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The Pioneer

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NEW DELHI | SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2025 | PAGES 16 | ₹5.00

RNI No. 53466/91. Vol.35 Issue 316

PUBLISHED FROM: DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR BHUBANESWAR RANCHI CHANDIGARH DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYAWADA

From resurgence to renaissance: Bihar's march toward a new era 5

CJI to deal with claim of bias at Chennai NCLAT 7

India should be a leader of reform process at WTO: Ngozi 11

India men's hockey to work with Dr Calder on coordination 15

PIONEER IN SHORT

DATA PROTECTION LAW UNVEILED

The Government of India has unveiled the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules 2025, to be implemented in phases over 12-18 months. The rules aim to empower citizens with greater control over their personal data, protect privacy, and prevent misuse, including spam calls and unauthorised access to digital content. Immediate implementation covers certain provisions, while others-such as registration of consent managers, notices from data fiduciaries, and detailed processing norms-will roll out gradually. A Data Protection Board will oversee compliance and levy penalties for breaches, with fines up to Rs 250 per breach and graded penalties to safeguard small businesses. The rules align with the 2017 Supreme Court judgment recognising privacy as a fundamental right, while also requiring citizens to provide accurate, verifiable information and avoid frivolous complaints. Certain exemptions apply, including legal enforcement, overseas data consent, financial default investigations, and selected Government-backed schemes. The framework represents a key step in strengthening digital privacy in India.

The ByStander

NEW US BILL AIMS TO END H1-B

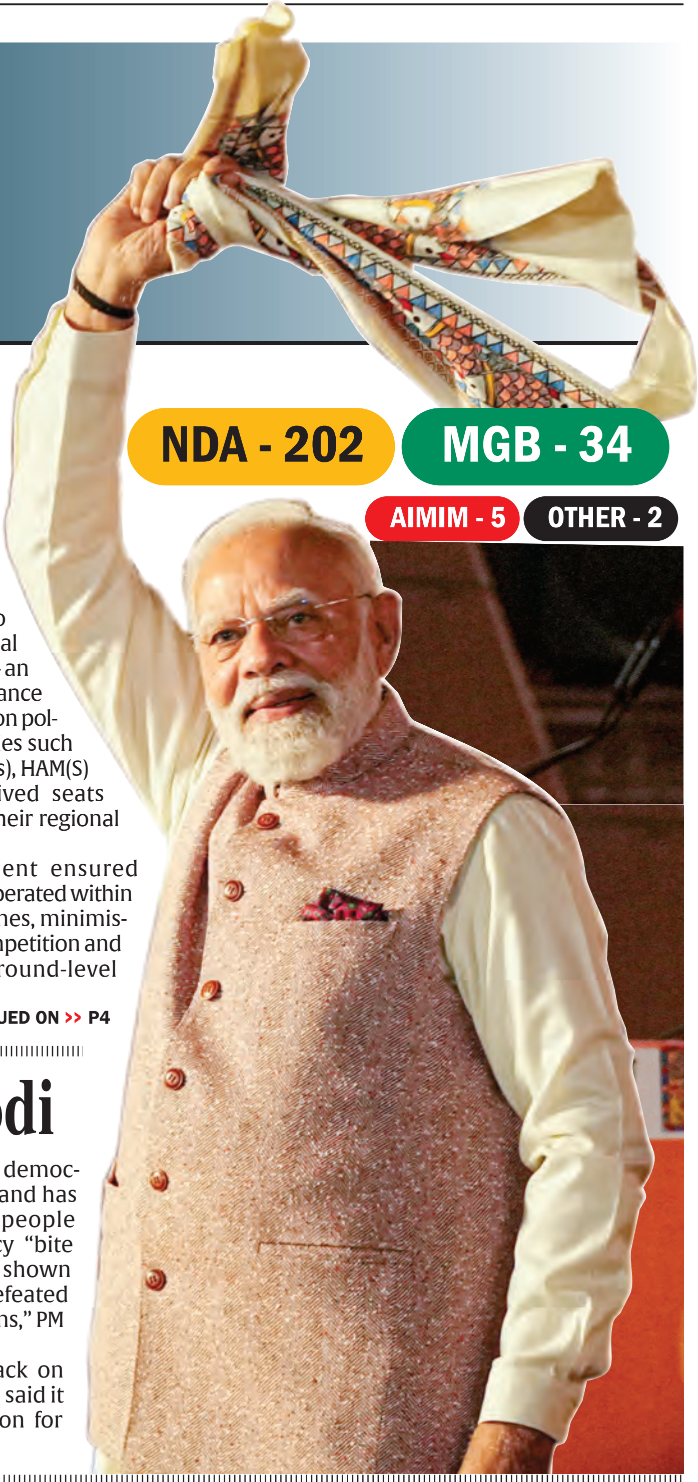
Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene announced plans to introduce a bill aiming to eliminate the H-1B visa program entirely, including its pathway to US citizenship, requiring holders to return to their home countries upon visa expiration. Greene described the program as "riddled with fraud and abuse" and blamed it for displacing American workers over decades. Her proposed legislation would allow a limited exemption for medical professionals, capping visas at 10,000 per year, which would be phased out over ten years to build a domestic pipeline of doctors and nurses. Greene emphasised restoring the visa's "temporary" intent, stating foreign workers should eventually return home.

