth Level Officer and tasked with SIR duty died of cardiac arrest in Rajasthan's Sawai Madhopur district on Wednesday.

Family members of the 34-year-old Class 3 teacher, Hari Om Balawa, alleged that a Revenue Department official had called him numerous times before he collapsed.

Churn in Oppn. bloc ahead of Mumbai civic body poll

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

As the local body polls approach, the internal dynamics within the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) are heating up as partners struggle over alliance arrangements.

In the latest, Mumbai Congress chief Varsha Gaikwad and other leaders met NCP (SP) president Sharad Pawar on Wednesday to discuss an alliance with its "natural ally".

Highlighting that Congress wants to contest with "like-minded parties", Ms. Gaikwad said, "We cannot unite with someone who takes the law into their hands. Besides, Mr. Pawar is a natural ally of the Congress and we met him to discuss the polls and potential alliance with us."

This comes after Congress expressed its intent to contest elections independently in the municipal corporation election in Mumbai, and Shiv Sena (UBT) advised it to introspect its decision.

Ms. Gaikwad and other party leaders met Mr. Pawar and his daughter and Baramati MP Supriya Sule.

The meeting is seen as Congress looking for a new equation, as its ally Shiv Sena (UBT) has expressed its intent to contest the elections with Raj Thackeray's Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), and the grand old party is hesitant about MNS's entry in the MVA.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) election is expected to be held in January 2026 in all 227 wards.

NCP leader and MLA Ajit Pawar. PTI

Breaking ties

In a related development, the Samajwadi Party (SP) on Wednesday announced its decision to exit the MVA and contest the civic body election on its own. Party leader and MLA Abu Asim Azmi made the announcement while criticising the Congress for not taking all Opposition parties along. The SP will field candidates in 150 seats in the BMC, Mr. Azmi said, adding, "across the State, we will contest every local election independently."

Meanwhile, Sikh community leaders in Mumbai demanded a fair representation in the BMC poll.

"In case of continued neglect, the community will boycott elections and vote NOTA across Sikh-majority wards," read a recent letter by a Sikh outfit to all major political parties.

(With inputs from PTI)

The Hindu Young World Quiz on Nov. 25

The Hindu Bureau
JAIPUR

The 24th edition of The Hindu Young World Quiz, in association with State Bank of India (SBI), will be held in Jaipur on November 25 at the Maharana Pratap Auditorium in Bhamashah Vidya Bhawan, Vidyadharam on K.N. Shinde Marg. Five teams of two students each can register from any school in Jaipur. There is no registration fee.

Students may contact Kalesh Chand Gupta (9887948330) for registration.

SBI, Jaipur, is the title sponsor of the event.

Sandeep Bhatnagar, the chief general manager of the branch, along with other senior officials, will give away the prizes.

SBI
THE HINDU Young World Quiz 24TH EDITION

Delhi

DELHI

THURSDAY, NOV 20

FRIDAY, NOV 21

SATURDAY, NOV 22

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	28	10
Safdarjung	28	10
Palam	28	11

Delhi Palam Today

28°C. The weather will be city. Day will be comfortable with light breeze. Night will be a bit cold. Pollution level will be very severe.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow

22°C. Morning will be dry & cold with mist and haze. Day will be pleasant but severe pollution. Night skies will be very clear. Dry weather to continue.

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• GURUGRAM 306, City Center, Sector 29 (Near Hotel Pitazio)
• WAZIRPUR A-5, Near Richi Rich Banquet (Opp. Shalimar Bagh)
• NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-18, Noida, UP
• LAJPAT NAGAR, 4V, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

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E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
Department of Mines & Geology
Khanija Bhavan, Race Course Road, Bangalore-01
E-mail: directmg@karnataka.gov.in
No. DMG/MLS/Auction/2025-26 Dated: 10.11.2025
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
The Department of Mines and Geology is calling tender for auction of old Iron Ore stock lying in the cancelled stock yards and generated Iron Ore Fines at sponge Iron Plant under various notifications through MSTC.
Eligibility conditions, terms and conditions, date and time for participating in the electronic auction are provided in the Tender Document. Separate Lot wise auction notifications are published in MSTC portal. Tender Documents, notifications, updates and other details for the e-auction process of respective lots shall be available in electronic form only at the website of MSTC Ltd.
https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ecsearch/search.jsp
The auction of old stock for each lot is "AS IS WHERE IS AND NO COMPLAINT BAS-IS". The interested bidders shall ascertain the quantity and quality of the Iron/Manganese ore before participation. The Department is not responsible for any dispute arising after confirmation of the bid.
Interested bidders may visit the MSTC Ltd website.
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DIRECTOR
Department of Mines & Geology

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I.A.S. Association Building, Near Patna Airport, Patna-14.
POST GRADUATE MEDICAL ADMISSION COUNSELLING (PGMACC-2025)
for MD / MS / PGD / DNB (Degree & Diploma) in Govt./Private Medical Colleges of Bihar
Adv. No.: BCECEB/PGMACC-2025/06 Dated : 19.11.2025
Notice for Re-scheduled date of Online Application & Choice Filling
Controller of Examination

Uttarakhand Urban Sector Development Agency (UUSDA)
Urban Development Department, Government of Uttarakhand
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CANCELLATION NOTICE

IN BRIEF

Trinamool MP seeks police action against W.B. Governor

The face-off between Trinamool Congress MP Kalyan Banerjee and West Bengal Governor C.V. Ananda Bose intensified further on Wednesday after the politician lodged a counter-complaint against the State's Constitutional head at the Lake Street police station in Kolkata within 24 hours of the latter having filed an FIR against the former at the same police station. Seeking to provide information under Section 173 (3) of the BNS, Mr. Banerjee, in his complaint, sought police action against the Governor, including those pertaining to criminal conspiracy and acts endangering India's sovereignty, unity, and integrity. ●

Ladakh LG admits discontent over team for talks with Centre

Ladakh Lieutenant Governor (L-G) Kavinder Gupta on Wednesday acknowledged that some people are unhappy with what they see as "imbalanced" representation in the ongoing dialogue with the Centre, but expressed hope that all issues would be resolved through discussions. The Ladakh Buddhist Association has said the majority of representatives in the ongoing talks were from the Muslim community. ●

Dept. to connect Rajasthani diaspora with State's progress

The Bharatiya Janata Party government in Rajasthan on Wednesday decided to establish a dedicated department to connect Non-Resident Rajasthanis settled in India and abroad with the State's development. The department will provide a platform for dialogue and cooperation between the Rajasthani diaspora and the State government.

Kerala CEO warns against obstruction of SIR work

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Obstructing Booth Level Officers (BLO) from discharging their duties relating to the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls will attract "strict criminal action", the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Kerala, Rathan U. Kelkar, said here on Wednesday.

At a press conference, Mr. Kelkar said the BLOs were prevented from doing their work in Malappuram and Kasaragod.

"As long as a person is appointed as a BLO, that person will be considered a public servant for the work of the Election Commission of India (ECI). Everybody should know that they have a prominent role to play. The District Collectors have been instructed to take strict criminal action under Section 121 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita against anyone who tries to obstruct their work," the CEO said.

Section 121 deals with obstructing the duties of public servants.

Mr. Kelkar said his office was taking the SIR forward "through teamwork" and by addressing the issues faced by the BLOs. Complaints regarding work pressure on the BLOs would be looked into.

He said the BLOs were appointed for Constitutionally-mandated work under Section 13B(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950. "Once a person is appointed a BLO, the control over the person rests with the ECI," he said.

India will become hub of natural farming; science, tradition to lead way: PM

Natural farming is the need of 21st-century agriculture, says Modi; bats for the restoration of soil health; backs on traditional knowledge, scientific strength, and government support for growth

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE

Green vistas: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Tamil Nadu Governor R. N. Ravi (left) at the inauguration of the South India Natural Farming Summit, in Coimbatore on Wednesday. PTI

India is poised to transform into a global hub of natural farming, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in Coimbatore on Wednesday, adding that moving on this path, ingrained in the country's traditions, is a necessity.

The Prime Minister said expansion of natural farming is the need of 21st-century agriculture and pitched for the restoration of soil health that has deteriorated due to excessive use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. "Our goal must be to make natural farming a fully science-backed movement," he said after inaugurating the South India Natural Farming Summit 2025 conducted by farmers' associations to propagate ideals of the late organic farming scientist, G. Nammalvar.

'Heartening trend'

Mr. Modi said the trend of educated youth taking up agriculture as a vocation and adopting modern techniques was heartening. He said traditional knowledge, scientific strength, and government support would enable India to show the way in natural farming to the world.

The National Mission on Natural Farming initiated last year has had its effect on lakhs of farmers.

About 35,000 hectares of land in Tamil Nadu are now under organic and natural farming.

Emphasising a joint effort, the Prime Minister appealed to the State government to utilise the capabilities of Farmer Producer Organisations to broad-base natural farming, with an emphasis on millet millets.

The Prime Minister urged farmers to start by bringing one acre under natural farming for a cropping season every year, and to scale up gradually.

Agricultural exports have doubled in the past 11 years owing to the policies. Assistance exceeding ₹10 lakh crore has been provided under the Kisan Credit Card scheme for farming and allied activities, including livestock and fisheries, and the reduction in Goods and Services Tax on bio-fertilisers has benefited farmers substantially, Mr. Modi said.

The Prime Minister released the 21st instalment of PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi, transferring ₹18,000 crore to farmers across the country. The beneficiaries include lakhs of farmers in Tamil Nadu. So far, ₹4 lakh crore has been directly transferred to the bank accounts of small farmers under the scheme, he said.

Mr. Modi advocated multi-crop agriculture over monoculture, citing the practice in the hilly areas of Kerala and Karnataka, where the productivity of a cultivable area was being optimised.

'Include in curriculum'

He appealed to scientists and research institutions to ensure integration of natural farming in curriculum, and to consider farmers' fields as living laboratories.

Mr. Modi exuded hope that the mission will pave the way for the emergence of new ideas and solutions. He later interacted with a group of agricultural scientists and agriculture-practising natural farming.

PM releasing a coin and stamps in Puttaparthi on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Modi releases ₹100 coin and postal stamps in Puttaparthi

K. Umashanker
PUTTAPARTHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi released a ₹100 commemorative coin and a set of postal stamps at the centenary celebrations of Sri Sathya Sai Baba at Prasanthi Nilayam in Puttaparthi, Andhra Pradesh, on Wednesday.

Addressing a gathering of devotees and students at the Hill View Stadium, the Prime Minister recalled the spiritual leader's decades of humanitarian service and legacy.

Mr. Modi opened the centenary celebrations a "blessing for the nation", stating that Sathya Sai Baba's universal message of love, service, and harmony had influenced millions across the globe.

Highlighting the charitable projects of Sri Sathya Sai Baba's organisations, Mr. Modi referred to medical services, drinking water projects spanning more than 2,000 km of pipelines, and relief efforts during the 1819 earthquake in Gujarat in 2001.

T.N. BSP chief murder case: SC stays probe transfer to CBI

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday modified an earlier order to stay the transfer of the Kenneth Armstrong murder case to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

On October 10, the apex court had stayed a Madras High Court order of September 24 quashing a 700-page charge-sheet lodged in the murder of Armstrong, the Bahujan Samaj Party's (BSP) Tamil Nadu president. However, at that time, the bench did not stay the part of the High Court order directing the transfer of the murder probe to the CBI.

"The direction for transferring the investigation to the CBI shall remain in operation," the top court had ordered on October 10.

Armstrong was killed in Chennai by unknown assailants on July 5, 2024.

Move to put off U.P. teachers' recruitment test triggers uproar over 'repeated delays'

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Venting ire: Candidates appearing for the teacher recruitment examination staging a protest in Lucknow in 2022. FILE PHOTO

The Uttar Pradesh Education Services Selection Commission's (UPESSC) decision to postpone the Trained Graduate Teacher (TGT) exam sparked widespread anger among aspirants on Wednesday over "repeated delays" in the recruitment process.

The aspirants pointed out that it was for the fifth time the exam had been postponed and accused the government of "playing with the future of lakhs of candidates who are wasting the prime years of their life in the hope of jobs". They added that youth in search of government jobs in the State are facing a bleak future.

The UPESSC had issued a notice on Tuesday stating that the TGT written examination, which was scheduled for December 18 and 19, has been postponed.

"The revised dates will be announced later," the notice stated.

About 8.6 lakh aspirants had applied for 3,539 teaching posts in government schools and some of them expressed their frustration over the delays.

"The notification for the examination was put out in early 2022 and it was supposed to be held the same year. After protests by aspirants over the delay, the commission scheduled the examination for April 4-5, 2023. Later, it revised the dates to May 14-15, July 21-22, and finally December 18-19. Now, the exam has been postponed again," Hemant Verma, an aspirant from Prayagraj, said.

"The delays are affecting over eight lakh aspirants who consider this examination as a major step towards upward mobility. We are staring at a bleak future," he said.

The UPESSC is entrusted with the responsibility of recruiting teachers for government schools, aided non-government colleges, aided minority colleges, aided non-government intermediate colleges, higher secondary schools, schools run and managed by the Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Board, aided junior high schools and affiliated primary schools, and aided minority junior high schools and affiliated primary schools.

Criminal acts: Cong.

Targeting the BJP-led State government, the Opposition Congress termed the repeated delays "shameful". "Continuous delay for years in conducting the examination is a criminal act against aspirants. It is shameful that youth are forced to spend years jobless due to the fault of the government system, investing lakhs in preparation and our accommodation," said State Congress president Ajay Rai.

Govt. hospitals in Delhi to have colour-coded bedsheets for 'visual assurance of cleanliness'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Beds in Delhi government hospitals will have sheets of different colours on each day of the week. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Delhi government on Wednesday introduced colour-coded bedsheets for each day of the week to ensure that hygiene standards are met at all government hospitals in the city.

Announcing the initiative, Health Minister Pankaj Kumar Singh said the system was designed not only to streamline linen management but also to provide a "visual assurance of cleanliness" to patients and their families.

The government hospitals will use white sheets on Monday, pink on Tuesday, green on Wednesday, purple on Thursday, blue on Friday, light grey on Saturday, and peach on Sunday, the Minister said.

"The well-being of our patients is our top priority. This is a simple yet crucial step to create an environment of trust and transparency. This initiative will not only reduce hospital-acquired infection rates but also have a positive psychological impact," Mr. Singh said while addressing mediapersons.

According to an official statement, the initiative is a direct application of the principles outlined in the Centre's Swakshy guidebook, which highlights the significance of proper linen management in preventing infections in public health facilities. The new system will simplify adherence to protocols mandated in the guidebook, making it easier for staff to manage linen cycles and maintain highest standards of hygiene, it stated.

RJD's Kerala unit searches for identity amid Bihar Assembly poll debacle

Aabha Raveendran
ALUVA

The political entity that functions as the Rashtriya Janata Dal's (RJD) Kerala unit, led by M.V. Shreyams Kumar and formerly by his late father M.P. Veerendra Kumar, has represented perhaps the most dramatic transformation in the State's recent political history. The faction had a separate name and electoral symbol during the local body polls in 2000, 2005, 2020 and now in 2025.

Its political metamorphosis began from the split of the Janata Dal (Secular) [JD(S)] and subsequent re-branding as the Socialist Janata (Democratic) [SJD] in 2006, the Janata Dal (United) [JD(U)] in 2015, and the Lokantrik Janata Dal (LJD) in 2020.

The faction had left the Communist Party of India (Marxist)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) following the denial of the Kozhikode seat to Veerendra Kumar in the 2009 Lok Sabha poll. Thus, three of the five JD(S) legislators became the SJD and secured an electoral alliance with the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF). However, the party leaders and workers, who have always been aligned with a national party, did not like the "local party" status. Hence, in 2014, the SJD merged with the JD(U) led by Nitish Kumar.

Following the JD(U)'s national alignment with the BJP, the State unit was reborn as the LJD, led by Sharad Yadav, in 2018, and it tactfully jumped on the LDF bandwagon.

A proposed unification between the LJD and the JD (S) had been a protracted topic of internal discussion, yet a formidable faction within the LJD vehemently opposed the amalgamation. One significant objection cited was the anticipated alignment of the JD(S), led by former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, with the BJP, a political development that materialised later.

The final structural change occurred in 2023 when the LJD merged with the RJD, thereby cementing its status as a recognised State-level unit of a national party and strengthening its position within the LDF alliance. "We had options to join either the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh or the RJD. The former was not very interested in spending out of U.P. and hence we chose the RJD," said Varghese George, State secretary-general of the RJD, who has been with the faction from the JD(S) days.

'Workers disillusioned'

Meanwhile, the constant changes have put the loyal party workers in a state of disillusionment. "We are losing the faith of our workers. We need to be a formidable force in the State, but repeated defects have taken a toll on the party," Mr. George added.

The RJD is now the third largest constituent of the LDF after the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India in Wayanad, Kannur and Kozhikode districts, where it has a considerable following. Having worked within the UDF as well as the LDF, the RJD finds the LDF more disciplined and easier to work with, while appreciating the openness in the UDF, Mr. George said.

As has been the pattern in the past, and more recently with the RJD receiving a drubbing in the Bihar Assembly election, this socialist group still appears to be searching for an identity and an enduring national alliance that aligns with its State-level political compulsions.

Robbers flee with ₹7 cr. from van in Bengaluru

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In a daring daylight robbery, robbers posing as Income Tax Department officials allegedly intercepted a van carrying cash for ATMs in Bengaluru, threatened the staff, and escaped with cash estimated at ₹7 crore.

According to the police, the vehicle was transporting cash from a private bank branch in J.P. Nagar when an SUV blocked its way. The robbers allegedly claimed that they needed to "verify documents" and forced the staff to cooperate.

The robbers then allegedly made the staff sit in their car along with the cash boxes and drove towards Hairy Circle. After reaching the spot, the gang forced the staff to leave and fled with the money.

A transfer manhunt, involving special teams, has been launched for the accused. The police have examined over 50 CCTV camera recordings and alerted checkpoints across routes.

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UP Rising

Yogi Adityanath's Vision Transforms Ayodhya, Lucknow & Tribal Heartlands

"Uttar Pradesh is creating models the world will follow in the future."
- Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister, U.P.

A new era of development, technology, culture & heritage in Uttar Pradesh

AYODHYA: A GLOBAL MODEL OF SPIRITUAL & MODERN DEVELOPMENT

Ayodhya's Transformation Under CM Yogi

Ayodhya today stands as a **prosperous, rapidly developing spiritual city,** drawing millions of visitors from India and abroad. Even before construction began on the **Shri Ram Temple,** CM Yogi Adityanath had charted a long-term plan to **restore Ayodhya to its historic glory.**

Ayodhya Master Plan 2031

A massive urban reform mission covering **133.67 sq. km,** backed by an investment of **₹1,000+ crore,** is turning Ayodhya into a **world-class, sustainable spiritual hub.**

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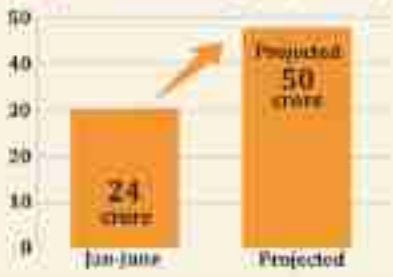
- International Airport ₹1,450 crore
- Outer Ring Road ₹3,835 crore
- Ram Ki Pauri Redevelopment ₹24 crore
- Gaptar Ghat ₹57 crore
- Hotels & Tourism ₹250 crore

Ayodhya Tourist Footfall (Jan- June 2025)



"Ayodhya is emerging as the world's foremost spiritual destination."
- Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister, U.P.

LUCKNOW TO HOST 'MINI INDIA': 19th NATIONAL JAMBOREE RETURNS AFTER 61 YEARS

A Global Cultural Convergence

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Jamboree Dashboard

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Key Features

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PRAYAGRAJ SHINES GLOBALLY

'Sounds of Kumbh' Gets Grammy Nomination

Celebrating the spiritual energy of Prayagraj, the album **"Sounds of Kumbh"** has secured a **Grammy nomination** for Best Global Music Album at the 68th Grammy Awards.