BUMRAH STARS AS SA FALTERS

Jasprit Bumrah's brilliant bowling turned India's bold four-spinner gamble into a stunning display as South Africa were bowled out for 159 on Day 1 of the first Test in Kolkata. Despite a promising 57-run opening stand, South Africa collapsed to 102 for ten in 45 overs, with Bumrah taking 5/27 and Mohammed Siraj adding crucial strikes. Kuldeep Yadav (2/29) and Axar Patel (1/21) contributed key wickets, exploiting the pitch's variable bounce and spin. India ended the day at 37/1, with KL Rahul (13) and Washington Sundar (6)** cautiously reducing the deficit in front of a 36,000-strong crowd.

MY win in Bihar

NDA - 202 | MGB - 34 | AIMIM - 5 | OTHER - 2



ASHOKE RAJ ■ Patna/New Delhi

The decisive majority of BJP-JD (U) alliance in the Bihar polls signals a shifting political equation — from the traditional Muslim-Yadav (MY) base to *Mahila*-Youth support.

The result was the culmination of a carefully managed campaign that blended communication, seat distribution and building a voter coalition broader than anything the State has seen in decades.

High enthusiasm among women and first-time voters, combined with a re-energised JD(U), powered the NDA's appeal around the double-engine leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

Voters showing their inked finger in Patna in the first phase of polls PTI

Concerns about CM Nitish Kumar's health and political longevity proved unfounded as his personal credibility remained a stabilising force. His campaign leaned on sharp, memorable slogans such as *Bihar ka matlab Nitish Kumar* reinforcing his identity as the State's most experienced administrator.

The JD(U)'s negotiated seat parity with the BJP signalled an equal partnership and boosted confidence among undecided voters. Nitish's long record on infrastructure, welfare expansion and governance beyond caste lines played a crucial role in consolidating swing communities that had drifted in previous cycles.

In contrast to earlier elections marked by friction and last-minute realignments, the NDA went into this contest with one of its cleanest seat-sharing arrangements.

The BJP and JD(U) agreed to contest an equal 101 seats each — an uncommon balance in Bihar's coalition politics — while allies such as LJP (Ram Vilas), HAM(S) and RLM received seats that matched their regional influence.

This alignment ensured every partner operated within its strongest zones, minimising internal competition and maximising ground-level coordination.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

PK'S BIG LEAP AND HARD FALL

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Patna

Poll strategist Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraaj Party (JSP) failed to open an account in the Bihar Assembly polls, even though it contested all the seats in its debut electoral fray. A majority of the JSP candidates in 238 constituencies also forfeited their security deposit.