Album Highlights

- Curated by Siddhant Bhatia
- 12 tracks, 50+ artists
- Blends ghat ambience, ancient mantras & binaural beats
- Showcases Mahakumbh's 45-day spectacle on the world stage

TRIBAL TRANSFORMATION: EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES WITH PRIDE & PROGRESS

Dharti Aaba Campaign: Development in 517 Villages

Under CM Yogi, tribal welfare has reached **unprecedented saturation levels** across **26 districts,** bringing schemes like:

Schemes

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- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana
- Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana
- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi
- Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana

Major Achievements

- Tharu, Buksa, Bhoria tribes receive **housing, education, drinking water, and electricity**
- **815 Buksa families** in forest regions fully connected
- **371 Tharu SHGs** linked to national markets via Tharu Handicraft Company
- New Tharu Museum in Balrampur; more coming in Mirzapur, Sonbhadra, Maharajganj
- Eklavya Model Schools & Sarvodaya Hostels uplift tribal youth
- **700+ ST candidates** selected for administrative roles

UP LEADS THE AI REVOLUTION: FARMING, GOVERNANCE & CULTURE GO DIGITAL

UP Global Pilot for AI in Agriculture

Under a World Bank, Google partnership, Uttar Pradesh became the **world's first pilot site** where AI transformed outcomes for **smallholder farmers.**

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- SMART CITIES & ICCCS — Enhancing urban governance
- AI IN HEALTH & MAHAKUMBH-2025 — Empowering care and events in UP

AI Across UP

Transforming Lives with Technology

- Real-time crowd management
- Khoya-Paya Centre reunites missing persons in minutes
- AI-driven emergency response systems
- AI-powered diagnostics & robotic surgeries

"Uttar Pradesh is blending ancient heritage with future-ready innovation"
- Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister, U.P.

From Ayodhya's global rise to Lucknow's grand Jamboree, from the Grammy spotlight on Prayagraj to deep outreach in tribal villages, and from AI-led agriculture to smart governance, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has positioned Uttar Pradesh as India's fastest-rising state.

A new Uttar Pradesh is taking shape

spiritual, modern, tech-driven, inclusive, and globally admired

Breaking the rules

Post-facto clearance must remain the exception, not the rule

The majority decision by a Bench of the Supreme Court to recall its May 2025 order, which had stayed the grant of post-facto (environmental) clearances, illustrates the difficulty of dealing with the seemingly irreversible consequences of a much-abused law. The controversy is also about the form of the Environment Ministry's instruments that normalised these exceptions. The Environment (Protection) Act 1986 and EIA notifications of 1994 and 2006 are framed around prior environmental clearance (EC), which means that large construction and industrial projects must not start work until an authority has assessed their consequences. Decisions by the Court including *Common Cause* (2017) and *Alembic Pharmaceuticals* (2020) treated post-facto EC as impermissible where prior EC was mandatory. The order in May, in Vanashakti, read this as ruling out post-facto EC's altogether for such projects. The new majority does not say 'EC first' is no longer the rule but locates a narrow space for post-facto clearances by relying on Alembic, *D. Swamy*, and others to allow 'regularisation' when considerable resources have already been committed, usually with fines. This will mean that the Ministry can maintain 'EC first' as the legal default and allow post-facto clearances only in rare, highly constrained cases. In any case the spirit of the EC regime remains *ex ante*.

A clearance granted after construction has begun or finished cannot replicate the EIA's rationale, which is to make environmental-related decisions before the potential cumulative consequences are underway. Post-facto clearances can only impose penalties, prescribe mitigation or order closure or demolition. Even if the judiciary permits such ECs in some circumstances now, the clearances will be remedial and sit uneasily with the structure of environmental jurisprudence in India since the 1990s. The majority's concern about differential treatment of past and future violators is also understandable, even if its remedy is not. Vanashakti struck down the 2017 notification and subsequent Environment Ministry office memoranda that facilitated post-facto ECs, but it let existing post-facto ECs stand. The majority treated this as discriminatory, which is fair, but one qualifications during a shift from a permissive to a stricter regime is to be expected during regulatory housekeeping. Its existence does not by itself require that an old route be revived. The Court has also recalled the bar on post-facto ECs and reopened the legal question, indicating that limited post-facto regularisation is not in itself unlawful. In the end, the Ministry must treat post-facto ECs as exceptional not least because they are inherently at odds with the legal framework. Any complaint about discrimination between past and future violators should be addressed by tightening legacy clearances, not by normalising post-facto regularisation.

Reset with Riyadh

US seems to have de-hyphenated Saudi Arabia and Israel in its West Asia plans

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman's visit to the White House marked the official end of a brief chill in relations between the most powerful country and the most influential Arab state. This had hit a low after Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi dissident journalist in the U.S., was murdered inside the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul in October 2018. U.S. intelligence agencies later concluded that MBS had ordered the killing. During his election campaign, Joe Biden had vowed to hold MBS accountable. Yet, it was Mr. Biden who took steps to rehabilitate the prince. He travelled to Jeddah in July 2022 where he greeted the heir to the Saudi throne with a fist bump. Donald Trump, who brokered the 2020 Abraham Accords, has been keen to deepen America's traditional ties with its Arab partners. On Tuesday, he defended MBS's human rights record, claiming that the prince "knew nothing" about Khashoggi's murder. He also promised to sell tanks and F-35 fighters to Saudi Arabia, despite Israel's objections. It will also get access to America's most advanced computer chips. MBS is seeking to build vast data centres to transform Saudi Arabia into a technological power house.

Historically, Saudi Arabia's abysmal human rights record has played little role in shaping its relationship with Washington, long anchored in geopolitical and energy interests. There have been moments of strain, such as the 1973 oil shock, the post-9/11 distrust or the chill after the Khashoggi murder, but both sides have consistently prioritised strategic alignment over values. One persistent complication, however, has been Israel, America's closest regional ally, which does not have formal diplomatic ties with Riyadh. After the Abraham Accords were signed, the Biden administration pushed Saudi Arabia to join the framework by normalising ties with Israel. MBS had said in September 2023 that Saudi Arabia and Israel were in an advanced stage of negotiations, but the October 7 Hamas attack and Israel's genocidal Gaza war halted the momentum. Today, Saudi Arabia says it remains open to joining the Accords, but only if there is a credible, time-bound path towards a two-state solution to the Palestine question — a position Israel opposes. Mr. Trump appears to have realised both the regional complexities and Israel's intransigence. He now seems prepared to deepen ties with Saudi Arabia without demanding an immediate commitment to recognise Israel. In effect, he has de-hyphenated Saudi Arabia from the Abraham Accords, for now, choosing instead to cultivate direct, stronger ties with the kingdom, which he views as central to his broader West Asia plans.

Recognise the critical role of the childcare worker

Nitya Rao

is Professor, School of Global Development, University of East Anglia, U.K.

On July 24, 2025, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution to declare October 29 each year as International Day of Care and Support. This resolution recognised the critical role of comprehensive care and support policies, aimed at reducing, redistributing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work, to the well-being of society and all its members — in particular, children, older persons and persons with disabilities — noting, as a disproportionate share of care and domestic work is undertaken by women and adolescent girls. It also remains invisible, undervalued and unaccounted for in national statistics, and neglected in economic and social policymaking.

India has had a long history of care provision with institutions outside the family emerging in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the work of educationists such as Tarabai Modak and Gijubhai Badheka. These pioneering efforts, with developmentally appropriate practices, gradually declined as modern childcare provisioning emerged post-Independence. With modern childcare mostly in the private, voluntary sector, low-income families, those who needed childcare services the most, were excluded.

The report of the study group on the development of the preschool child, submitted to the Government of India in 1972, with Mina Swaminathan as its convenor, transformed the history of childcare services in the country. It set out a clear social justice agenda, emphasising a holistic approach to address the health, nutrition and developmental needs of the young child, especially from poor and marginalised communities.

This resulted in the launch of the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS) in 1975. It is one of the world's largest early childhood development programmes today, with 1.4 million Anganwadi (childcare) centres operating across the country, reaching 23 million children, and serviced by around 2.4 million Anganwadi workers and helpers. Based on estimated population projections, and the need to reach over 80 million children by 2030, this number is likely to almost double to 2.6 million centres with over five million workers.

Underpaid and undervalued

As several national and global studies have revealed, despite recognising the importance of care for societal growth and well-being, care-workers have remained underpaid and undervalued, and their contributions to the early development of the child not fully recognised. The promise on the ICDS to rapidly expand to ensure universal coverage has led to a lower emphasis on pre-service and in-service training to build competencies of the care-workers in practice-based learning, that is crucial for quality childcare. This is partly driven by the perception of early years teachers as carers, addressing primary needs of food, hygiene and immunisation, not as professionals. The devaluation of their roles, of not being treated as professional workers, results not just in low pay but also a lack of attention to working conditions (including paid leaves, social security benefits, opportunities for career advancement, and collective organisation and representation. In many States, their wages, in the range of ₹8,000-₹15,000 a month, are barely on a par with the minimum wages for unskilled workers.

> The childcare worker in India needs better policies, decent wages and working conditions, and a strengthened care infrastructure

The impact of climate change

In the context of climate change, the need for good quality childcare services for the rural and urban poor is rapidly rising. There is sufficient evidence to show that poor women and children are the worst affected by the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events, such as floods or droughts. They confront reduced access to health and care services, alongside diverse and healthy food. While the Sustainable Development Goals suggest the need for a more equal sharing of care responsibilities between women and men in households, climate change is forcing many men to migrate out of their rural homes to urban centres in search of work.

Apart from their own dire circumstances, as witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic in India, their physical absence makes such sharing impossible. When families migrate to urban areas, the higher costs of living — in particular rentals — make it imperative for women to find work too, which is often domestic and care work in the homes of the middle classes. There is, however, little care provision for their own children, with only 10% of Anganwadi centres currently functioning in urban areas.

The Government of India's Time Use in India 2024 survey confirms the feminisation of care work, with women spending an average of 426 minutes a day (over seven hours) on unpaid domestic and care work as against 163 minutes (over two hours) by men (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation). Together, this would constitute 8%-9% of GDP. Smaller scale studies demonstrate clear links between the mother's lack of time for care and feeding and child undernutrition, as visible in the persistently high child stunting levels at over 35%. Only 11% of children aged six months-23 months had a minimum acceptable diet (National Family Health Survey 5, 2019-21), raising cognitive and developmental concerns.

In this context, Mobile Crèches and the Forum for Crèches and Childcare Services (FORCES) organised the India Childcare Champion Awards on October 26, 2025 in New Delhi. The awards were presented across seven categories that honoured excellence and dedication in the field of childcare — the Mina Swaminathan Special Jury Award for Best Crèche Worker, Best Crèche Worker, Best Crèche Supervisor, Best Local Leader, Best NGO, Childcare Champion, and Gratitude to CSR Funders in Childcare. The awards sought to give recognition to frontline childcare workers and supervisors as well as local panchayat leaders, employers and civil society organisations. It was to celebrate their tireless efforts working on the ground, within communities, and at the policy level to make quality childcare accessible and equitable for all.

The event gave voice to childcare workers, bringing out clearly not just the fact that these workers were skilled professionals but that they were also change-makers, challenging social norms and structures. The workers spoke about breaking caste and class barriers, building self-confidence to overcome social stigma and dealing with critiques of themselves by their families and communities, as working with 'dirty' children.

Slowly, but surely, they have built trust with parents and emotional bonds with the children, hoping to give them a chance in life that they would not otherwise have. Caring for the children of migrant workers is even more demanding as the parents work full-time, often living in poor conditions. Children have confront a range of health issues, so care-workers have, in addition, become advocates for health insurance, fair clean and adequate space and care infrastructure, amongst others. They play multiple roles — as children playing with children, as carers nurturing them, and as adult decision makers, monitoring their key milestones, and intervening when needed.

Match the standard in Scandinavia

Recognition of childcare workers is clearly a first step in highlighting their critical role in providing quality, nurturing care, and laying the foundation for a strong and inclusive nation. Yes, there is a lot more to do — apart from ensuring that they have decent wages and working conditions, there is a need to redirect resources to both skill-building of these care-workers and the strengthening of care infrastructure. There is still little provision for the child below the age of three years, with only 2,900 of the over 10,000 crèches approved under the Government of India's Palna Scheme, currently operational. As compared to the current public investment of approximately 0.4% of GDP, the ambitions of universalising good quality care would need a tripling of budgetary allocation to between 1%-1.5% of GDP — the standard in Scandinavian countries that have universal childcare coverage.

A focus on care spotlights the rights of women and children. Achieving this requires both individual and systemic changes. Recognition of the knowledge and skills of childcare workers has to be accompanied by rules and policies that ensure adequate resources and roles in the sector. Decentralisation, convergence and collective ownership are critical if the rights of women workers and underprivileged children are to be realised.

Redefining the narrative of TB eradication worldwide

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan

is former Chief Scientist, World Health Organisation

Looking back at the history of tuberculosis (TB) control, one small yet revolutionary change stands out — the development of point-of-care molecular diagnostics. Traditionally, TB diagnosis involved either a poorly sensitive sputum smear test or waiting for weeks for culture results from centralised labs. However, with small, battery-powered Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) machines, both TB and drug resistance can now be diagnosed in under an hour.

A diagnostics game changer

World Health Organisation (WHO)-approved rapid molecular diagnostic platforms such as Truenat are now a cornerstone of the worldwide fight against TB, particularly in low-resource settings. For instance, after integrating it with the Nigerian national TB programme, the identification of rifampicin-resistant TB cases nearly doubled, which was an indicator of the platform's ability to detect drug-resistant strains. In addition, Nigeria has experimented with stool-based Truenat testing for the diagnosis of TB among children in primary health care centres. This is intended to overcome the challenge of sputum collection among children, thus improving case detection and bacteriological confirmation.

A study conducted recently and published in The Lancet assessed the use of this platform in primary health care centres in Mozambique and Tanzania, in Africa. The trial revealed that combining on-site molecular testing with rapid communication of results greatly improved the rate at which patients began treatment within seven days of their initial visit. The intervention not only improved diagnostic quality but also optimised treatment, proving the instrumental role of point-of-care diagnostics in improved TB care in resource-constrained environments. Such innovations are critical to the achievement of global TB elimination targets.

This shift in diagnostic capacity did not merely alter the rhythm of TB control. It became the basis for a world where early treatment was no longer a function of geography or infrastructure.

It was this very shift that was recognised globally this year, when Goa-based Molbio Diagnostics was awarded the coveted Kochon Prize for its contributions to TB diagnostics. Established by the Kochon Foundation of the Republic of Korea and in collaboration with the Stop TB Partnership, the Kochon Prize is one of the world's most distinguished awards for TB control contributions. It has honoured scientists, organisations and individuals whose innovations have radically enhanced TB outcomes. The real value of this award transcends any single company. This year's award says a lot about the extent to which India's indigenous technological innovations are not just fighting TB within its own geography but also significantly influencing the world of TB eradication.

This writer recalls WHO's endorsement, in 2020, of the portable molecular platform developed in India. The evidence came from diverse studies in Asia and Africa, showing an impact equivalent to central lab systems but with significantly greater deployability. The excitement was palpable — at last, a diagnostic test that could go to the patient, not the other way around. It was a moment when innovation met inclusion. Since then, many more Indian companies have ventured into TB diagnostics innovation, which is visible today in the range of improved point of care tests available.

> This year's Kochon Prize highlights how India is creating scalable solutions that can transform global health equity

India's role in decentralised TB control

India's National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) was swift in adopting these technologies, installing thousands of point of care molecular testing units across the country. Today, we have enough and more evidence of how this has significantly reduced the time between suspecting TB and starting treatment, thereby greatly enhancing TB management protocols.

This award also highlights India's collaborative model for TB elimination. Today, the TB fight is no longer solely the responsibility of the public sector. It is a shared mission, where private innovators, community health workers and government systems work hand in hand. For a country that bears close to a quarter of the world's TB burden, this partnership is not only desirable, it is imperative. The private sector offers agility, scale and technology while the public sector offers reach, data and accountability. Together, they create the foundation of a strong public health response.

The Kochon prize has been awarded to India twice — in 2006 to Dr. L.S. Chauhan, Deputy Director General-Tuberculosis, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (joint winner with TB/HIV activist Winstone Zulu from Zambia), and in 2017 to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). This year's recognition is not just another win for India. It is a global acknowledgement of the power of affordable indigenous innovation.

The adoption of field-ready molecular diagnostics from India has led to deployments worldwide — from mobile clinics in sub-Saharan Africa to refugee camps in Eastern Europe. It proves that India can be at the forefront of innovation, creating scalable solutions that can transform global health equity.

But the fight against TB is not done yet. The next challenge lies in ensuring that such diagnostics are accompanied by balanced access to treatment, nutrition, social protection and reduction of stigma. Studies have established that malnutrition accounts for about 40% of TB in India. The battle against TB will have to address all of these determinants in order to succeed.

A call for continued investment, innovation

We stand at a critical juncture. While the recognition of innovations such as point-of-care diagnostics is heartening, we must not lose sight of the bigger picture: TB is a disease of inequality.

We must continue investing in innovations that integrate diagnostics with nutrition, contact tracing, digital adherence and vaccines. Only then can we ensure that no one is left behind in this global effort to eliminate TB.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SIR work

I strongly feel that carrying out the job of the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls can be assigned to unemployed graduates and postgraduates across Tamil Nadu (Tamil Nadu, "SIR work preventing completion of syllabus for half-yearly exam: teachers", November 18). This is germane for other States too. Those who do the work can be given reasonable remuneration and also a certificate which will enhance their job prospects. The Centre and the State government concerned can work out the financial implication of this plan. The sustained creation of jobs is vital to make the nation a 'developed' one.

S. Ramakrishnayya,
Chennai

Writing today

Writers face challenges in penning their views, as the principle of free expression, which is a fundamental right, is often contradicted by political pressures and social backlash. This environment of intolerance creates a chilling effect, forcing writers to choose "self-censoring" to avoid personal risks (Open Page, November 18). The rise of digital media has amplified the risk of online abuse. Women journalists often face gendered online threats. The challenge for modern-day writers lies in navigating a complex landscape.

R. Sivakumar,
Chennai

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

Hidden cost of polluted groundwater

Sreoshi Banerjee

is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research

Rukmamara Rose

is a consultant at the National Council of Applied Economic Research

On a sweltering afternoon in Punjab, a farmer lowers his bucket into the well that has sustained his family for generations. The water looks clear, but tests reveal a different story: uranium levels far above the permissible limit. In nearby villages, children suffer skeletal deformities from fluoride-laced groundwater, while families spend what little they earn on hospital visits. What is happening here is not just a public health tragedy; it is an economic calamity unfolding silently beneath our feet.

The latest Annual Groundwater Quality Report (2024) paints a grim picture. Nearly one-fifth of samples from over 440 districts exceed safe contamination limits. In Punjab, almost a third show uranium above permissible levels, with fluoride, nitrate, and arsenic also widespread. India's dependence on groundwater, with 600 million people relying on it for drinking and most irrigation, makes this a national crisis.

The World Bank estimates that environmental degradation, largely from polluted water and soil, drains India of nearly 80 billion dollars each year, around 6% of GDP. Health costs from unsafe water run into billions annually, while waterborne diseases result in millions of lost working days.

People at risk

The link between contamination and human capital loss is especially alarming. In Gujarat's Mehsana district, fluorosis has disabled workers, reduced their earning capacity, and plunged households into cycles of wage loss and medical bills. Across the country, diarrheal illnesses still kill hundreds of thousands of children under five each year. Beyond these health tragedies, the consequences represent a steady erosion of India's most valuable resource: its people.

Agriculture, which employs over 40% of Indians, is also under siege. Soil degradation affects nearly a third of the country's land, with polluted irrigation water accelerating the decline. Heavy metals and residues in groundwater reduce yields and accumulate in crops. Research shows that farms near polluted stretches of water experience a drop in productivity and income.

The risks extend beyond village boundaries. Contamination undermines not only the quantity but also the quality of crops. International buyers are increasingly demanding traceability and safety standards, and instances of export rejections over contamination concerns highlight the dangers of complacency. If such problems spread to staples such as rice, vegetables, or fruits, India's $50-billion agricultural export sector could face serious losses.

Groundwater contamination also deepens inequality. Wealthier households can buy bottled water or invest in filtration systems, but poorer families cannot. Out-of-pocket expenses already account for most health spending, leaving households with little buffer. In rural areas, dependence on contaminated aquifers traps communities in cycles of ill health, debt, and declining productivity. The damage extends to the next generation, as children growing up with cognitive impairments from arsenic or fluoride exposure face limited prospects for education and employment.

Reckless over-extraction, already more than one and a half times the sustainable limit in Punjab, forces farmers to drill deeper, worsening water quality and increasing fertilizer use, creating a vicious cycle that undermines the long-term viability of agriculture.

Way forward

Yet solutions exist if policymakers act with urgency. First, India needs a nationwide, real-time groundwater monitoring system with open access to data so communities know what they are drinking and irrigating with.

> India needs a nationwide, real-time groundwater monitoring system with open access to data so communities know what they are drinking and irrigating with

Second, enforcement against industrial effluents and untreated sewage must be strengthened; the current weak framework effectively allows industries to pass the costs onto society. Third, agricultural policy must shift away from input subsidies that encourage chemical overuse, towards incentives for crop diversification, organic practices, and micro-irrigation. Fourth, decentralised treatment systems, from community water filters to low-cost purification units, can provide immediate relief to affected villages.

In Nalgonda district, Telangana, community water purification units have provided safe drinking water to villages long plagued by fluorosis, leading to a measurable decline in new cases among children. In Punjab and Haryana, pilot programmes promoting diversification away from water-intensive paddy to pulses and maize have reduced pressure on aquifers, lowered chemical use, and maintained farmer incomes. These successes show that locally tailored interventions can deliver results while broader reforms are implemented.

Finally, stricter export quality checks and farmer training are needed to safeguard India's reputation in global markets.

Groundwater contamination is not a marginal issue but a hidden economic drain. Unlike water scarcity, which can sometimes be reversed, contamination is often permanent. India faces a choice: continue treating contamination as inevitable, allowing short-term gains to impose massive long-term losses, or recognise it as one of the country's most urgent challenges. To sustain growth and secure its future, India must act decisively.

The poison beneath our feet has been ignored too long. Delay will only raise the price. Half-measures are no longer enough; only bold, coordinated action can prevent this crisis from becoming a national catastrophe.

Views expressed are personal

Metro Rail projects ride into political row

Centre's refusal to clear the Metro projects triggers a political clash in Tamil Nadu

STATE OF PLAY

T. Ramakrishnan
THE HINDU BUREAU IN NEW DELHI

The Union government's rejection of the Metro Rail projects for Coimbatore and Madurai has provided the ground for yet another fierce political battle between the ruling DMK-led front and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the ruling party at the Centre.

Citing one of the norms stipulated in the 2017 Metro Rail Policy – that a city must have a population of at least two million to qualify for a mass transit system such as Metro Rail – the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, in its November 14 communication to the Tamil Nadu government, referred to 2011 Census data showing Coimbatore's population at 1.58 million and Madurai's at 1.5 million as the basis for its decision. Remaining detailed project reports for the two cities, the Ministry stated that "the Metro projects are cost-intensive and should be planned carefully for long-term sustainability." It suggested other cost-effective urban transport systems, including the Bus Rapid Transit System.

The State government had followed the Union Ministry's guidelines while commissioning feasibility studies for the Mass Rapid Transit System in Coimbatore, Madurai, and three other tier-II cities in Tamil Nadu. Detailed project reports were eventually prepared by Chennai Metro Rail Limited for Madurai and Coimbatore and sent to the Centre, with a recommendation that the project cost be met under a 50:50 equity sharing basis. While complete elevated two corridors have been proposed for nearly 35 kilometre in the case of Coimbatore, the other city is to have an elevated corridor of 36.5 km and an underground corridor of 5.5 km. Each project was estimated to cost around ₹11,000 crore.

Wide outrage

When the communication became public on November 18, it triggered loud protests from the ruling party and its allies. It was left to the BJP and its ally, Tamil Maanila Congress (Moopanar), to defend the move of the Union government, which was said to have come after 21 months. On Tuesday late evening, the DMK's information technology wing, on X, complained of the Centre's discrimination against Tamil Nadu vis-à-vis a couple of cities in north India, for which the approval had been given in the past despite "not fulfilling" the norm of a two-million population.

Senior BJP leader and legislator of Coimbatore South, Vanathi Srinivasan, rejected the charge of bias against the State and contended that under the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance's reign at the Centre, the State had "received ₹1.3 lakh crore in rail funds, hardly the sign of any anti-Tamil Nadu agenda." She added that the State could resubmit the project proposal, "using urban agglomeration data, or give special justification – just as Agra Metro was approved for tourism. Similar precedents exist for Bhopal and Patna." The TMC(M)'s chief and former Union Minister G.K. Vasan expressed hope that the projects would take off in the future.

On Wednesday morning, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, in a post on X, accused the BJP-led government of using "flimsy grounds" to deny the Metro Rail projects for the "Temple City" Madurai and "South India's Manchester" Coimbatore. The BJP's ally in the state, the AIADMK, known for its strong base in Coimbatore and other western districts of the State, chose not to join the debate directly. However, its general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami, in a representation submitted to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was coincidentally in Coimbatore on Wednesday to attend a farmers' meet, appealed to the Centre to expedite the implementation of the Metro Rail projects. The AIADMK's IT wing reposted a statement issued by the BJP's State unit. The national party had explained that the Centre had "returned" the metro proposals, asking for basic clarifications. A similar process was followed for metro extension projects in Bengaluru, in addition to Agra and Patna, the BJP added.

Even though the DMK and BJP had fault with each other over the present fate of the project proposals, they, however, sound optimistic about making the projects a reality. It remains to be seen how they are going to accomplish it, but what is certain is that the Coimbatore and Madurai Metro Rail projects will get featured in election manifestos of all major parties when Tamil Nadu goes to the polls in April-May.

How welfare delivery shaped, but did not decide, Bihar's elections

The Bihar verdict reflects how widespread welfare delivery, clear credit attribution, and powerful job promises shaped voter choices

DATA POINT

Vibha Attri

The 2025 Bihar Assembly elections delivered a result many had expected, but the intensity of the victory surprised several observers. Caste alignments and alliance partners continued to matter, yet welfare delivery emerged as a central, though not exclusive, factor shaping the verdict.

The National Democratic Alliance's (NDA) governance record and leadership, combined with the well-timed and highly visible rollout of welfare schemes, blurred the line between routine governance and election-focused initiatives. Evidence from a post-poll survey conducted by Polldiaries reinforces this: welfare schemes in Bihar reached people on an impressive scale, and voters knew whom to credit, shaping their political perceptions and choices.

People's verdict: A view of Nitish Kumar's poster thanking the people after the NDA's massive victory in the Bihar Assembly elections, in Patna on Monday. *PTI*

Welfare penetration

Welfare penetration during the Jantra Dal (United)-led government was extensive. Going by survey responses, more than four-fifths of households benefited from the Har Ghar Bijli Yojana, and nearly seven in ten received support from the Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal Yojana. Women-focused initiatives also reached a large number of households: roughly one third of households benefited from the Balika Poshak Yojana, which provides school uniforms for girls, and about one-fifth availed the Swayam Sahayata Bhatta Yojana, offering a monthly allowance of ₹1,000 for unemployed youth seeking work.

A key political turning point in this election was the Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana, launched shortly before the election, which provided a direct cash transfer of ₹10,000 to women. Nearly three in five respondents reported that they or someone in their household had benefited from this scheme, highlighting its rapid and widespread reach. Beyond the immediate financial support, the scheme also reminded voters of Nitish Kumar's long record of working for women through education support, bicycles, and other programmes. This mix of new and past benefits strengthened support, especially among women, for the ruling alliance.

Survey findings also indicated that the reach of these schemes was broad. Beneficiaries were spread across marginalised communities, rural households, and low-income groups, showing that the distribution was widespread.

Credit attribution

Crucially, what strengthened the ruling NDA alliance even further was the clarity of credit attribution. Around seven in ten beneficiaries attributed the schemes to the State government, while about a quarter assigned credit to the Union government. Importantly, credit given to the Centre did not result in any political loss, since the JD(U) was part of the NDA at both the State and central levels. This clarity of credit sharply enhanced the ruling coalition's political advantage from welfare delivery.

The data reveal an association between benefiting from schemes and voting behaviour. Beneficiaries of all the schemes showed higher support for the NDA compared to non-beneficiaries. The effect was especially pronounced in schemes with the highest reach.

For the Mahila Rojgar Yojana (57% beneficiaries), 54% of beneficiaries voted for the NDA, compared with 35% of non-beneficiaries – an exceptionally large 19-percentage point advantage. For Har Ghar Bijli (82% beneficiaries), 49% of beneficiaries supported the NDA versus 34% of non-beneficiaries – a 15-point advantage.

For Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal (85% beneficiaries), 51% of beneficiaries backed the NDA compared with 37% of non-beneficiaries – a 14-point advantage.

Future promises

Beyond existing welfare schemes, voters' choices were also shaped by promises of future benefits, which likely functioned as prospective welfare initiatives. Survey data show that Tejashwi Yadav's promise of one government job per household influenced a substantial portion of respondents, with one-third (36%) reporting it affected their vote 'a lot' and another 23% saying 'somewhat'.

Mr. Tejashwi's job promise resonated across caste groups. While majorities of Mahagathbandhan's (MGB) core supporters – Yadavs (52%) and Muslims (60%) – said it influenced their vote 'a lot', significant shares of other communities were also affected: over a quarter of Kurmis-Koeris and other OBC voters, and three in ten Dalits, reported strong influence of this promise on their vote choice.

Although a smaller share, 12% of upper caste voters also said the promise influenced their voting decision 'a lot'.

Among those highly influenced by this promise, nearly two-thirds (62%) voted for the MGB, while about one-fourth backed the NDA. As the influence of the promise weakened, the MGB's support declined and NDA support rose, peaking among those who said the promise did not influence at all.

Caste-wise, 86% of Yadavs and 75% of Muslims, for whom the promise had a strong impact, voted for the MGB. Among non-M-Y communities, 22% of Kurmis and Koeris, and nearly half of Dalits who strongly felt about the promise, also supported the alliance. This shows that the promise not only reinforced the core support but also attracted some support from beyond it.

Similarly, the JD(U)'s commitment to create one crore government jobs for youth resonated strongly, influencing six of every ten respondents (28% 'a lot' and 32% 'somewhat'). These findings indicate that even as voters evaluated existing schemes, aspirational promises played a complementary role, reinforcing the ruling alliance's broader appeal.

Among voters who said JD(U)'s employment promise mattered 'a lot', a little over three-fifths voted for the NDA, while about one-fifth supported the MGB. The NDA support declined modestly as the influence decreased, though not nearly as sharply as the drop in MGB support across the categories of Mr. Tejashwi's promise. This suggests that while Mr. Tejashwi's promise mobilised MGB-leaning voters, the JD(U)'s promise helped consolidate the NDA's base.

The welfare paradox

Just over half (51%) felt that government schemes were merely election-time freebies that did little to change people's lives, while nearly four in ten (37%) viewed them as a right of a citizen. And yet, they admit having benefited from the schemes. Views on pre-election cash transfers were even more critical: over 70% believed that giving money just before voting is wrong, while only about one-fifth saw nothing wrong with it.

Yet, when we examine actual voting patterns, the impact of these schemes becomes apparent. Among those who saw welfare as election-time freebies, a majority still voted for the parties delivering them: 34% backed the MGB and 54% supported the NDA. Those who considered welfare a citizen's right were slightly more evenly split, with 39% voting for the MGB and 48% for the NDA. This suggests that even voters with a critical or realistic understanding of the political purpose behind welfare measures were often persuaded to support the parties implementing them. This contradiction is also visible in the case of the ₹10,000 Mahila Rojgar Yojana. Ninety-nine percent of its beneficiaries believed that pre-election transfers were wrong, suggesting that while they benefited, they were aware of the political intent behind their timing.

Non-beneficiaries expressed similar views, indicating that concerns about electoral manipulation extended across groups regardless of personal gain.

Proper implementation of a few key schemes added an important layer to the dynamics of the 2025 Bihar election. While it was not the only factor behind the NDA's victory, effective welfare delivery strengthened the ruling side's position. Even where voters questioned the timing or intent of new announcements, they still recognised benefits that reached them. This wide reach and clear credit attribution helped reinforce existing political support, contributing to the NDA's victory.

Vibha Attri is a research fellow at Lokniti. Views expressed are personal

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO NOVEMBER 20, 1975

FBI told Dr. King to commit suicide

Washington, November 19: Shortly before he was awarded the Nobel Prize, Dr. Martin Luther King received an anonymous letter written by the Federal Bureau of Investigation suggesting that he commit suicide or be exposed.

The partial contents of the letter to Dr. King were released yesterday by the Senate Intelligence Committee during a public hearing on FBI domestic intelligence programmes.

"There is only one thing left to do and you know it," the letter said. "There only are 34 days left to do it and you know it must be done".

The Committee counsel Mr. Fred Schwartz, was interrupted at this point by Chairman Frank Church: "This was suggesting suicide?"

"Yes, sir," Mr. Schwartz replied.

Neither Mr. Schwartz nor Mr. Church gave any information as to the material the letter threatened to expose about Dr. King.

Mr. Schwartz said a draft of the letter was found in the file of the former Deputy FBI Director Mr. William Sullivan.

"He claims he did not write it, but that it was a plant by someone else in the FBI," Mr. Schwartz said. He said that copies were received by both Dr. King and his wife.

The letters were part of a concentrated effort by the FBI to discredit Dr. King, who was described in a 1963 memo by the late J. Edgar Hoover, former FBI director, as "No good."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO NOVEMBER 20, 1925

Passengers' day

Bombay, November 20: This morning's papers are coming out with editorials and leaders' messages on the Passengers' Day, describing the intolerable woes of railway passengers in India. Mrs. Naidu states: "Only those who, through necessity, or choice, or as in my case now and then for the sake of personal experience and observation, travel in the crowded boxes known as third-class carriages, can realise the injustice of combining the maximum profit to the Railways with the maximum discomfort to the traveller." Nawab Ajmal Khan says: "Substantial and useful service to third-class passengers can be accomplished only if the Railway authorities take a genuine interest in the humanitarian object of the Association."

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Unauthorised forex trading platforms on RBI's 'alert list'

95 The Reserve Bank of India added seven new names to its 'alert list' of unauthorised forex trading platforms, taking the total number to 95. The alert list contains names of entities which are not authorised to deal in forex under the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999. ←

The fine imposed on Cloudflare by Tokyo court over piracy

3.2 In $ million. Tokyo's district court on Wednesday ordered Cloudflare to pay $3.2 million to major Japanese publishers after the U.S. firm was accused of hosting servers for manga piracy sites. Four major publishing firms accused Cloudflare of copyright infringement. ←

Risk of developing arthritis from exposure to PM2.5

12-18 In per cent. As New Delhi enters its winter phase with the crossing smog, physicians are sounding the alarm on a dual threat. A 2025 study found that long-term exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5) increases the risk of developing arthritis by 12-18%. ←

The funds required for recovery operations in Afghanistan

128.8 In $ million. A UN-led assessment says Afghanistan requires $128.8 million to restore housing, schools and key services in its quake-hit provinces, warning that reconstruction faces "significant shortfalls" as donor support falls sharply. ←

Projects approved by U.P. govt. to strengthen State's canal system

95 Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath approved 95 canal projects aimed at enhancing the irrigation network's capacity and ensuring an uninterrupted water supply. Once completed, the projects will directly benefit nearly 9 lakh farmers. ←

Compiled by Pritha Chatterjee

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The threat of digital tradecraft in terrorism

A car explosion near Delhi's Red Fort on November 10, killing at least 15 people and injuring over 30, has revealed the use of advanced digital tradecraft in terrorist attacks. This is a sobering reminder that the next frontier in counter-terrorism is not just on the physical terrain, but also in encrypted, and deeply private digital spaces.

EXPLAINER

Krishna Nandiraj

The story so far:

The unfolding investigation into the recent car explosion near Delhi's Red Fort has exposed a chilling dimension – modern terror modules are no longer merely exploiting ideological or logistical networks, they are also leveraging advanced digital tradecraft to plan and coordinate such attacks. While law enforcement agencies continue to verify all leads, emerging revelations from the probe rely well-established academic research on how violent actors exploit encrypted platforms, decentralised networks, and spy-style communication to evade surveillance.

What happened?

On November 10, a car exploded near Gate No. 1 of the Red Fort Metro Station. The blast killed at least 15 people, and over 30 others were injured, making it one of the deadliest terror incidents in Delhi in recent memory. Indian authorities moved quickly to treat the incident as a terrorist attack, rather than a mere accident, and handed over the investigation to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) under counter-terrorism laws.

Central to the probe are three doctors allegedly connected to the terror module: Dr. Umar Un Nabi, Dr. Muzammil Ganaie, and Dr. Shaheen Shahid, all linked to the Al Falah University in Faridabad. According to investigators, these individuals were deeply involved in the operational planning of the attack.

Remains of the debris: The Delhi police combed off the blast site near Delhi on November 12, 2025

What were the major findings?

So far, some of the more alarming aspects uncovered include:

Encrypted communication: The trio is alleged to have communicated via the Swiss messaging app Threema, a platform known for its high privacy design. Threema does not require a phone number or email to register; instead, it assigns users a random user ID unlinked to any personal identifier. Investigators suspect that the three accused may have established their own private Threema server, creating a closed, isolated network through which they shared maps, layouts, documents, and instructions. The server may have been hosted either within India or abroad (investigations are ongoing as to its origin). Threema's architecture is particularly useful to evade detection because it offers end-to-end encryption, no storage of metadata, and allows message deletion from both ends. These features make it extremely difficult for digital forensics teams to reconstruct full communication chains.

Sharing information using 'dead drop emails': In what is being described as a classic "spy-style" technique, the suspects apparently used a shared email account (accessible to all module members) to communicate via saved drafts. Instead of sending messages, they would save drafts; another member would log in, read or update them, and delete them – leaving no outgoing or incoming record on conventional mail logs. This method, sometimes referred to as a "dead drop," is particularly insidious because it generates almost no digital footprint.

Reconnaissance and ammunition stockpiling: As per interrogation and forensic data, the accused conducted multiple recce missions in Delhi before the attack. Investigators allege that ammonium nitrate, a powerful industrial explosive, was stockpiled, possibly via a red EcoSport vehicle that has now been seized. The use of a familiar vehicle, rather than something more suspicious, may have helped the module remain under the radar during logistics buildup.

Operational discipline and external linkages: Sources suggest that Dr. Umar, who was reportedly the driver of the car that caused the blast, "switched off his phones" and cut digital ties after the arrest of his associates, a sophisticated tactic to limit exposure. Moreover, though investigations are ongoing, some sources suggest that the attack has links with the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) or was following a JeM inspired module. The layered communication architecture – encrypted apps, dead-drop emails – coupled with infrequent but deliberate physical recces, suggests a cell that counts operational security among its highest priorities.

What about academic scholarship?

The tactics reportedly used in this attack directly align with patterns documented in counter-terrorism scholarship. Researchers have long warned that extremist actors are increasingly using end-to-end encrypted (E2EE) tools to coordinate, share files, and plan in relative anonymity.

Apps like Threema, which minimise or eliminate metadata retention, make it significantly harder for surveillance agencies to reconstruct communication graphs. Moreover, by running a private server, the threat actor effectively bypasses centralised infrastructure and associated law-enforcement checkpoints. The use of unsent email drafts is characteristic of old-school spycraft adapted to the digital age. This method leaves no obvious transmission record, thereby thwarting standard surveillance or legal intercepts.

The blending of encrypted apps, anti-trace techniques (like VPNs), and physical tradecraft (recce, minimal digital footprint) suggests a multi-domain approach to operational security – exactly what academic counter-terrorism analysts have been warning about for years.

What are the implications?

As more terror modules adopt privacy-preserving technologies, traditional surveillance such as phone tapping, metadata collection, and email intercepts have become less effective. This should force law enforcement agencies to rethink investigative architectures.

Threema is reportedly banned in India (under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000), yet the suspects seem to have continued using it via VPNs and foreign proxies. This suggests that bans alone may not stem the misuse of such apps, especially by sophisticated operators. Investigators need advanced capabilities such as being able to track private servers, reverse engineer encrypted networks, and apply memory forensics to raid such modules. Standard device seizures may not be sufficient without specialised technical expertise.

Moreover, if a link to external handlers (such as the JeM) is proved to be true, this attack may be part of a wider network. The level of planning and security discipline shown suggests not a lone cell, but a well-trained, possibly transnational, group.

What are some policy solutions?

There are multiple policy and strategic solutions to strengthen counter-terrorism capabilities and posture. First, is to build a dedicated digital forensics teams. There is a necessity to establish and expand teams skilled in encrypted platform analysis, server forensics, and memory dumping to recover ephemeral data. The government should invest in units that specifically monitor misuse of E2EE platforms, anonymising services, and VPN exit nodes for potential terror tradecraft.