Positioned as a revolutionary third alternative to the ruling NDA and the Opposition INDIA bloc, the party, floated by the former political strategist, failed to galvanise votes in its favour, despite a high-pitched campaign and raising pressing issues such as unemployment, migration and dearth of industries.

In many seats, the party's vote count was less than the NOTA (None of the Above) category. Kishor had earlier asserted his party would either be on the top or at the bottom in the seat tally, but that there is no middle ground in the Bihar polls.

The 47-year-old had launched the party, with much fanfare, about a year ago, after a "pada yatra" that saw him marching across the length and breadth of Bihar over several months.

Victory against lies and *jungle raj* : PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday vowed to throw out *jungle raj* from West Bengal and said that just as river Ganga flows to Bengal through Bihar, this victory has cleared the path for the BJP's victory there also. Addressing party workers and supporters at the BJP headquarters, Modi said the Congress has become *Muslimleegi Maowadi* Congress — MMC and will witness a big split soon.

In a swipe at the top Congress leadership, he said some *naamdars* within the party are drowning everyone with them.

During his address, PM Modi wore a *gamchha* with Mithila painting as a symbolic gesture to connect with the people of Bihar. He said the victory in Bihar has given a new "MY — *Mahila* and Youth" formula with the people destroying the "communal M-Y formula of the *jungle raj* people".

He said Bihar is the land which gave India the pride of being the mother of democracy, and the same land has ensured that the people attacking democracy "bite the dust". "Bihar has shown again that lies are defeated and people's trust wins," PM Modi said.

In a scathing attack on the Congress, the PM said it has no positive vision for the country.

Phoenix soars in Patna

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

What was seen as a litmus test of his political relevance instead reaffirmed him as Bihar's Phoenix — a leader repeatedly rising from near — defeat, tested on endurance and trust. For Nitish Kumar, who has governed the State for nearly two decades, this election became a measure of both endurance and trust.

A buoyed Kumar, thanked people of the State for a landslide victory. "People of the State have expressed their confidence in our Government by giving us a landslide mandate in the polls. For this, I bow to all the esteemed voters of the State, and express my heartfelt gratitude and thanks," Nitish posted on social media. He also thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his continuous support to the NDA Government in the State and congratulated other NDA alliance partners Chirag Paswan, Jitan Ram Manjhi and Upendra Kushwaha.

Once celebrated as *Sushashan Babu* for steering Bihar out of what was often called the era of *jungle raj*, Kumar has in recent years faced voter fatigue and criticism over his unpredictable political alliances. Yet, the latest verdict reveals a complex electoral faith that prizes governance and delivery over coalition arithmetic.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Verdict redraws Bihar's power equations

ABHINAV KUMAR JHA ■ Patna

A wave of decisive mandates, many with margins exceeding 50,000 votes, has strengthened the NDA, especially the BJP and the JD(U), while leaving the RJD to defend shrinking territory and explain significant defeats of top leaders.

In constituency after constituency, NDA leaders and high-profile debutants pulled ahead early and widened their leads. The BJP's most formidable showing came from Samrat Choudhary, Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister and a key OBC face of the party. His sweeping victory in Tarapur, by 45,843 votes, reaffirmed his expanding clout within the NDA. With 1,22,480 votes, Choudhary's performance cements his position as one of the most influential leaders shaping the party's trajectory in Bihar.

NDA supporters celebrating the alliance's victory in Bihar polls PTI

His colleague and fellow Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha added to the party's strength map by winning Lakhisarai with 24,940 votes, backed by a solid 1,22,408 votes polled. Sinha's win signals that his command over the constituency remains intact, despite the fierce challenge posed by the Opposition.

The BJP paired such senior victories with the rise of compelling new entrants. Maithili Thakur, a cultural icon and first-time candidate, clinched Alinagar by 11,730 votes, showing that the party's strategy of fielding fresh faces resonated powerfully with youth and first-time voters.