Secondly, self-hosted communication infrastructure needs to be regulated. The state needs to craft regulatory frameworks mandating private servers hosting communication platforms to comply with lawful access obligations, while balancing privacy rights. Cooperation with technology providers needs to be encouraged in order to enable lawful interception under strictly controlled, judicially-supervised processes.

Third, legal frameworks need to be enhanced. For example, counter-terrorism laws need to be updated so that it explicitly addresses threats posed by encrypted, decentralised communication. Introduce or refine digital dead-drop detection mechanisms in investigations. Law enforcement should be trained to look for shared accounts, draft-only mailboxes, and similar tradecraft.

Fourth, community and institutional engagement needs to be prioritised. The fact that the suspects were reportedly doctors from a university is deeply concerning; such institutions need support to detect radicalisation early. Counter-radicalisation programs tailored to highly educated recruits may be deployed. Modules operating in professional spaces (doctors, academics) are often less visible, but may wield more technical or ideological sophistication.

And finally, international collaboration needs to be strengthened. Given the possible transnational nature (encrypted apps, private servers, cross-border funding of the attack), the state should deepen cooperation with foreign intelligence and law enforcement agencies. It should also encourage tech diplomacy, and engage with countries where encrypted-messaging apps like Threema are based to explore lawful but privacy-respecting access to self-hosted infrastructure linked to terror cases. There should also be public awareness about how modern terror cells operate.

What next?

The Red Fort blast investigation illustrates how modern terrorist modules are evolving rapidly. They no longer rely solely on brute force or mass propaganda – they are integrating advanced digital tradecraft with traditional radicalisation and operational planning.

These developments resonate strongly with academic insights into extremist behaviour in the digital age. As violent actors become more technically adept, states too must adapt – not just by strengthening brute-force capacity, but by cultivating sophisticated, multidisciplinary intelligence, cyber forensics, and legal tools.

For India – and democracies globally – this case is a sobering reminder that the next frontier in counter-terrorism is not just on the physical terrain, but also in encrypted, decentralised, and deeply private digital spaces. If we are to safeguard our cities and societies, we must meet this threat not only on the streets and borders, but also on servers and in code.

The author is a retired Additional Director General of the Indian Coast Guard.

THE GIST

- Central to the probe are three doctors allegedly connected to the terror module: Dr. Umar Un Nabi, Dr. Muzammil Ganaie, and Dr. Shaheen Shahid, all linked to the Al Falah University in Faridabad.
- The trio is alleged to have communicated via the Swiss messaging app Threema, a platform known for its high privacy design. Threema does not require a phone number or email to register; instead, it assigns users a random user ID unlinked to any personal identifier.
- The Red Fort blast investigation illustrates how modern terrorist modules are evolving rapidly. They no longer rely solely on brute force or mass propaganda – they are integrating advanced digital tradecraft with traditional radicalisation and operational planning.

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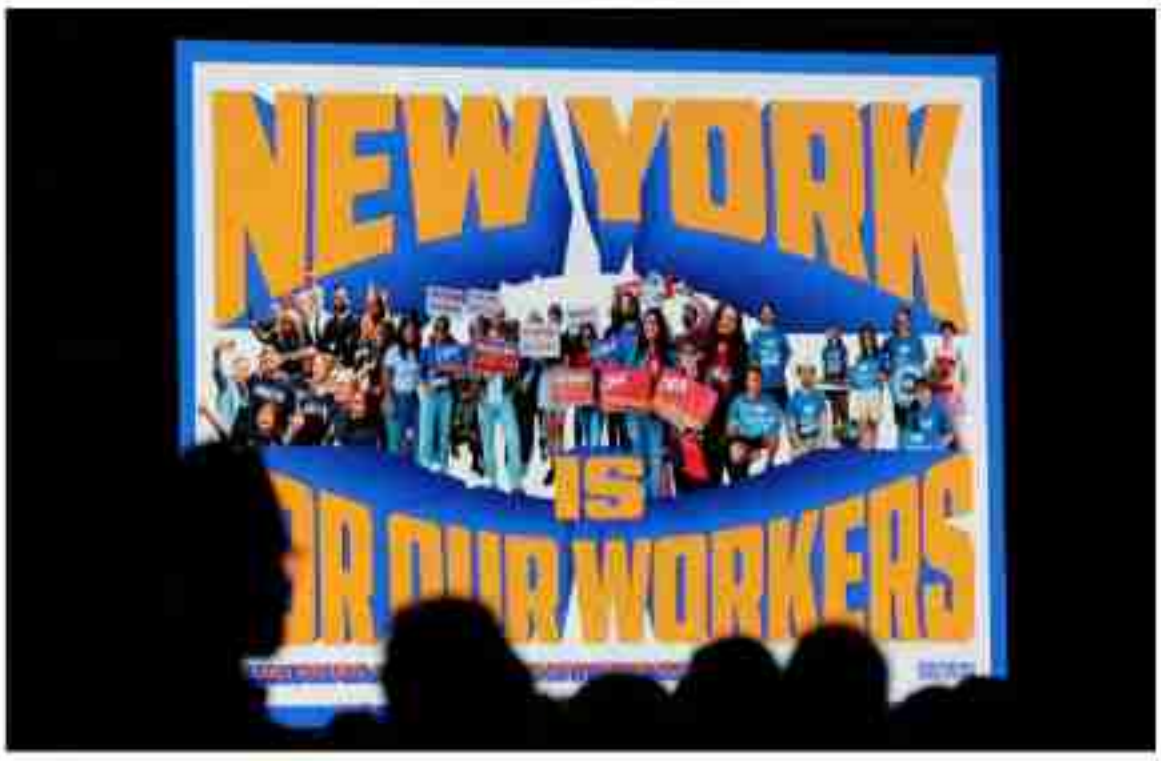

A new public: A poster is seen on a screen during a campaign rally for New York City mayoral candidate Zohran Mamdani in New York City on October 26, 2025

Zohran Mamdani and the economics of democratic socialism

With the New York Mayor-elect's brand of welfare politics in the spotlight, we read a host of writers including Thomas Piketty and Robin Archer who have weighed in on whether socialism can return to the forefront of political life by pursuing the objective of economic democracy

Atanu Biswas

In his victory speech, New York City's Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani declared, "I am a democratic socialist." It certainly orchestrated renewed interest in learning what democratic socialism is and what its economics are.

Mamdani won portraying a progressive programme that included, among other things, universal childcare, free bus service, frozen rents, and a higher minimum wage to make the highly expensive city more affordable. In fact, Mamdani quoted prominent American socialist activist and trade unionist Eugene Debs from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He also referred to a 1960 speech by Martin Luther King Jr. "I call myself a democratic socialist in many ways inspired by the words of Dr. King from decades ago who said, 'Call it democracy or call it democratic socialism. There has to be a better distribution of wealth for all of God's children in this country,'" he said. "And as income inequality has declined nationwide, it has increased in New York City. And, ultimately, what we need is a city where every single person can thrive."

Earlier, during his 2016 presidential campaign, Bernie Sanders raised awareness of democratic socialism. Sanders, a registered independent, described himself as a democratic socialist who supports workplace democracy in the form of worker cooperatives and union democracy. He also admires elements of Nordic social democracy.

Social initiatives

Ideas and Ideologies: A Reader (2019), edited by Richard Dagger and Daniel I. O'Neill, is an extensive collection of classic and modern readings that encompass all of the major "isms."

Sanders, a senator from Vermont, explained his views in the chapter titled "On Democratic Socialism in the United States" in the book and demonstrated how many of the core government initiatives and policies that a majority of Americans consider essential today were once mocked as "socialist." President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programmes like Social Security, minimum wage regulations, unemployment insurance, and the forty-hour work week, President Lyndon B. Johnson's later Great Society initiatives like Medicare and Medicaid, which provide the impoverished and old with the bare minimum of medical treatment, and many more are examples of this. In contrast to some socialists, Sanders opposed government ownership of the means of production.

So what exactly is democratic socialism? While proponents of democratic socialism typically advocate for the government to assume control over certain economic sectors, like utilities and healthcare, for the benefit of the general public, there is no universally applicable definition of this ideology. Socialist countries typically have democratic elections and multiple political parties. The majority have mixed economies too. For instance, despite having strong socialist systems, Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Norway, and Sweden all combine elements of capitalism with socialism.

The economics of democratic socialism has been the subject of numerous book-length discussions that offer various perspectives, including theoretical, historical, and policy-oriented. The 1950 book *Socialist Economics* by G.D.H. Cole was a foundational text describing the theoretical underpinnings of democratic socialism and how it differs from laissez-faire classical economics. It provides fundamental theory that is helpful in comprehending how democratic socialism defines its economic position, which is carefully distinguished from Keynesian neo-classical ideas.

According to Pranab Bardhan's 1990 EPW article "Some Reflections on Premature Obituaries of Socialism," socialism was having trouble adapting to market competition and political democracy without sacrificing its fundamental egalitarian ideals. To tackle the problem, socialist thinkers must create new institutional mechanisms and modify existing ones, suggested Pranab Bardhan.

The feasibility question

Robin Archer's 1995 book *Economic Democracy: The Politics of Feasible Socialism* may be viewed through this lens. Socialism can return to the forefront of political life in advanced capitalist countries by pursuing the objective of economic democracy, Archer argued. In economic democracy, according to him, firms function in a market economy but are run by their workers. He demonstrated how it preserves the benefits of a corporate industrial relations structure while appealing to the principle of individual freedom. It focuses on how a socialist economy might be feasibly organised – that is, realistic rather than idealistic.

French economist Thomas Piketty has authored books in which his analysis and recommendations largely touch on that area of democratic socialist economics. His *Ideology and Capital* (2019) is a comprehensive historical, ideological, and political economic analysis of inequality regimes. Crucially, it contains a suggested programme of what Piketty refers to as "participatory socialism," which is conceptually very close to democratic socialism despite some subtle differences in emphasis and framing.

'Participatory socialism'

"The system I call participatory socialism rests on social ownership, social control over capital, and permanent circulation of property, combined with shared power within firms and democratic participation in all forms of decision-making," Piketty states in *Capital and Ideology*. In essence, this's democratic socialism, but expressed in a way that makes sense in terms of modern policy and is backed by a wealth of historical evidence.

While democratic socialism focuses on progressive taxation and social welfare for redistribution, participatory socialism also includes the concept of a universal capital grant. Thus, it can be viewed as democratic socialism 2.0 that incorporates participation, education, and wealth distribution; it's less revolutionary and more reformist. In essence, Piketty adds a structural adjustment to wealth inequality to the Nordic success narrative, something that even Scandinavia hasn't entirely accomplished.

In his 2021 paper, "Justice, Power, and Participatory Socialism: on Piketty's Capital and Ideology," published in Analyse & Kritik, Martin O'Neill explored how Piketty's ideas for "participatory socialism" would disperse economic power within society in addition to redistributing wealth and income. Piketty's participatory socialism offers a useful and perceptive collection of suggestions for rescuing our economies and society from the ravages of hypercapitalism, according to Martin.

Let's return to the aftermath of democratic socialism related to Mamdani's triumph. "To me, it's this radical idea that working people have economic rights," U.S. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a Democrat, defined democratic socialism, listing housing, a liveable wage, healthcare, and childcare as examples.

Can democratic socialist candidates running outside of New York City, however, use Mamdani's strategy as a winning model? Supporters certainly find lessons from Mamdani's accomplishment, but it's not that simple.

Atanu Biswas is Professor of Statistics, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata

Language in conversation

Vaishali R. Venkat

"Genie, help me! My math calculations and thoughts are doing somersaults and spinning in circles!"

"What's it now, dear?"

"Genie, I've been wrestling with this math puzzle for nearly an hour, and I still can't crack it. It feels painfully torturous."

"Little Moon! It feels torturous to you only because the puzzle itself is torturous."

"Oh, for God's sake, stop your vocabulary aerobics, Genie! My mind is already doing cartwheels."

"Moon, calm your brain. 'Torturous' means something so difficult or full of suffering that it squeezes your soul the way a lemon is squeezed. It becomes so unbearable that you clutch your head and howl at the ceiling like a confused little wolf. But the puzzle you are trying to solve is torturous. 'Torturous' means twists and turns, full of changes in direction, never simple or straightforward. The puzzle is squeezing you, so it feels torturous to you. But the puzzle itself is like a maze, too convoluted and complicated, and that is why it is torturous."

"Wow, Genie. Your language lesson is surprisingly energising."

"Glad to hear it, Moon. That math puzzle was 'enervating' to the point that you looked like a pulled, deflated balloon, but I somehow managed to 'energise' you with a dose of vocabulary wizardry."

"Genie, I barely wrapped my head around 'torturous' and 'tortuous', and now you've hurled two more words at me. What's this 'energise' and 'enervate' business now? All the words are tumbling over one another and doing acrobatics in my brain."

"Moon, 'energise' means to fill you with power, excitement, and spark. It happens when your brain suddenly feels happy, starts dancing again, and you feel energetic and refreshed. 'Enervate' is the opposite. It means to drain your energy until you droop like a phone battery stuck at one per cent. It's like drinking glucose when you're tired and then immediately letting a math puzzle enervate you all over again."

"Interesting, Genie... since you've energised my brain, explain this too. What parts of speech are these four words you taught me and how do I use them correctly in sentences?"

"Moon, listen carefully. These four little troublemakers belong to two different kingdoms of grammar. 'Torturous' and 'tortuous' are adverbs adjectives. They describe things, that is, nouns or pronouns. A torturous exam, a tortuous path, a torturous puzzle that makes you annoyed and drained. Adjectives are simply labels you stick on nouns or pronouns to show what kind of creature, person, or thing they are."

"Understood, Genie... now don't leave me hanging. What about 'energise' and 'enervate'? What category do these men fit into?"

"Moon, 'energise' and 'enervate' are verbs – action words. They show what something does. One verb fills your battery, the other sucks it dry like a greedy little vacuum. Example: The scorching Sun enervated the children, and they stopped playing."

"Genie, wait. I shall finish the examples. A swim in cold water always energises me. Right?"

"Perfect, Moon."

Word of the day

Prolix: tediously prolonged or tending to speak or write at great length

Synonym: verbose

Usage: Like a rolling prolix manuscript

Pronunciation: /prəʊˈlɪks/ prō-LIKS

International Phonetic Alphabet: /pɹəʊˈlɪks/

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

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send your answers to sahya.c@thehindu.co.in

The qualification rounds for the 2026 FIFA men's World Cup have wrapped up. Here is a quiz on one of the most anticipated tournaments in the world

Vishwesh P. Venkitesh

QUESTION 1

How many countries will take part in the opening edition and how many slots are left to be filled through play-offs?

QUESTION 2

Which country was the first to qualify for the tournament along with the co-hosts?

QUESTION 3

Name the confederation which will host its own play-off tournament for four of the remaining slots.

QUESTION 4

While New Zealand claimed the only spot allocated to Oceania, name the country from the confederation which is headed to the intercontinental play-offs.

QUESTION 5

Ahead of the play-offs, how many countries are set to play their first-ever World Cup in 2026? Name them.

Visual question

Name the nation which became the smallest ever by population to qualify for the tournament after securing a draw against Jamaica on Tuesday. ANI

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Mary Shelley wrote the book as part of a ghost story competition with her friends during the wet summer of 1816. The competition was the idea of this English Romantic poet. **Ans: Lord Byron** 2. The author of a Gothic story. **Ans: Horace Walpole**

3. A novel and its author are part of the title of this film starring Gary Oldman, Winona Ryder, Keanu Reeves, and Anthony Hopkins. **Ans: Bram Stoker's Dracula**

4. Name this Gothic novel written by a Scottish writer. **Ans: Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde**

5. This short story was adapted by Mike Flanagan into a miniseries. **Ans: The Fall of the House of Usher**

'Dusk' Twilight Knights was repackaged after the success of the series. **Ans: The Twilight series by Stephenie Meyer**

Early Birds: Siddhartha Sivakumar, Akshay Kumar Sharma, Deepak Sadhu, Soumendra Banerjee, Ajith Kubar

From Page One

India's Russian oil cuts predate U.S. tariffs: data

"The Trump tariffs had come during that time," the official said. "Yes, they are a factor to be kept in mind, but they are not driving Indian policies."

Since the 50% tariffs were imposed, U.S. President Donald Trump has been repeatedly claiming that India will be cutting its imports of Russian oil, something the Indian government has neither confirmed nor denied.

Separately, formal trade talks between India and the U.S. have resumed after a brief hiatus, with statements again being made about tranche one of a Bilateral Trade Agreement expected to be concluded "soon".

Several Indian Ministers have asserted that India will make its energy import decisions as per its needs and best interests, and not under duress.

The reduction of Russian oil is not just in absolute terms, but also in terms of its share in India's total oil imports. Russian oil accounted for about 4.7% of India's total oil imports in September 2024, which came down to 38% by September 2025. However, rather than a one-off, the data confirm that this is part of a longer process.

Russia's share in India's oil imports grew from 1.6% in 2020-21 to 2% in 2021-22, before jumping to 19% in 2022-23, 33.4% in 2023-24, and 38.4% in 2024-25. The first six months of 2025-26 had, however, snapped this four-year increasing trend, with Russia's share falling to 32.3% in the April-September period.

Diversified imports

Russia's war in Ukraine, the resultant sanctions on it by the U.S. and Europe, and the discounts it provided India resulted in a significant shift in India's oil import basket for a few years after the war started, with an increasing dependence on Russia.

Some of that is now reversing itself as India has started shifting away from Russian oil. In 2021-22, the U.S. accounted for 9.2% of India's oil imports and the UAE accounted for 12.4%. This was when Russia accounted for only 2% of India's oil imports. By 2024-25, Russia accounted for 35.1% of India's oil, while the shares of the U.S. and the UAE had fallen to 4.6% and 9.7%, respectively.

In the first six months of 2025-26, the U.S. share has once again increased to 8% and that of the UAE to 11.7%, even as Russia's share has fallen to 32.3%.

Nitish to be sworn in as Bihar CM for 10th time

All the top leaders of the NDA constituents, including Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan, Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM) chief Upendra Kushwaha and Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) founder Jitan Ram Manjhi and his party president Santosh Kumar Suman, were present.

Mr. Choudhary proposed Mr. Kumar's name, and senior BJP leader Dharmendra Pradhan called for a show of hands, leading to Mr. Kumar's unanimous election.

Following this, Mr. Kumar and other NDA leaders visited Raj Bhavan, where he submitted his resignation as head of the outgoing government to Governor Arif Mohammad Khan and staked claim to form the new government by presenting the list of NDA MLAs. The Governor accepted his resignation and requested him to continue as acting Chief Minister until the new government is sworn in.

The oath-taking ceremony will be held at 11.30 a.m. on November 20 at Gandhi Maidan in Patna, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh, BJP chief J.P. Nadda, and several other dignitaries.

SC scraps provisions of Tribunal Reforms Act

Justice Chandran separately added that the 2021 Act was "old wine in a new bottle, the wine where not the judicial palate, but the bottle merely displeases". The Bench said that Parliament had "ignored" the defects that the court pointed out in the ordinance, and blithely transferred its provisions in a slightly altered form to the 2021 Act.

Chief Justice Gavai concluded the Act was nothing but a "legislative override" of the binding Supreme Court judgment of 2021.

The CJI dismissed the Centre's argument, presented by Attorney-General R. Venkataramani, that Parliament had "illustrious" to ignore the decisions of the Supreme Court".

Noting that judicial review of laws is a basic feature of the Constitution, the CJI said that by bringing the 2021 Act, Parliament and the Centre had brushed aside the supremacy of the Constitution. The Bench quoted B.R. Ambedkar, who said that "If the executive is honest in working the Constitution, it must act in accordance with the judicial decisions given by the Supreme Court".

The judgment was based on a batch of petitions filed, among others, by the Madras Bar Association and Congress leader Jairam Ramesh. They argued that the Act was a sly revival of the 2021 ordinance.

Mr. Ramesh had argued that the 2021 Act posed a serious threat to judicial independence by giving the government wide powers to make rules on the appointments, service conditions, salaries, etc. of members of crucial tribunals in which the Centre itself was the largest litigant. The petitioners had submitted that the 2021 Act was passed without parliamentary debate amid ruckus in the House.

SC declines quota for promotee judges in HJS

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to grant a quota for promotee judges in the Higher Judicial Service (HJS), saying perceived discontentment and heartburn without something more in the form of a legal claim or even a legitimate expectation can not result in creating an artificial classification of members within a cadre.

A five-judge Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai said fixation in the Selection Grade and Super Time Scale within the HJS is based on merit-cum-seniority within the cadre, and cannot depend on the length of service or performance in the lower rungs of the judiciary.

The court issued guidelines for the filling up of the district judge posts and said the seniority of officers within the HJS should be determined through an annual four-point roster, filled by officers appointed in the particular year in the repeating sequence of two regular promotees, one promoted through Limited Departmental Competitive Examination and one direct recruit.

Seven Maoists, including 3 women, killed in A.P.

Tech Shankar, a specialist in technical operations, was among those slain, say police; encounter came a day after Maoist commander Madvi Hidma and five others were killed in the same district

Rajalagundi Srinivas
VIJAYAWADA

Seven Maoists were killed in an encounter with the police in the Maredumilli forests of Alluri Sitarama Raju district in Andhra Pradesh early on Wednesday.

This is the second encounter in the past 24 hours in the forests near G.M. Valasa of the same district.

Metturi Jogi Rao, alias Tech Shankar, the CPI (Maoist) central committee member in charge of the Andhra-Odisha Border, was among those killed, Mahesh Chandra Laddha, Additional Director-General of Police (Intelligence), said. Jyothi, alias Saritha, former guard commander of slain Maoist leader Nambala Keshava Rao, Suresh, alias Ramesh, Lokesh, alias Ganesh, Salim, alias Vasu, Anitha and Shamin were the other Maoists gunned down.

"The encounter took place around 7 a.m. Three women and four male Naxalites were killed in the exchange of fire on Wednesday," Mr. Laddha said at a press conference. A few of the Maoists who managed to escape from the police in Tuesday's exchange of fire were killed in Wednesday's firing, the intelligence chief added.

"CPI (Maoist) in-charge central committee member of Andhra Odisha Border (AOB) Metturi Jogi Rao, alias Tech Shankar, who specialised in technical operations in the banned outfit, was among those killed in the encounter," Mr. Laddha said. Top Maoist commander Madvi Hidma and his wife, Madkam Raje, were among six killed in a similar encounter on Tuesday.

Hidma was a central committee member and South Bastar battalion commander of the CPI (Maoist), while his wife was a Chhattisgarh State zonal committee member.

Separately, the police produced 43 arrested Maoists in courts in Eluru, Krishna, and NTR districts on Wednesday. Most of them were remanded in judicial custody for 14 days.

ASGP Intelligence Mahesh Chandra Laddha, Eluru Range DIG G.V.G. Ashok Kumar and other officers looking at the weapons seized from the arrested Maoists in Vijayawada on Wednesday. KVS RAO

Ashish Sharma

Inspector of M.P. elite force killed in Chhattisgarh

The Hindu Bureau
BHOPAL

An Inspector of the elite anti-Maoist Hawk Force in Madhya Pradesh died on Wednesday after sustaining bullet injuries during an encounter with Maoists in Rajnandgaon district of Chhattisgarh, officers said.

According to the police, Ashish Sharma, 40, was leading a Hawk Force platoon as part of an inter-State joint operation in the dense forests near the Madhya Pradesh-Chhattisgarh-Maharashtra tri-junction.

Hawk Force Commandant Shyam K.M. told The Hindu that the teams faced sudden gunfire, triggering an exchange in which Mr. Sharma suffered bullet injuries in his thigh and abdomen.

Stalin says Centre denied Metro Rail for Coimbatore, Madurai on 'flimsy grounds'

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Wednesday accused the BJP government at the Centre of denying Metro Rail projects for Madurai and Coimbatore on "flimsy grounds".

In a post on X, the Chief Minister said, "The Union BJP government has denied Metro Rail for 'Temple City' Madurai and 'South India's Manchester' Coimbatore on flimsy grounds. A government exists to serve people without bias. Yet, the Union BJP treats Tamil Nadu's democratic choice as a reason to take revenge.

Mr. Stalin said pushing such a political custom in which BJP-ruled States get Metros for smaller Tier-II cities while the Opposition-ruled States are deprived, was a disgraceful approach.

A government exists to serve people without bias. Yet, the Union BJP treats Tamil Nadu's democratic choice as a reason to take revenge

M.K. STALIN
Chief Minister

'Land of self-respect'

"Tamil Nadu, the land of self-respect, will never accept such distortion of federal principles," he added. "When they [Centre] attempted to stall the Chennai Metro, we overcame those malicious attempts and kept the project progressing. With the same determination, we will secure the Metro Rail that Madurai and Coimbatore require for their future growth," he said.

The Union government earlier rejected the Metro Rail project proposals for Coimbatore and Madurai, arguing that the two cities lacked the mandated 2 million population according to the 2011 Census.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs said according to the 2011 Census, the population of Coimbatore city was 15.84 lakh and that of Madurai was 15 lakh. The Metro Rail Policy, 2017, states that the population of a city should be 2 million or more to plan a Metro Rail project.

NIA arrests Anmol Bishnoi, accused in Siddique murder, after deportation from U.S.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday arrested Anmol Bishnoi, the younger brother of jailed "gangster" Lawrence Bishnoi, following his deportation from the United States to India.

Amid heavy security arrangements, he was produced in a court that sent him to the agency's custody for 11 days.

He had been on the run since 2022 and is the 19th person held in the NIA's terror-gangster conspiracy case. He was chargesheeted in March 2023 for allegedly helping his brother and designated "terrorist" Goldy Brar carry out terror activities between 2020 and 2023. The probe agencies suspect his role in the killing of former Maharashtra Minister Baba Siddique in 2024. At that time, Lawrence Bishnoi was lodged in the Sabarmati Central Jail in Ahmedabad. His alleged aide Shubu Lonkar claimed responsibility for the murder, through a Facebook post, linking it to the death of Anuj Thapan in police custody.

Anuj was arrested by the Mumbai police for allegedly opening fire outside Bollywood actor Salman Khan's house on April 14, 2024. Anmol's involvement is also alleged in the firing incident, besides the killing of singer Sidhu Moosewala in Punjab's Mansa district in 2022.

According to the NIA, Anmol continued to operate the Bishnoi network from the U.S., coordinating with gang members in India, arranging shelter and logistics for shooters, and running extortion rackets from abroad. He was detained there in November last year and deported to India on Tuesday.

Anmol Bishnoi being brought to the Patiala House Court, after he was deported to India from the U.S. on Wednesday. PTI

Al Falah chief sent to 13-day custody; ED cites group's rapid rise since 1990s

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday sent Javed Ahmed Siddiqui, chairman-cum-chancellor of Al Falah University, to Enforcement Directorate custody for 13 days.

Mr. Siddiqui is the founder of the Al Falah Group, which, according to the agency, witnessed a "meteoric rise" since the 1990s.

Spread over 70 acres in Dhauj village of Faridabad in Haryana, the university came into the limelight after three doctors working with the institution were found allegedly to be the part of a "terror" module.

Two doctors, Muzammil Ahmad Ganaie and Shaheen Saeed, were held while the third one – identified as Umar-un-Nabi – latter turned out to be the person behind the wheel of the car that exploded near the Red Fort on November 10. The institution has distanced itself from the case and offered to cooperate with the investigations.

In 1992, Mr. Siddiqui set up a company named Al Falah Investment. It is alleged that following a complaint of cheating, he spent over two years in Tihar Jail. He came out on bail in February 2004 and was later acquitted by the court in the case next year, after he and his brother agreed to make repayments.

Investigators have found that Al Falah University is run by the Al Falah Charitable Trust, registered in Delhi's Okhla on September 8, 1995, with Mr. Siddiqui being named as one of the first trustees and designated as its managing trustee. The ED has alleged that the university, through these deceptive practices, has continued to attract admissions, and accumulate substantial monetary gains, thereby enriching itself at the cost of students' trust, future, and legitimate expectations.

"The entire Al Falah Group has seen a meteoric rise since the 1990s, metamorphosing into a large educational body. However, the financials of the various entities are at variance with the huge amount of assets/wealth accumulated by the group. The Proceeds of Crime are also seen to have been diverted/layered on various occasions," it has alleged.

Al Falah University is run by the Al Falah Charitable Trust with Javed Ahmed Siddiqui being named as one of the first trustees and designated as its managing trustee.

Bangladesh invites NSA Ajit Doval to visit Dhaka amid tense ties

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Amid tense bilateral ties, Bangladesh's National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman has invited Indian National Security Adviser Ajit Doval to visit Dhaka. The invitation was extended by the Bangladesh side during a meeting between the two NSAs that took place in New Delhi on Wednesday, ahead of the 7th Meeting of the National Security Advisers of the Colombo Security Conclave on Thursday.

The visit of the Bangladesh team, led by Mr. Rahman, has drawn attention as it commenced a day after the International Crimes Tribunal delivered death sentence for former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who is in exile in India. The meeting between Mr. Doval and Mr. Rahman discussed "key bilateral issues", said a press release from the High Commission of Bangladesh. Mr. Doval will host his counterparts from Maldives, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh at the Colombo Security Conclave, the Ministry of External Affairs said in an announcement.

Ajit Doval

CPI(M) plans *Bangla Bachao Yatra* ahead of 2026 election

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) will launch *Bangla Bachao Yatra* (Save Bengal March) from November 29 to highlight crucial issues concerning West Bengal ahead of the next year Assembly polls.

"The *Bangla Bachao Yatra* will begin from Tufanganj in Cooch Behar from November 29. We have already started preparation for the yatra through campaign and wall writings. The idea behind saving Bengal is saving our education, our healthcare, our public transport, saving Adivasis, minorities and Matuas. Saving the spirit of Bengal renaissance," CPI(M) State secretary Md. Salim said on Thursday.

The yatra is likely to traverse across the State, and will conclude at Ramchandrapur in North 24 Parganas on December 17, covering 1,000 km across 11 districts and several adjoining parliaments.

SC to hear Kerala govt., IUML pleas challenging SIR in State tomorrow

Kerala argues conducting the special revision concurrently with the local body polls will require manpower and hinder essential govt. functions; personnel deployed for the local body polls will not be engaged in the SIR exercise, says CEO

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India (CJI) B.R. Gavai on Wednesday agreed to urgently list on Friday separate petitions filed by the Kerala government and the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) for deferment of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in the State as the "cumbersome" exercise clashes with the local body polls and lead to a strain on human resources besides resulting in an "administrative impasse".

The State, represented by advocate C.K. Sasi, and the IUML, represented by advocate Haris Beeran, made an oral mentioning before the CJI for an early hearing.

The SIR process has been scheduled from November 4 to December 4.

The Kerala State Election Commission had decided to conduct local body polls in two phases on December 9 and 11.

Data check: A special camp in Kochi on Wednesday to help people fill their enumeration forms. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Idukki and Ernakulam will go to the polls on December 9. Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod will vote on December 11.

The notification for the election is to be issued on November 14 and that of withdrawal of nominations on November 24. The counting of votes will be on December 13 and the last date for completion of election is December 31.

The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Kerala had already communicated that the personnel deployed for election to Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs) would not be engaged in the SIR exercise.

'Near impossibility'

The State government pointed out that the simultaneous conduct of the SIR and the LSGI election would be a "near impossibility".

"SIR is a huge exercise requiring deployment of 1,76,000 personnel from government and quasi-governmental services for election-related duties and further 68,000 police and other security personnel. SIR is also a comprehensive process with cumbersome procedure, requiring the services of additional personnel, numbering 25,888. The pool of trained and election-experienced staff is finite, which constrains real-world deployment. Putting with such a large number of officers for simultaneous SIR and LSGI elections is a near impossibility, apart from possibly pushing the State to an administrative impasse," the state had submitted.

The government said undertaking the SIR would affect the smooth conduct of the local bodies' election. There are 1,200 LSGIs in the State comprising 941 grama panchayats, 152 block panchayats, 14 district panchayats, 87 municipalities and six corporations. There are 21,032 wards in total.

The petitions have highlighted the constitutional mandate under Articles 243-E and 243-U as well as a statutory mandate under Section 26 of the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act and Section 94 of the Kerala Municipality Act to conduct election to the LSGIs within five years.

Both the IUML and the State government had made it plainly clear that objected to the constitutionality of the SIR, terming the exercise an anathema to the democratic polity of the country.

However, they said the current petitions addressed the immediate and practical problem of the logistics of conducting SIR and local bodies election at the same time in the State.

Congress leader Sonia Gandhi presents the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2024 to former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet in New Delhi on Wednesday. PTI

Indira reshaped the country with her policies, says Sonia

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Indira Gandhi, India's first woman Prime Minister, reshaped the country with her policies dedicated to fighting poverty, deprivation, conflict, and inequality, Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi said on Wednesday.

Ms. Gandhi made these remarks after presenting the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2024 to former President of Chile Michelle Bachelet, who had also served as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Former National Security Adviser Shiv Shankar Menon headed the jury that selected Ms. Bachelet for the award in recognition of her efforts to ensure the rights of all, but particularly of women.

"The award commemorates Indira Gandhi's monumental contribution by celebrating women, men and institutions that have worked towards social development, peace, sustainability, and numerous other causes. It reminds us that even in times of strife, there are those who fight for progress, justice, and the well-being of humankind," Ms. Gandhi said.

"As India's first and only woman Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi reshaped our country with her policies dedicated to eradicating poverty, deprivation, conflict, and inequality. She once said, 'Peace we want because there is another war to fight against poverty, disease, and ignorance,'" she said.

The Chilean leader was awarded for her efforts to ensure rights to all, especially women

Ms. Gandhi hailed the former President of Chile as an "inspiring leader", and said that her life and work "epitomises the very essence of Indira Gandhi's life and work".

'True privilege'

Ms. Bachelet began her acceptance speech by offering condolences to the victims of the recent bomb blast in Delhi, which left 13 people dead.

"It is a true privilege to be once again in India, a country of extraordinary cultural richness, profound history, and vibrant diversity. Today, I wish to pay tribute to the remarkable life and legacy of Indira Gandhi, a visionary woman and a tremendous source of inspiration for so many people around the world," she said.

"She [Indira Gandhi] believed that nations could prosper only if they lived in harmony with one another. This belief feels even more urgent in today's fragmented world. One of the very causes that deeply moved Indira Gandhi is also what inspired me to enter politics: to improve the welfare of the people. Early in my life, I realised that people's wellbeing is intrinsically linked to the respect for human rights," Ms. Bachelet said.

272 eminent citizens accuse Opposition of 'tarnishing' poll body

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Over 270 eminent citizens, including retired judges, bureaucrats, diplomats and former armed forces officers, have issued an open letter accusing Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and several other Opposition leaders of attempting to "tarnish" constitutional institutions, the latest being the Election Commission (EC), through "unsubstantiated accusations".

The letter said some political leaders were resorting to "provocative" charges instead of offering policy alternatives, noting that institutions such as the armed forces, judiciary and Parliament had previously faced similar attacks. It alleged that the EC was now being subjected to "systematic and conspiratorial" attempts to damage its credibility.

The open letter also noted that the armed forces, Parliament and judiciary had faced similar attacks

Among the signatories are former Supreme Court judge Adarsh Kumar Goel, former Delhi High Court judge S.N. Dhingra, former RAW chief Sanjiv Tripathi, former NIA Director Y.C. Modi, former Secretary to Government of India Saumitra Chatterjee and former police chiefs of several States.

SC advisory today on Presidential Reference on Governors' timelines

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled on Thursday to pronounce its advisory opinion on a Presidential Reference questioning the top court's authority to "impose" timelines and prescribe the manner of conduct of Governors and the President while dealing with State Bills sent to them for assent or reserved for consideration.

Reserving the arguments in September, the five-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai had made it clear that the Centre should not expect the top court to "sit idle" and go useless if a constitutional authority failed to discharge his duties.

The marathon hearings in the Presidential Reference had brought into sharp focus the dividing line between Opposition-ruled States and their Governors over delay in clearing crucial laws.

Marathon hearings had brought into sharp focus the dividing line between Opposition-ruled States and Governors

April 8 judgment

The Union government had used the platform of the Presidential Reference to criticise the court for encroaching on the domains of the Governors and the President.

The bone of contention which led to the Presidential Reference was an April 8 judgment of the Supreme Court that imposed a three-month deadline on Governors and the President to deal with Bills placed before them for assent or consideration, respectively.

The court had, in the judgment, held that Governors cannot stall governance by endlessly sitting on important welfare laws passed by State legislatures.

The Union government, through Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, had argued that the April 8 judgment had forced a "one-size-fits-all" solution. Mr. Mehta had contended that a uniform time frame for all State Bills would prove "self-destructive".

"Every Bill has its own context-based issues," he had submitted, adding that the court cannot take over legislative functions by issuing a mandamus to Governors to assent to State Bills.

Attorney General R. Venkataramani had submitted that Governors must be given the discretion to either assent or withhold Bills after testing their constitutionality.

The Hindu's journalists win Laadli awards for gender-sensitive reports

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Journalists from *The Hindu* bagged honours at the Laadli Media and Advertising Awards for Gender Sensitivity, 2025 on Wednesday.

Population First, a non-governmental organisation, presented the 15th edition of the Laadli awards, honouring 60 print, web, and TV journalists.

The Hindu won accolades for two reports. Shiv Sahay Singh, Sravana Chatterjee, and Mayurie Sen from the Kolkata bureau won an award in the English language print series category for the report "Doctor rape and murder: Violence and vigil in Kolkata".

Their reportage connected the horrific crime at the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital to a deeper structural rot in healthcare and governance, and for shifting the focus from sensationalism to accountability.

Sravana Chatterjee and Mayurie Sen (left) and Shiv Sahay with the Laadli award. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A Delhi report of Ashu Bansal and Sarika Mahajan, "Homes for transgender people: A safe space, threatened", bagged an award under the print category.

The feature highlighted the challenges faced by the Central government-established Garima Grehs that are struggling to keep their doors open for transgender persons.

Population First, which is supported by the United Nations Population Fund, has been recognising journalists and creatives in news media and advertising for their work on gender sensitivity since the year 2002.

Journalists from several other organisations, including Scroll, The News Minute, Newsclick, The Quint, Thefirst, Behanbox, Indiaspend, and People's Archive of Rural India, took home honours.

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
49, East Wing, 4th & 5th Floor, Khanija Bhavan, Race Course Road, Bangalore - 560 001. Phone No. 080-22260333 website : www.kiadb.in
No. KIADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-21/1364/2025-26 Date: 19.11.2025
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(Through GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Only)
Tender under two cover bid system is invited for the work mentioned below as per the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through electronic procurement from eligible Contractors who have got adequate financial resources, suitable construction equipments, technical man power & sufficient past experience for the following work as per the schedule given below:
Name of the works: (1) Formation of Industrial Layout including Formation of 30M, 24M & 12M Wide Roads, Flexible Pavement, Construction of RCC Side Drains, RCC Utility Ducts, HDPE Water Supply Pipeline etc., at Ragatti Industrial Area, Section-1 in Dharwad Taluk & District. (2) Formation of Industrial Layout including Formation of 30M Wide Roads of Flexible Pavement, Construction of RCC Side Drains, RCC Box Culverts, RCC Utility Ducts, HDPE Water Supply Pipeline etc., at Ragatti Industrial Area, Section-2 in Dharwad Taluk & District.
Applicants May download bidding documents from the Karnataka Public Procurement portal **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**
Last Date for submission of bids is **18.12.2025** upto **4:30** pm.
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Online applications are invited for the entrance examination conducted by the Dr. Ambedkar Center of Excellence (DACE), Dr. Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya, Sagar from Scheduled Cast (SC) and Other Backward Communities (OBC) and PM CARES Children candidates for admission in free coaching for 70 Seats in Civil Services Examination (Preliminary and Mains) and 30 Seats in Banking (Clerk & PO). Online application and other details are available on the university website https://dhgsuadmin.samarth.edu.in/index.php/site/news and for more details and updates, please visit the website www.dhgsu.edu.in.
Important Dates:
1. Starting Date to Apply Online: 22.11.2025
2. Last Date to Apply online - 05.12.2025
As per rule 20 lpad per month will be paid by Dr. Ambedkar Foundation (SAF)
Registrar

TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS-TIRUPATI
S.V. AYURVEDIC HOSPITAL e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
e-Tenders are invited for supply of 1.5 Ton (300 kl) with Oil System through e-tenders to S. V. Ayurvedic Hospital, TTD, TIRUPATI.
For tender notice and tender details log on to the web site
http://www.tenderwizard.com/https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in
For further details contact phone number: 0877-2264150.
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

ANDHRA PRADESH CENTRAL POWER DISTRIBUTION CORPORATION LTD
Tender Notice No: CGM/PRG/V/A/SP WO/HS NIT-06 dt 11.2025-26
Sealed tenders are invited from eligible bidders for: Turnkey Improvement Project for Survey, Design, Supply, Installation and Commissioning of 33/11kV Outdoor Sub-Stations and 11/0.433kV Distribution Sub-Stations in NTR, Krishna, NCPR, Nellore, Prakasam and Ongole Circles of APCPDCL on E-procurement platform.
Sd/- Chief General Manager Projects, APCPDCL, Vijayawada

NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY DELHI
(A University of Law Established by Act No. 1 of 2008 of NCT of Delhi)
Sector-14, Dwarka, New Delhi-110078
Ref. No. NLUD/Faculty Admin./2025/1541
Date: 19.11.2025
Online applications are invited in the prescribed Application Form from eligible candidates for various teaching positions (regular/contractual) at National Law University Delhi. The last date for receipt of application is **20.12.2025**. For more details visit the University website **www.nludelhi.ac.in**.
Any addendum/corrigendum shall be posted only on the University Website.
Sd/-
Registrar

IN BRIEF

Delhi HC gives nod for release of *120 Bahadur* this week

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday gave its nod to the release of the Farhan Akhtar starrer movie *120 Bahadur* on November 21, closing a plea challenging its CBFC certification on the grounds that it distorts historical facts. The court noted it was too late to change the name and release date of the film and that the producers have mentioned the names of the soldiers at the end of the movie in the form of a special tribute. The court closed the petition after the Rezang La Rejment Mancha and the families of Rezang La soldiers agreed to accept the film's title on the condition that all 120 soldiers' names were included.

Court bars transfer of Azam Khan, son outside Rampur jail

The Special MP/MLA Court in Rampur on Wednesday directed that senior Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Azam Khan and his son Abdullah Azam Khan be kept in the Rampur district jail and not be shifted to any other facility without its prior permission. Special Judge Shobhit Bansal gave the order on an application by Khan pleading that he be lodged in Rampur district jail due to "poor health" and that over 100 cases are pending against him, and 45 cases against his son, most of which are being heard in Rampur. After hearing both sides, the court ordered the Rampur jail superintendent to ensure that the hearings in the cases take place in Rampur and the two should be lodged in the district jail. ●●

Press bodies question data protection Act and its rules

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

News media associations expressed concerns that the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules (DPDP), 2025, did not address their concerns that the main law – the DPDP Act, 2023, which has been partially notified – could hurt journalistic newsgathering.

The Editors Guild of India, in a statement, said, "While the Guild has earlier highlighted the Act's shortcomings, which included the dilution of the Right to Information regime and the absence of any explicit journalistic exemption, the newly issued Rules continue to leave critical questions unresolved for journalists and media organisations."

S. Krishnan, Secretary, Electronics and Information Technology Ministry, had met representatives of the Guild and Digipub, representing paraplay digital outlets, and assured them that a detailed "FAQ" document, which is ready, would be issued addressing concerns of the media outlets.

In a separate statement, Digipub expressed "deep concern" over the Rules and the Act, saying they "collectively cripple the Right to Information Act".

Climate talks veer away from 'implementation'

Differences over financing and pathways have hurt progress on a decisive deal on climate action; observers say European nations have reached the 'maximum' they can deliver in terms of finance

Jacob Koshy
BELEM

Stop "the bulldozer, down with gas in Asia," chants a group of activists in the hallways of the COP30 venue in Belém, Brazil, while they raise colourful banners and placards condemning oil and gas drilling.

The walls of this sprawling venue hosting the climate talks – near this humid city's airport – are make-shift and porous and these chants bleed through into the inner sanctum rooms, where teams of delegates from a coalition of countries – nearly all of them Asian – scrible together common ground to stonewall and delay firm action on eschewing fossil fuel use. The countries are collectively called the Like Minded Developing Countries (LMDC).

Saudi Arabia is a vocal representative of the LMDC that comprises several oil and gas producing nations and given the criticality of fossil fuel to their economies, have for years resisted a phase-out plan for fossil fuel. The "Like Mindedness" of these countries is fuzzy.

Activists participate in a demonstration outside the venue for the COP30 UN Climate Summit in Belém on Wednesday. AP

The climate talks in Baku, last year, concluded with the rich countries promising to deliver $300 billion annually by 2035, which was viewed as insufficient to keep the world from heating beyond two degrees Celsius (2C). The push-back against this – a position India has independently articulated multiple times – is that these sums are never available as low-cost loans or grants and available largely as part of commercial transactions.

"Grants and concessional resources can lower the cost of capital, facilitating a robust pipeline of investments and making these investments more sustainable in lowering the cost of capital," India said on November 15.

Differing views

On the other hand, observers as part of European delegations say this several Western European countries have reached the "maximum" they can deliver in terms of such public finance. "While it is well understood that developing countries have their own limitations and planned pathways regarding their dependence on fossil fuel, the sense is that the maximum funds that can be made available as public finance have already been done so," said Jesi Mathias Clausen, RIU Program Director with Concito, a think tank in Denmark and who has been part of COP negotiations for over a decade.

The fundamental logjam guides attempts by the President of COP negotiations, at present Andre Lago of Brazil, to opt for a process whereby all countries – nearly all of them who are part of about 19 negotiating blocs – feel heard, rather than crafting an ambitious decisive deal that would rachet climate action. This, when COP30, in the run up to the two-week jamboree was pitched as a "...COP of implementation."

As things stand on Wednesday, the Presidency has asked countries to evolve consensus on four of the most pressing climate concerns – finance, trade, transparency and the fact that countries' ambitious cutting plans – known as nationally determined contributions or NDC, are inadequate to limit temperature rises to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Uniform organ transplant policy needed, says top court

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said a uniform national policy was imperative to ensure putting in place a transparent mechanism for organ transplantations.

The court said the mechanism must operate beyond the limitations of gender, region and class across States. "There should be uniform criteria for organ transplants for all," it observed.

A Bench comprising Chief Justice B.R. Gavai and Justice K. Vinod Chandran referred to how organ donors, many a time, were left in the lurch following transplantation without any follow-up medical care. "A live donor who parts with a valuable organ should not be ignored and must be well looked-after following the donation," the Bench noted in a hearing of a petition filed by the Indian Society of Organ Transplantation.

It asked the Centre to persuade Andhra Pradesh to adopt the 2011 amendments to the Transplantation of Human Organs Act, 1994. It directed Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Manipur to adopt the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Rules, 2014.

ISRO tests bootstrap mode start on CE20 cryogenic engine

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully demonstrated the bootstrap mode start test on the CE20 cryogenic engine which powers the upper stage of the Launch Vehicle Mark 3 (LVM3) rocket.

The test on the CE20 cryogenic engine, which was successfully conducted under vacuum conditions in the High Altitude Test (HAT) facility at ISRO Propulsion Complex, Mahendragiri, on November 7, for a duration of 10 seconds is an important develop-ment towards enhancing the restart capability and mission flexibility of future LVM3 flights.

Though the CE20 cryogenic engine, powering the LVM3 upper stage, is already qualified for operation at thrust levels ranging from 19 to 22 tonnes in flight with a single start, and also for the Gaganyaan missions, during nominal operation, the engine ignition is initiated under tank head conditions, followed by the start of turbo pumps using a stored gas start up system.

"For future missions, multiple in-flight restarts of the CE20 engine will be needed for flexible multi-orbit missions. But with the current set up, each restart demands an additional start-up gas bottle and associated systems. Hence, achieving bootstrap mode start – where the engine builds up to steady operation without external start-up assistance – is essential," the ISRO stated.

After Delhi blast, every Kashmiri is projected as suspect, says Omar

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday expressed regret that all Kashmiris were "being portrayed as suspects after the Red Fort blast" and said "even he feared driving around in New Delhi in a vehicle with a J&K number on it".

Mr. Abdullah also questioned the Centre's narrative that peace prevailed in J&K after the abrogation of the provisions of Article 370 in 2019.

Speaking at the two-day J&K Business and Trade Fair in Kulgam, Mr. Abdullah expressed his worry over the fear instilled among Kashmiris after the Red Fort blast, which left 12 civilians dead.

"Such a situation has been created that no father would like to send his child outside. Everyone looks at Kashmiris with suspicion because of the involvement of a few. Unfortunately, an impression is being created that everyone from Kashmir is responsible for the (Red Fort) incident. It will make it hard for Kashmiris to come out and earn their livelihood outside," Mr. Abdullah said.

Omar Abdullah also questioned the Centre's narrative that peace prevailed in J&K after the abrogation of Article 370. ALI MUJTABA

The Chief Minister said he does not feel safe driving a vehicle with a J&K number plate in New Delhi. "I also think twice whether to drive or not in New Delhi with a J&K number plate. What if I am stopped and questioned," Mr. Abdullah said.

He said people of J&K were told that the violence had ended now and peace prevailed after 2019. "However, the reality on the ground has not changed. Ordinary citizens are still paying the price. If it is not exploding in Delhi, it is exploding here. J&K has witnessed continuous violence over the last three decades," the Chief Minister said.

'Security not under CM'

Stating that security does not come under his purview as the Chief Minister of a Union Territory (UT), Mr. Abdullah said, "The responsibility for the ongoing situation lies with those in charge of security. Why this is still happening, you should ask those responsible for our security. We don't have that responsibility."

He said that in the past two days he has visited homes of five victims of blasts in Kashmir.

NCDC flags study on rising antibiotic resistance in India

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has refuted claims made in an international study published by The Lancet that over 33% of Indian patients hospitalised for a specific gastrointestinal procedure are colonised with at least one multi-drug resistant organism (MDRO).

The study has raised alarm over soaring antimicrobial resistance in India, describing it as a rapidly escalating superbug crisis and a "global threat".

In response, the NCDC, which is mandated to prevent, detect, and control diseases of public health importance in India, points out that The Lancet do-tment only reports colonisation of multi-drug resistant organisms, not actual infections.

"Colonisation is a microbiological finding, but not a clinical failure," it said, adding that the results refer to specific high risk clinical groups and cannot be generalised for all patients or the general population in India.

The research paper, published in The Lancet's journal eClinicalMedicine, is titled 'Prepreoperational screening for multidrug-resistant organisms for endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP): an international, multicentre, cross-sectional observational study'. An ERCP is an endoscopic procedure used to diagnose and treat problems in the gall bladder, the bile ducts, and the pancreas.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD + 14644

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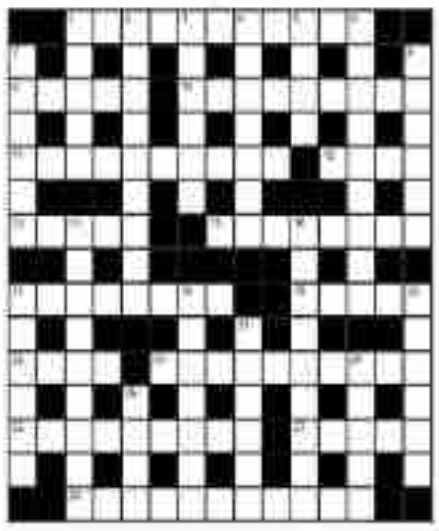
Set by Inspector



Across

1 Vanity embassy getting up and stopping (11)
9 In India, Constantine pairs canine (5)
10 What one may handle when making masala dosa? It's a controversial subject! (3,8)
11 Swan and lionel playing a game (4,6)
12 Port from Birkenhead, England (6)
13 Variety meat? It's not co... Has a bit of lard (8)
15 Space traveller having one tone of drug (8)
17 Oscar writes about north eastern head of state's transparency (8)
19 Spice? And onion? (5)
22 Word for period of time (6)
23 Buried Dewan building and decorated (10)
26 How the creature captures a Yankee primary (9)
27 Wrongly makes prayer leaders (5)
28 Hire UN agent making a mammoth weapon (8,3)

Down

1 Projectile concealed in a mouse (5)
2 Half time performed in sporting event (5)
3 Some Washington handler available nearby (7,4)
4 Works out by instant manufacture of tin suit (7)
5 Engineers sowing tree growth? (4)
6 Violently run our dog for lifting? (9)
7 An elector with love for Greek god (5)
8 Silly Liverpool's giving in not about nobody for Lent (8)
14 Type of eggs kept in front of cooking oil present without change (4-5)
16 More than old church editor in Germany (9)
17 Pontiff? Tell me! I can be wrong! (7,4)
18 Scream, "South Indian children!" (7)
20 Stressor from Jhunjhunu district? (6)
21 Ads lowers country by that opener (6)
24 Wave a twin wrongly (5)
25 Mislead to some extent, "Not isolated landmass" (4)

SUDOKU

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	4			2				
			5		1	4		

DIFFICULTY RATING ★☆☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Scriptures and dharma

Dharma and our nation are inseparable. The Sanskrit text 'Thesaurus proclaims: "Sanatanoo Dharmo Nityaha Sanatana Dharma:" – affirming that Sanatana Dharma is eternal, unalterable, and indestructible. Scriptures such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Bhagavata Purana stand as enduring pillars upholding this timeless tradition. Sri Ramanujaya explained that Ramayana presents a complete model for an ideal society. It offers a perfect king in Dasarathu, ideal mothers in his queens, an ideal son in Sri Rama, a perfect wife in Sita, ideal brothers in Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrugna, a perfect servant in Hanuman, an ideal friend in Vibhishana, and even an ideal enemy in Ravana. Through these exemplary characters, the Ramayana continues to guide and inspire generations.

Srimad Bhagavatam presents the vision of a true Bhagavata (devotee) society. It depicts the pure and unwavering love that devotees express to God, illustrating how life becomes elevated when centred on devotion, surrender, and divine love. In addition, the Mahabharata reflects a practical society and the complexities of human life, showing how people can change for better or worse. Duryodhana, driven by jealousy, even attempted to kill his elder brother Yudhishthira. In Vidura Neeti, Vidura advises that one should never offer counsel to a person who has not sought it. In the Yaksha Prashna, when the Yaksha asked Yudhishthira which path one should follow, he wisely replied that one must choose the path shown by the righteous elders. Through such teachings, the Mahabharata offers deep insights into human behaviour and the principles that sustain society.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	Value	% Change
Sensex	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
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NIFTY 50

	Close	% Change
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

TAIPEI

U.S. confirms sale of $700-mn air defence missile system to Taiwan

AP

The United States approved a $700-million sale of 82 mobile NASAMS air defence systems to Taiwan, the second weapons deal in a week. Used in Ukraine, the system boosts Taipei's defences amid rising Chinese threats. Work is scheduled to be completed by February 2031 under a fixed-price Pentagon contract, it said.

WASHINGTON

U.S. Congress orders Epstein files release after President's U-turn

REUTERS

The U.S. Congress on Tuesday overwhelmingly voted to release government files on Jeffrey Epstein after President Donald Trump ended his opposition. The Epstein Files Transparency Act compels public release of unclassified documents on Epstein's operations and death. Mr. Trump has pledged not to veto the legislation. AFP

DHAKA

NCP registered as a political party in Bangladesh, *Shapla Koli* symbol

AFP

The National Citizen Party (NCP), linked to the movement that ousted Sheikh Hasina, was officially registered by Bangladesh's Election Commission ahead of the 2026 general election. It received the symbol *Shapla Koli* (water lily bud) and plans candidates in all 300 constituencies. PTI

WASHINGTON

White House working with Russia on new Ukraine peace plan: report

AP

The U.S. administration is currently drafting a 28-point peace plan to end the Ukraine war, reported by President Donald Trump's new proposal, Axios reported on Tuesday, citing U.S., Russian officials. The plan includes peace in Ukraine, European security guarantees, and future U.S. relations with Russia and Ukraine. REUTERS

Trump defends MBS, designates Riyadh as a major non-NATO ally

U.S. President, who hosted the Saudi prince in White House, approved a 'major defence sale package' which includes 'future deliveries' of F-35s, and signed a civil nuclear cooperation deal. MBS pledged to make investments worth $1 trillion in U.S.

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump fiercely defended Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Tuesday over the 2018 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, insisting the kingdom's de facto ruler "knew nothing" about the murder as he wooed him at the White House.

Mr. Trump sought to brush the gruesome murder of the Washington Post columnist under the red carpet, honouring the Saudi royal with a flypast and lavish dinner, and formally naming Riyadh as a major non-NATO ally.

Close kin: Donald Trump meets Mohammed bin Salman in the Oval Office of the White House on Tuesday. AP

He raged at a journalist who asked the Prince in the Oval Office about the case for embarrassing the Saudi royal on his first U.S. trip since the murder, and called Khashoggi "extremely controversial".

"A lot of people didn't like that gentleman that you're talking about," he said.

"Whether you like him or didn't like him, things happen, but he (the prince) knew nothing about it. And we can leave it at that. You don't have to embarrass our guest by asking a question like that."

The Saudi royal, who came bearing a pledge of a $1 trillion investment in the U.S. on his first U.S. visit since the killing, said Khashoggi's murder was "painful" and a "huge mistake".

Mr. Trump called for U.S. broadcaster ABC, whose journalist asked the question about Khashoggi's murder, to have its licence revoked in a furious diatribe against the "crappy" company.

In a surprise move at the gala dinner in the evening, Mr. Trump said he was designating Saudi Arabia as one of just 20 major non-NATO allies around the world. "I'm just telling you now for the first time, because they wanted to keep a little secret for tonight," he said.

The two countries later signed a host of deals, including a civil nuclear cooperation agreement that the White House said would last decades.

Mr. Trump also approved a "major defence sale package" which includes "future deliveries" of F-35s. They also agreed to share AI technology "while protecting U.S. technology from foreign influence".

Dissanayake vows to begin Constitution talks in 2026

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Wednesday told the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi (ITAK) that his government would initiate talks on the promised new Constitution in January next year. He also said elections to the Provincial Councils would be held without further delay, although he did not provide a timeline for the same, members of the party told *The Hindu*.

It was the first time that the ITAK – prominent Tamil party with eight MPs in the current Parliament – met President Dissanayake on the pending political solution to Sri Lanka's national question. "We told the President that unless this issue is resolved, the country cannot move forward," ITAK general secretary and former Jaffna legislator M.A. Sumanthiran told the media following the meeting. Acting president of the ITAK, C.V.K. Sivagnanam, and all parliamentarians representing the party in the north and east were present at the meeting.

Mr. Dissanayake told the ITAK that longstanding issues faced by the people of the Northern and Eastern Provinces can no longer be addressed through "watered political solutions" and therefore, it was necessary to move towards "a new political framework", a statement from the President's office said. "Everyone's support is essential in that process," he further emphasised. The discussion comes after the ITAK wrote to Mr. Dissanayake in September 2025 – when he completed a year in office – seeking a meeting on the long-pending political settlement. Reminding him of his pre-poll pledge to address the aspirations of the Tamil people, the letter said, "no action seems to have been taken".

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake with ITAK members during a meeting in Colombo on Wednesday. PRESIDENTIAL MEDIA DIVISION

Concerns over delay

The Dissanayake government is yet to initiate processes to draft a new Constitution. Further, although the five-year terms of Sri Lanka's nine Provincial Councils expired between 2017 and 2018, elections are yet to be held. While the administration's latest budget has allocated funds to hold the Provincial Council elections, concerns persist over a further delay, owing to differences among political parties over a possible shift to a new electoral system.

Weeks before his election to the country's top office in September 2024, Mr. Dissanayake told *The Hindu* that fixing Sri Lanka's battered economy and wiping out racism were "top priority" for his National People's Power (NPP) coalition. He promised to take forward previous efforts to draft a new Constitution.

In Wednesday's meeting, ITAK representatives referred to several earlier proposals to address the Tamil national question, which is at the heart of Sri Lanka's enduring ethnic conflict, 16 years after the civil war ended.

Ilankaiyin parliamentarian Shanakiyan Rasamanickam said that "although a year late", it was very clear from the meeting that President Dissanayake "has a very good understanding of Tamil aspirations, what needs to be done and the various agreements and technical processes" of the past. "We are willing to engage constructively," Mr. Rasamanickam said, underscoring the need for "a clear timeline and concrete confidence building measures" from the government.

The ITAK's talks with Mr. Dissanayake come days after tensions in the eastern Trincomalee district over the placement of an allegedly unauthorised Buddha statue, an issue that was also debated in Parliament. The incident sparked concern amid Tamils' ongoing battle for their lands that they accuse authorities, including from archaeology and forest departments, of taking over to "alter the demographic" of their areas.

Russian strikes kill 25 in Ukraine as Zelenskyy arrives in Turkiye

Associated Press
KYIV

A large Russian drone and missile barrage pummelled a western Ukrainian city, killing 25 people, including three children, authorities said on Wednesday, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived in Turkiye in search of diplomatic support for his fight against Russia's invasion.

The nighttime attack hit two nine-story apartment blocks in Ternopil, located around 200 km from the Polish border, according to emergency services, he said. At least 68 people, including 16 children, were injured, emergency services said.

Russia fired 476 strike and decoy drones, as well as 48 missiles of various types, says Ukraine

Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko, emergency crews were sifting through the rubble in daylight to find survivors, he said. Ukraine's air force said. The bombardment included 47 cruise missiles, with air defences intercepting all but six of them, the air force said. Western-supplied F-16 and Mirage 2000 jets intercepted at least 10 cruise missiles, it said.

The Ukrainian leader said he would meet with Turkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan later on Wednesday as part of his efforts to diplomatically isolate Russian President Vladimir Putin and bring more international pressure to bear on him.

Israeli air strikes kill 25 Palestinians in Gaza, rattling truce

Reuters
CAIRO

At least 25 Palestinians were killed in four Israeli air strikes on Wednesday in a part of Gaza under Hamas control since a shaky ceasefire took effect in October, health authorities said.

Medics said 18 people were killed in the Gaza City suburb of Zeitoun, two in Sheijaia suburb to the east and the rest in two separate attacks in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip.

The Israeli military said its forces struck Hamas targets across Gaza after members of the Palestinian militant group fired on its troops in violation of the nearly six-week old ceasefire. No Israeli forces were injured.

Repeated shooting incidents have pointed to the fragility of the ceasefire. Israel and Hamas have traded blame for what both call violations of the U.S.-brokered truce, the first stage of Trump's 20-point plan for a post-war Gaza.

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Sport

Captain Rohit confident of India putting up a good show at the junior World Cup

HOCKEY

K. Keerthivasan
CHENNAI

Captain Rohit, a powerful drag-flicker and a fearless raider, is confident of India putting up a good show in the FIH junior men's hockey World Cup, to be held here and in Madurai, from November 28 to December 10.

In his second and last stint with the National junior team, the 21-year-old from Haryana is excited to play in front of the home crowd.

"I'm feeling good because we are playing in front of the home crowd. I'm also excited because the other teams will come under pressure," he said.

Though Rohit has been with the junior team since 2022, winning gold medals in the Asia Cup in 2023 and 2024 and the Sultan of Johor Cup in 2022, he was chosen as the skipper ahead of quite a few seniors.

Head coach P.R. Sreejesh defended the decision, terming it a collective one. "He is one of the iconic and most recognised players in the team. He is part of the leadership group with four others, and they respect each other. When it comes to captaincy, I asked my players who they would pick and most of them chose Rohit," revealed the former India goalkeeper.

For Rohit, hailing from Dubra village in the Hisar district of Haryana, pressure is not something to fear but something to feel responsible about.

"As a drag-flicker, I have to score whenever the team needs me. When the team is losing, I have to tell the players to be more active."

Rohit said playing with the senior India team in the camp at Bengaluru recently showed what real pressure meant, and taught the team how to deal with it.

"We played four matches with the seniors. The seniors are quick and put a lot of pressure. The quarter-finals and semifinals of the junior World Cup here will be like that and we are prepared," he said.

Geared up: Mr. Rohit (left) with the National junior team. Rohit is excited to play in front of the home crowd. A. VINOD KUMAR

Coach Gilardi bullish about *Los Leoncitos'* medal prospects

K. Keerthivasan
CHENNAI

Like any true Argentine, Juan Ignacio Gilardi loves to explore nature in all its beauty.

The 44-year-old head coach of the Argentina's men's junior hockey team for the World Cup is a keen surfer and is also into kite-surfing.

"I hope to find at least one hole to do kite-surfing here. If you know someone that takes lessons, contact me," Gilardi told *The Hindu* here on Wednesday.

But, before that, he has a few scores to settle. Having lost to eventual champion Germany in the quarter-finals of the previous edition (2023), Gilardi is confident Los Leoncitos (Little Lions) will battle for a medal this time.

Gilardi, right, with Juan. SAME A SAMARAS

"We have six players from the previous World Cup. It's a new group – strong and unique. We have some players who are really skilful and powerful. We also have a few penalty corner specialists, and a solid goalkeeper," he said.

The team led by Tomas Illuiz had a good build-up to the mega event by clinching the Pan American Trophy with an all-win record.

"We are aware that the World Cup will be harder. We will have practice matches against India from Thursday (Nov. 20) and we will be ready," he said.

Two-time champion Argentina, placed in Group C with New Zealand, Japan and China, is expected to progress to the quarter-finals smoothly.

Gilardi was, however, cautious. "We don't know too much about Japan and China though we have some videos about New Zealand," said the 2006 Olympics gold medallist who had 174 senior caps (2007-08).

WILL HE?

Gill travels with team to Guwahati, but remains doubtful for Test

India captain Shubman Gill travelled with the team to Guwahati for the second Test against South Africa starting on November 22. However, he remains a doubtful starter. "He will continue to be monitored by the BCCI medical team and a decision will be taken accordingly," said a statement from the board.

FIREWORKS

Conway and Santner exploits eclipse Hope's unbeaten century

AFP

Mitchell Santner's fireworks with the bat helped New Zealand beat West Indies by five wickets in the second ODI in Napier on Wednesday. The match was reduced to 34 overs. **The scores:** WI 347/9 in 34 overs (Hope 128 n.o., Smith 44) lost to NZ 348/5 in 33.3 overs (Conway 90, Ravindra 55, Santner 34 n.o.). **Toss:** NZ. **PoM:** Hope.

REMARKABLE FEAT

Hope first batter to hit hundreds against 13 international teams

AP

Shai Hope became the first to hit centuries against 13 international teams — Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, England, India, Ireland, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe — when he scored an unbeaten 128 in the Napier ODI against New Zealand on Wednesday.

ANOTHER FEATHER

Federer to be inducted into the International Hall of Fame in 2026

AP

Roger Federer will be inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame (ITHF) in an induction celebration set for August 2026 in Newport, USA, the ITHF said on Wednesday. Federer won 20 Grand Slams, the first man to reach the benchmark, and clinched Olympic gold before retiring in 2022.

Wei knocks out Arjun; Indian challenge ends

The second seed falters in second tie-break game; misses chance to seal spot in the Candidates tournament. Sindarov sets up all-Uzbek semifinal against Yakubboev; Esipenko advances

CHESS WORLD CUP

P.K. Ajith Kumar
ANTALYA (TURKIYE)

In the tie-breaks was broken India's heart on Wednesday.

Arjun Erigaisi, the host's last hope at the Chess World Cup, was knocked out in the quarterfinals at Resort Xbi. The second seed was outwitted by Chinese Wei Yi.

Arjun was in a spot of bother in the first set of the tie-breaker games, but fought back to get a draw, but in the second, he lost. Wei, the seventh seed, thus won the tie-break 1.5-0.5.

After the early exit of the No. 1 and 3 seeds D. Gukesh and R. Praggnanandhaa, Arjun had very much been the man in focus here. His defeat is a big setback to him, and India: he needed to finish inside the top three to get a slot in the Candidates.

Wei will certainly be entertaining his hopes of travelling to Cyprus, where the Candidates will be played in March-April next year. Also in the same boat of expectations are Jovakhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan and Andrey Esipenko of Russia, but they had to wait longer to get their tickets for the semifinals. In the second set of the tie-breakers, Sindarov beat Jose Martinez Alcantara of Mexico and Esipenko defeated Sam Shankland of USA 2-0.

Chinese chicken: Wei (right) lost to Arjun twice to let the second tie-break game 1-1.

The first game saw Wei, playing from the white side of a French Defence, getting the upper hand from early on, following a dubious pawn push from Arjun. The Chinese locked in control until he messed up with a couple of weak moves, back-to-back, in the middle game, allowing Black to equalise and the game was drawn in 65 moves.

In the second game, Arjun faced Petrov's Defence, and found himself struggling again before stabilising the position. Things were equal in the rook and bishop ending until White blundered on his 61st move. He took the rook to the wrong square, giving Wei the clear advantage, which the Chinese eventually managed to convert, checkmating Arjun in the end, on the 78th move.

"I had many chances in the first game, but I didn't find even one way to win," said Wei. "In the second game, I think Arjun played some risky moves in the ending and I realised I had some chances to win, too."

In the semifinals on Friday, Sindarov will take on Nodirbek Yakubboev in an all-Uzbek battle, while Wei will meet Esipenko.

The results: Quarterfinals (tie-break): Wei Yi (7) bt Arjun Erigaisi 1.5-0.5, Jovakhir Sindarov (Uzb) bt Jose Martinez Alcantara (Mex) 1.5-1.5 (2-0), Andrey Esipenko (Rus) bt Sam Shankland (USA) 1-1, 2-0.

Washington the latest No. 3 in the game of musical chairs

SA IN INDIA

S. Dipak Ragav
GUWAHATI

Batting at No. 3 is one of the most crucial roles in Test cricket. The job description is exhaustive: a batter must be technically sound to face even the second half of the match and versatile enough to push the game forward when the openers build a solid platform.

In the last three decades, India was fortunate to have two dependable batters who have owned that role. First, Rahul Dravid left a lasting legacy before Cheteshwar Pujara seamlessly took over.

However, in recent times, filling that spot has become a game of musical chairs. In the first Test against South Africa in Kolkata, Washington Sundar became the seventh and latest man to be entrusted with solving this puzzle ever since Gautam Gambhir became the coach.

The early signs are good. The tall left-hander may have made only 29 and 31 but he brought a sense of calm, courtesy his sound technical foundation. Despite India's 30-run loss, he was a bright spot, remaining largely unrattled on a spiteful surface with uneven bounce. Notably, he faced the most deliveries in the game (174).

Calm and collected: The early signs of Washington's batting at this crucial position are good, courtesy his solid technique and temperament.

His assurance, though, shouldn't surprise anyone, for he started as a top-order bat for Tamil Nadu before being used primarily as a bowling all-rounder for India. "He has a sound defence. When you trust it, you tend to play considerably. The way he played by getting to the pitch of the ball with the bat in front showed his confidence," explained M. Senthilnathan, Washington's long-time coach and mentor.

While the Eden Gardens fixture showcased his game against spin, the 26-year-old is equally adept at playing pace. In his debut Test in 2021 against Australia, he made vital contributions in the memorable win at the Gabba in Brisbane.

Earlier this year in England, walking in at No. 3 at Old Trafford in Manchester, Washington scored a match-saving maiden century on the final day.

In the fifth and final Test at The Oval, he blasted a quickfire half-century, decimating the tail to set up a famous win and help level the series 2-2.

Now that Washington is auditioning for the No. 3 role, it remains to be seen if he gets a longer run than his predecessors Sai Sudharsan and Karun Nair.

Given the position's importance, it may be time to pause the music.

Playing at the No. 3 slot is a challenge, says Karthik

C. Shyam Sundar
CHENNAI

The No. 3 spot in the Indian Test team has seen a handful of occupants in recent times and Washington Sundar became the latest to do so, in the first Test against South Africa at Kolkata.

The left-hander, playing in that position for the first time in his career, made 29 and 31, acquitting himself rather well as the team lost the Test.

Former India cricketer Dinesh Karthik weighed in on Washington walking in at the crucial No. 3 position in the Kolkata Test, saying that playing in that slot is a challenge.

"Obviously, playing at No. 3 is a challenge. Most of the time, pure batters do it (play there).

"Washington Sundar is an all-rounder, he is someone who bowls a lot. He has the technique to bat at No. 3, but he has to work a lot on his batting.

Balancing act

"When he works a lot on his batting, bowling becomes tiring.

"Balancing both can be challenging... that is what I mean," he said, at an event at VS Hospitals here on Wednesday where he launched a robotic assisted solution for knee replacement.

India to open U-19 WC campaign against USA

Press Trust of India
DUBAI

India will take on USA in the 2026 Men's U-19 World Cup opener with the tournament to be staged in Zimbabwe and Namibia from January 15 to February 6.

The competition will feature 16 teams divided into groups of four in the first stage, with 41 matches to be played over 22 days.

India is in Group A alongside USA, Bangladesh and New Zealand. Group B will have Zimbabwe, Pakistan, England and Scotland, whereas Group C will have defending champion Australia, Ireland, Japan and Sri Lanka. Group D consists of Tanzania, the West Indies, Afghanistan and South Africa.

India's remaining group contests against Bangladesh and New Zealand will be on January 17 and 24 with all its matches to be played in Bulawayo.

The top three ranked sides from the first round will take part in the Super Six stage, with these teams forming two groups of six each.

SA-A rides on Pretorius, Moonsamy's tons to post consolation victory

SA-A IN INDIA

Sahil Mathur
RAJKOT

South Africa A walked off with a convincing 73-run win in the third and final one-day match, its batting firepower and improved bowling finally aligning to defeat India A in the Niranjan Shah Stadium here on Wednesday.

The visitors stole on a 240-run opening partnership between centurions Dhananjay Pretorius and Rivaldo Moonsamy before their bowlers applied the squeeze, bowling out the hosts for 252 to avoid a clean sweep. The series ended 2-1 in India's favour.

Chasing 326, India A began positively with Ruturaj Gaikwad rising the ball well, but wickets at regular intervals derailed the pursuit.

Abhishek Sharma fell to Tshepo Moreki, and Tilak Varma struggled for rhythm before losing his stumps for 11. Ruturaj's stay ended when he was beaten by Bjorn Fortuin, leaving India A at 57 for three. Ryan Parag counter-attacked but fell soon.

Big stand: Moonsamy and Pretorius (left) set up a massive 240-run opening partnership. (Above) Kishan.

Ishan Kishan and Ayush Badoni added 88 runs — the only substantial stand of the innings. Kishan reached a fifty with a crisp cut, while Badoni produced a composed half-century. But Nqaba Peter dismissed Kishan, triggering a slide.

Badoni top-edged for 65, Harshit Rana departed first ball, and Fortuin cleaned up Nishant Sindhu as India A collapsed from 180 for four.

South Africa A's bowlers, led by Peter's four for 46 and supported by Moreki and Fortuin, maintained pressure through the middle overs. Lower-order attempts from Manav Suthar and Prasidh Krishna were brief as the chase fended out.

Earlier, Pretorius and Moonsamy produced a strong top-order display. Pretorius dominated from the start, racing to a 29-ball half-century, while Moonsamy anchored before accelerating.

India A's new-ball pair struggled for consistency, and Rana's no-ball reprieve proved costly.

Pretorius reached his hundred in 98 balls and launched three straight sixes off Badoni, while Moonsamy completed a 123-ball ton. Prasidh finally removed both in the 38th over, but Delano Potgieter's 15-ball 30 lifted South A to a formidable total.

The scores: South Africa A 325/8 in 50 overs (Pretorius 131, Moonsamy 103) bt India A 252 in 49.3 overs (Ishan Kishan 53, Ayush Badoni 65, Nqaba Peter 4-46).
Toss: India A.
PoM: Peter (SA). **Pelli:** Suthar.

Jaismine, Nikhat ease past their semifinal opponents

BOXING

Y. B. Sarangi
GREATER NOIDA

World champion Jaismine Lamboria and former World champion Nikhat Zareen struggled off the challenge of beginning their campaign late as they won their respective semifinal bouts in the World Boxing Cup Finals at the Shaheed Vijay Singh Pathik Indoor Stadium here on Wednesday.

Jaismine (57kg) defeated former Asian youth gold medallist Ulzhan Sarsenbek 5-0, while Nikhat (51kg) beat 2022 World youth champion Gulsesar Gazieva 5-0.

Six more Indians entered into title bouts. Altogether, 15 home boxers will be seen in action in the finals on Thursday.

Confident

A tall southpaw, Jaismine quickly assessed her strong Kazakh opponent, who closed the gap to attack, and employed her long range game with confidence. With her fluent movement around the ring, Jaismine controlled the bout and stole points effortlessly.

Jaismine will meet Taiwan's Paris Olympics bronze medallist Shu Shih Yi in the final.

Nikhat had a tough time against Uzbekistan's Gulsevar but managed a 4-1 verdict in the opening round.

Experienced hand: Nikhat, right, had a tough time against Gulsevar (in red) but managed to come out with a 4-1 win. (PTI)

Lot of clinching

The experienced Indian, who executed her combinations to score points, convinced all five judges amid trading of punches and a lot of clinching in the last two rounds.

"My (first) bout has come towards this end. It has never happened.

"It wasn't as per expectations, but I am happy to medal. On nearly two years," said Nikhat, who will face Taiwan's Guo Yi Xuan.

Select results:
Semifinals: Men: 50kg: Jaskirat Singh (I) bt Jose Drew (Aus) 3-0. **55kg:** Pawan Barhal (I) bt Frankbridge Sang (I) 5-0. **65kg:** Sachin Siwach (I) bt Ulzhan Kenzhebek (Kaz) 5-0. **71kg:** Vishal (I) bt Muhammad Sultan (Uzbek) 5-0. **75kg:** Mohit (I) bt Sunil Kumar (I) 4-1. **85kg:** Jaspreet Singh (I) bt Jaysan Williams 5-0. **Women: 51kg:** Nikhat Zareen (I) bt Gulsevar Gazieva (Uzbek) 5-0. **57kg:** Jaismine Lamboria (I) bt Shu Shih Yi (Taiwan) 5-0. **65kg:** Chin Nien Chun (Taiwan) bt Manju Pragati 3-2.

IN BRIEF

Curacao is smallest nation by population to qualify for WC

Curacao salvaged a 0-0 draw with Jamaica to become the smallest nation by population to qualify for a World Cup and will be joined by CONCACAF sides Panama and Haiti which also booked their spots. Curacao finished as the only undefeated nation in the tournament and finished atop Group B with 12 points to advance. It has a population of 156,237 as of last January.

Abhinav and Pranjali win air pistol mixed gold

Abhinav Deshwal and Pranjali Pradhan Dhumal won 10m air pistol mixed gold, while Kuntagra Singh Rajawat claimed bronze in the 50m rifle prone competition at the 25th Deaflympics in Tokyo on Wednesday. The Indian shooters have won a total of 8 medals so far in the competition. Abhinav and Pranjali notched up a dominating 16-6 win over Ya Ju Kao and Ming Jui Hsu of Taiwan to finish on top. Kuntagra finished third with a score of 224.3 in the event won by Ukraine's Dmytro Perrenko with a Deaf World and Olympic Record score of 251.0.

Australian Open badminton: five Indians in second round

Five Indians, including Lakshya Sen and H.S. Prannoy, reached the men's singles second round at the $4,75,000 Australian Open Super 500 badminton in Sydney on Wednesday.

The results (first round): Men: Lakshya Sen [illegible]; H.S. Prannoy [illegible]; Tharun Mannepalli [illegible]; Mithun Manjunath [illegible]; Kiran George [illegible]. **Mixed doubles:** [illegible]; Jaiswal & Gadde [illegible].

Mushtaq spins J&K to a big win over Hyderabad

The left arm spinner scalps seven wickets in the second innings; the visiting team's resistance ends in just 43 overs and 25 minutes on the final day as it loses by a massive 281-run margin

RANJI TROPHY

Tarun Shastry
JAMMU

When the writing on the wall is as clear as the morning sun, a team can do little but brace for the inevitable.

Once play resumed on the final morning, Jammu & Kashmir, with ruthless precision, marched towards its third outright victory of the season, demolishing Hyderabad by 281 runs in a Ranji Trophy Group D encounter at the JKCA Sports Hostel and Science College Ground here on Wednesday.

The entire final act lasted only 43 overs and 25 minutes.

Left arm spinner Abid Mushtaq (seven for 68) started exactly where he had left off the previous morning. He delivered a ripper to overnight batter Ankireddy – one that pitched outside leg, turned, and crashed into the middle and off stump.

Rahil Shaikh followed suit. Punnaiah met the same fate moments later, undone by two flatter, faster deliveries that skidded in and trapped both in front. With those strikes, the crisis was complete.

The architects of the triumph – pacer Aqib Nabi, Mushtaq, and bowling coach Krishna Kumar – spoke to the The Hindu immediately after the win, reflecting on the clinical performance.

"I realised how difficult the pitch was, so I decided to use the rough patches consistently just outside the off stump," said Mushtaq.

"Whenever I got an opportunity, I wanted to control hard," added the 27-year-old.

"I just focus on bowling in good areas. That's what Krishna Kumar sir keeps telling me, so I focus on that and keeping things simple is key," said Nabi.

"His ability to swing the ball both ways at will is remarkable. He's worked hard on his skill, and it shows," said coach Krishna Kumar about Nabi.

"He's taking five wickets almost every match. He's constantly making his case to the selectors. I truly believe he'll play for India very soon," he added.

"The team atmosphere is outstanding. We all have a strong bond. If someone makes a mistake, we don't criticise – we encourage them. That has made everyone responsible and accountable. That's the X-factor," Kumar concluded.

Clueless: Mushtaq clears up Ankireddy to trigger Hyderabad's collapse on the final day. [illegible]

The scores:
Jammu & Kashmir – 1st innings: [illegible]
Hyderabad – 1st innings: 143.
Jammu & Kashmir – 2nd innings: 427.
Hyderabad – 2nd innings: Tanmay Agarwal [illegible] 47, [illegible] 16, Rahil Shaikh [illegible] 31, K. Punnaiah [illegible] 12, Ankireddy [illegible] 0, Rohit Reddy [illegible] 20, Tanmay Dhyagopagari [illegible] 3, Joseph Reddy [illegible] 22, Rakshan Reddy [illegible] 12, Kartikeya Kak [illegible] 5, B. Pawan Kumar [illegible] 4. Extras: [illegible] 1, [illegible] 40. Total: [illegible] in 57.3 overs: 146.

Fall of wickets: 1-86, 2-92, 3-102, 4-102, 5-124, 6-124, 7-131, 8-133, 9-146.

Jammu & Kashmir bowling: [illegible]

RANJI SCORES – ROUND 5 (FOURTH AND FINAL DAY)

Elite Group A: Jamshedpur: Jharkhand [illegible] in 22.2 overs (Gurwinder Singh 60, Saurabh Kumar 5/47) lost to Andhra [illegible] by [illegible].
Points: Andhra 7(22), Jharkhand 0(18).
Bhubaneswar: Odisha [illegible] & [illegible] lost to Nagaland [illegible] & [illegible] in 105 overs (Bipin Nachiketa 32, Sankalp Pattnaik 5/77).
Odisha 6(7), Nagaland 0(1).
Coimbatore: Tamil Nadu [illegible] & [illegible] in 32 overs (B. Sachin 59, N. Jagadeesan 44, done with Uttar Pradesh [illegible] in 105.1 overs (Abhishek Goswami 75, Anjali Arya 41, Rinku Singh 19, Shivam Mavi 5/[illegible], V. P. Vaiyapuri [illegible]).
UP 3(17), TN 1(5).
Nagpur: Vidarbha [illegible] & 377 in [illegible] 186 & 121 in 50.4 overs (Darshan Nalkande 5/32).
Vidarbha 4(19), Baroda 0(6).
Group B: Rajkot: Saurashtra [illegible] lost to Goa 159 & 190 in [illegible] overs (Parth Bhut 7/86).
Saurashtra 7(13), Goa 0(13).
Indore: Kerala [illegible] & [illegible] drew with [illegible] in 84 overs (Sachin Baby 122 n.o., B. Aparajith 106; rain hunted draw at 87 Madhya Pradesh [illegible] & [illegible] in 49 overs (Sandeep Sharma [illegible]).
Kerala 3(6), MP 1(6).
Group C: Kalyani: Assam [illegible] & [illegible] in [illegible] overs (Deepak Das 71, Sunil Deshpandeyar 67, Shankar Roy 52, Shanbhat Ahmed 4/67) drew with Bengal [illegible]. **Bengal 3(13), Assam 1(4).**
Dehradun: Gujarat [illegible] & [illegible] lost to Uttarakhand [illegible] & [illegible] in [illegible] overs (Karan Vishnoi [illegible]).
Gujarat 0(15), Uttarakhand 0(18).
Leh: Services [illegible] & [illegible] lost to Haryana [illegible] & [illegible] in 41.4 overs (Pulkit Narang 5/66).
Services 0(19), Haryana 0(18).
Group D: Mumbai: Mumbai [illegible] & [illegible] lost to Puducherry [illegible] & [illegible] in [illegible] overs (Arpan Bhuyan Kanpuran 45, Siddhant Adhatrao 34, Aman Khan 30).
Mumbai 7(24), Puducherry 0(5).
Madurai: Chhattisgarh [illegible] & [illegible] & [illegible] in [illegible] overs (Karan Lal [illegible]).
Chhattisgarh 3(14), HP 1(5).
Jammu: Jammu & Kashmir [illegible] & [illegible] in [illegible] overs (Tanmay Agarwal 47, [illegible]).
J&K 5(20), Hyderabad 2(22).
Rajsamand: Rajasthan [illegible] drew with Delhi [illegible] & [illegible] in [illegible] overs (Nitish Rana [illegible]).
Rajasthan 1(13), Delhi 1(8).
Patna: Bihar [illegible] & [illegible] lost to Madhya Pradesh [illegible] in 57.5 overs (Kumar Jaiswal 1/[illegible], Avesh Khan [illegible]).
Bihar 0(16), Madhya Pradesh 0(8).
Surat: Meghalaya [illegible] & [illegible] drew with Manipur [illegible] & [illegible] in 25.5 overs (Kaushal Lungjam [illegible]).
Meghalaya 2(22), Manipur 1(16).

Parth Bhut (Saurashtra, 7/86) in a match against Goa in Indore.

LIVE TELECAST

Bangladesh vs Ireland: 2nd Test, Day 1, Fatullah, 9 a.m.

NEW DELHI ROUND-UP

Dhanwar scores five

Sushil Dhanwar struck five times as Indian Navy beat Army XI 9-2 in a Pool D quarterfinal league match of the 61st Nehru senior men's hockey tournament at the Shivaji Stadium. The other Pool D match saw Railways Sports Promotion Board beat Gorakhpur 10-3, Kapurthala 4-1. After a barren first quarter, Navy scored thrice in six minutes to go 3-0 up at half-time. It added two more in the final quarter as Army XI struggled to find a way to score. Dhanwar scored all five goals for his team – one each through a penalty stroke and penalty corner and three open goals. For Railways, Pratap Lakra struck a hat-trick, converting three penalty corners as it took a 4-0 lead before Yogember Rawat managed to pull one back for BCP in the 30th minute.

The results: Pool D: [illegible] in BCP's [illegible]; Indian Navy [illegible] Dhanwar 5).

DCH triumphs

Noor Mohammad and Sakesh Vohra's explosive batting saw Delhi Cricket Club (DCH) overhaul a massive 302-run target in just 10 overs to defeat FWCA by four wickets in the final of the third K.K. Tiwari memorial cricket tournament.

Electing to bat, FWCA piled up 301, courtesy Purkabir Singh Bhati's double century and an 87-ball 101 from Parth Dabas. Vohra took five for 71 to be named the best bowler of the match.

In reply, Noor, adjudged man of the match, smashed 255 in 115 balls and Vohra added 178 for a seemingly easy win. Bhati was named fighter of the match and Dabas, the best batsman.

The scores: [illegible] in 50 overs (Parvinder Singh Bhati 201, Parth Dabas 101, Sakesh Vohra 5/74) lost to DCH [illegible] in 46.1 overs (Noor Mohammad 255, Sakesh Vohra 178, Arnav Dabas Dagar [illegible]).

Bashir [illegible]

Bashir in England squad for Perth Test

Agence France-Presse
PERTH

England named off-spinner Shoaib Bashir in a 12-man squad on Wednesday alongside four frontline pace bowlers, keeping its options open for the first Ashes Test against Australia in Perth.

The squad: Ben Stokes (Capt.), Jofra Archer, Gus Atkinson, Shoaib Bashir, Harry Brook, Brydon Carse, Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Jamie Smith, Mark Wood.

Scotland ends 28-year wait; Spain, Austria also book berths

WC QUALIFYING

Agence France-Presse
GLASGOW

Scotland will play in the World Cup for the first time in 28 years after two injury-time goals sealed a dramatic 4-2 victory over Denmark on Tuesday, while Spain also booked its place at the 2026 finals.

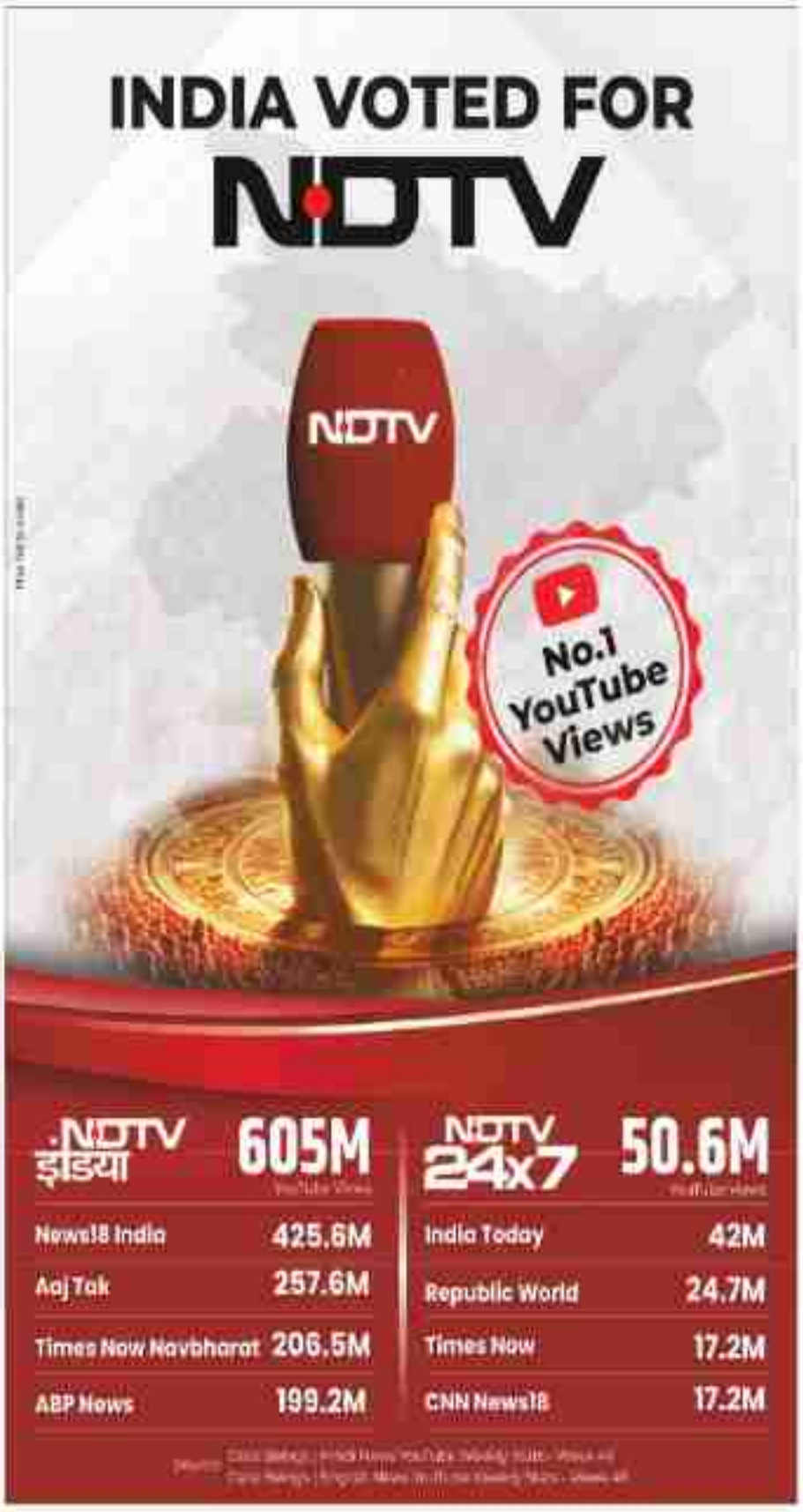
Scotland got the win it needed to qualify from Group C in a thrilling match in Glasgow, thanks to brilliant late goals from Kieran Tierney and Kenny McLean. Spain, Austria, Belgium and Switzerland also booked tickets to next year's tournament on the final night of European qualifying.

Michael Gregoritsch's 78th minute goal won Half Rangnick's Austria to its first World Cup since 1998 in a 1-1 draw with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Spain only needed to avoid defeat by seven goals against Turkey to confirm a place at a fifth successive World Cup. Belgium booked its place in the finals by thumping Liechtenstein 7-0. Switzerland extended its run of consecutive World Cup appearances to six with a 1-1 draw with Kosovo.

Opening salvo: [illegible] Scotland [illegible].

The results: Group B: Kosovo 1 (Muriqi 38) drew with Switzerland 1 (Vargas 47). Sweden 1 (Isak penalty 83) drew with Slovenia 1 (Elias 64).
Group C: Belarus 0 drew with Greece 0. Scotland 4 (McTominay 1, Sheehan 6 78, Tierney 90+3, McLean 90+5) bt Denmark 2 (Hojbjerg 42 pen, Dreyer 82).
Group E: Bulgaria 2 (Nikolov 32, Ferdev 74) bt Georgia 1 (Kochorashvili 88).
Group F: Spain 2 (Olmo 4, Oyarzabal 32) drew with Turkey 2 (Akturkoglu 2, Zeki 34). **Group H:** Austria 1 (Gregoritsch 78) drew with Bosnia and Herzegovina 1 (Tabakovic 12). Romania 2 (Marin 23-og, Raducanu 89, Man 41, Valentin 83-og, Hagi 90, Burcu 82). Kazakhstan 86 pen) bt San Marino 1 (Gasperoni 2). **Group I:** Belgium 7 (Mavididi 3, Doku 34, 41, Doubemba 52, Sadiq-Ibrahim 55, De Katelaere 57, 88, 90+1, Lagerbielke 6, Mulder 7, Mitrovic 25 pen, 75, 85 pen, Bondo 87, Jovanovic 90, Lorenzo 57, Jerusalmi 88, Mr North Macedonia 1 (Nikolov 20).



Jalaj Saxena – a journeyman in pursuit of a long-cherished dream

The veteran cricketer, playing in his 21st successive First Class season, still eyes the India cap; the reliable all-rounder relishes his myriad roles: ever-dependable with the ball, solid with the bat and a sounding board for the youngsters in the dressing room

Amol Karhadkar

In an era when longevity in Indian domestic cricket is increasingly rare, Jalaj Saxena continues to stand out for his endurance as much as he does for his excellence. Into his 21st consecutive First Class season, the veteran all-rounder is inching closer to two remarkable landmarks: he is four wickets shy of 500 First Class wickets and within striking distance of becoming the fourth-highest wicket-taker in Ranji Trophy history.

Funnily enough, the man himself remains blissfully unaware of his proximity to these milestones.

"No idea what the latest number is," he replied after Maharashtra's innings win against Punjab in Chandigarh. He was told he was at 496.

It is not an act. The 38-year-old genuinely does not track his figures. "I know when I get on Instagram. That's it," he laughs.

For a cricketer whose earnings, relevance, and future have long depended on numbers, this indifference is unusual. But it is also what defines him.

Past the conventional 'prime' in cricket, he speaks with the composure of someone who has made peace with the uncertainty of sport. The calm, however, has not diminished his ever-unrelenting desire – the India cap that has eluded him despite two decades of dominance on the domestic circuit. "I still have that dream. I don't know how realistic it is, but without that motivation, I wouldn't be able to work the way I do."

The self-belief is intact. The self-doubt that occasionally surfaces is dealt with the same way he handles everything else – by focusing on what can be controlled. "Aiming is in my control. Being selected is not. So I keep aiming. That's enough."

Consistency needs effort

As effected as that sounds, Jalaj walks the talk. Just a month shy of turning 38, he spent almost three days out on the field – bowling long spells or keeping Maharashtra in the game with a defiant effort down the batting order – against a formidable opponent.

Over the years, Jalaj has become a travelling professional, a role that has a clear demand: deliver or make way. That mantra has carried him from Madhya Pradesh to Kerala and now to Maharashtra.

"When you play professionally, there is always pressure to contribute. It actually helps your game. Pressure makes you improve. I enjoy it."

It shows. He is relishing his role as a reliable all-rounder, ever-dependable with the ball and solid with the bat. But, perhaps more importantly, he has become a sounding board for a relatively young dressing room.

"The first goal is to qualify, then win the Ranji Trophy. On paper, this is one of the best teams in the country."

The side's run hasn't been perfect – dropped catches cost Maharashtra dearly against Karnataka – but Jalaj refuses to read too much into it.

"We didn't have luck in this match... but I am hopeful that we will do well, qualify and compete strongly for the title."

Jalaj knows the ins and outs of the way Maharashtra operates, not just by virtue of being in the ecosystem for as long as he has. He is well acquainted with many of the players within the setup, including captain Ankeet Bawne. In fact, the selection committee chief, Akshay Darekar, was his teammate during his maiden India A tour to the West Indies in 2002.

Darekar played an important role in getting Jalaj introduced to the younger lot in the setup during the off-season. In the months to follow, his optimistic nature has helped break the ice with the unit.

Desire cuts expectations

Hope has never been positive for Saxena. It is practical, grounded, and always accompanied by effort. Jalaj has played long enough to know the sport often gives more scars than celebrations.

It is a delicate balance – nurturing others while chasing a dream that flickers but never fades. Jalaj handles it with the same equanimity he brings to his cricket

"I try to control the controllables. I don't think about the rest. Cricket teaches you that. Every innings starts from zero. It keeps you grounded."

It also keeps him detached from expectations.

"If something isn't in my hands, I don't feel disappointed. I have learnt that from Cricket itself. Selection, non-selection – these things are not in your control."

In recent years, Jalaj has embraced the responsibility of mentoring teammates – whether in Kerala earlier or in Maharashtra now. His satisfaction comes from seeing younger players succeed, even if it pushes him further away from the spotlight.

"If they perform well, the team benefits, and so do I. Ultimately, everyone doing well helps my dream too."

It is a delicate balance – nurturing others while chasing a dream that flickers but never fades. Jalaj handles it with the same equanimity he brings to his cricket.

As Indian cricket transitions into a new era shaped heavily by the Indian Premier League, Jalaj offers a pragmatic perspective, devoid of judgment.

"Changes have to come. In mentality, approach, everything. IPL has helped domestic cricket a lot. And changes were necessary."

Coming from someone who has spent a lifetime in the domestic grind, the honesty carries weight.

When Jalaj reaches the 500-wicket milestone – the Ranji Trophy will have a two-month break and resume in January 2026 – it will be a moment of celebration. But it is unlikely he will mark the achievement in any extraordinary way. He may not even realise the occasion when it arrives.

Numbers have never been the story for this seasoned spin bowling all-rounder. The narrative has always been about endurance, adaptability, process, and the relentless power of a dream that has been as steady at 38 as it was at 14.

As Maharashtra goes through the ups and downs of another campaign with quiet ambition and a dressing room rich in worth, they also have, in Jalaj, a core figure in Indian domestic cricket – a cricketer who has achieved almost everything the domestic circuit can offer, except the one thing he still wakes up chasing.

Still, he doesn't sound bitter. In fact, he revels in being awarded the best All-rounder award in domestic cricket almost half a dozen times at the annual BCCI Awards function.

"Even though I haven't been able to play for India, the BCCI has acknowledged my contribution with awards like Best Cricketer, Best All-rounder," he says. "When you get recognition, when the authorities recognise your efforts, it gives a lot of happiness."

Whether that final chapter is written or not, his journey remains one of Indian cricket's finest testaments to perseverance – and to the quiet, unshowy dignity that has marked his entire career.

THE GIST

- The narrative has always been about endurance, adaptability, process, and the relentless power of a dream that has been as steady at 38 as it was at 14
- When Jalaj reaches the 500-wicket milestone – the Ranji Trophy has gone into a two-month break and will resume in January 2026 – it will be a moment of celebration
- It is a delicate balance – nurturing others while chasing a dream that flickers but never fades. Jalaj handles it with the same equanimity he brings to his cricket

SHIVANI, SUCHI

Most wickets in Ranji

637	Pankaj Gupta
530	S. Venkataraghavan
479	Sunil Joshi
442	K. Hoisy Kaul
441	Rajinder Pinder
440	**Jalaj Saxena**
437	E.S. Chandrasekhar
418	Ajit Kumar
416	Shakoor Haider
409	Pankaj Singh

> When you play professionally, there is always pressure to contribute. It actually helps your game. Pressure makes you improve. I enjoy it... I try to control the controllables. I don't think about the rest. Cricket teaches you that. Every innings starts from zero. It keeps you grounded
>
> JALAJ SAXENA