In Siwan, Bihar's Health Minister Mangal Pandey delivered one of the RJD's most stinging defeats by ousting Speaker Awadh Bihari Chaudhary by 9,370 votes. Given Chaudhary's long legislative presence, the loss marks a symbolic collapse of the RJD's hold in a sensitive political zone.

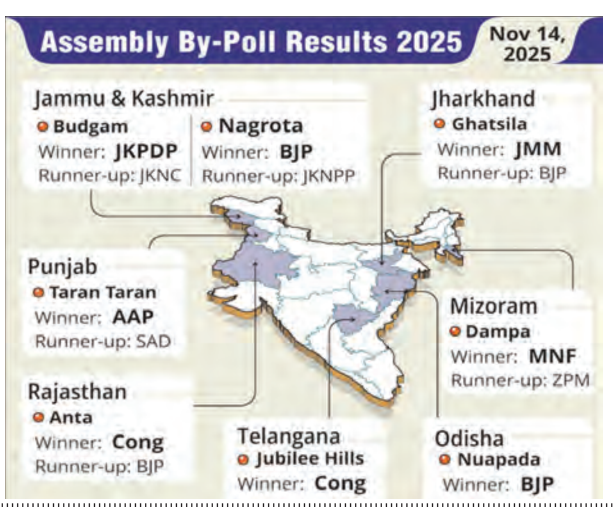
CONTINUED ON >> P4

Bypolls deliver setbacks to ruling parties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Jaipur/Jammu/Hyderabad

Ruling parties lost four of the eight seats where Assembly bypolls were held with the Congress bagging one seat in BJP-ruled Rajasthan and the PDP handing the National Conference its first ever defeat in its stronghold of Budgam in Jammu and Kashmir.

BJP won the Nagrota seat in J&K and Mizoram's main Opposition party, Mizo National Front (MNF), retained the Dampa Assembly seat with its candidate R Lalthangliana defeating Vanlalsailova of the ruling Zoram People's Movement by a margin of 562 votes.



Bypolls were also held in Anta (Rajasthan), Ghatsila (Jharkhand), Jubilee Hills (Telangana), Tarn Taran (Punjab) and Nuapada (Odisha). In Odisha's Nuapada, BJP's Jay Dholakia beat Ghasi Ram Majhi of the Congress by a huge margin of 83,748 votes. Jay is the son of late BJD MLA Rajendra Dholakia, whose death necessitated the bypoll.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

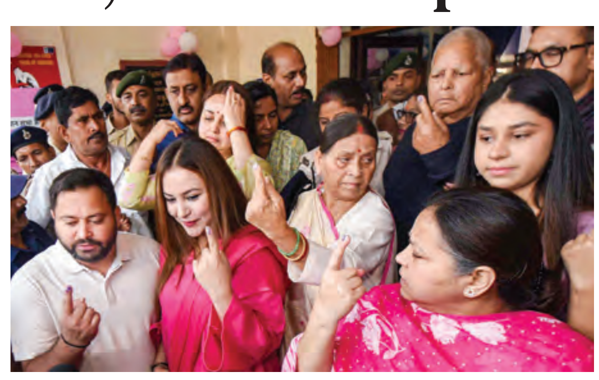
RJD wins votes, loses Bihar polls

RAJESH KUMAR ■ Patna/New Delhi

Tejashwi Yadav-led RJD was routed in the Assembly polls despite securing a higher vote share than both the BJP and JD(U).

Projected as the INDIA bloc's next chief minister, Tejashwi, however, salvaged some pride by retaining his Raghopur seat. Yet, the RJD's defeat shows that voters not only rejected the alliance but also largely dismissed its campaign.

Contesting 143 seats in the 243-member Assembly, the RJD has so far secured a 22.84 per cent vote share — 1.94 percentage points more than the BJP and 3.91 points more than the JD(U).



Lalu Yadav's family posing for pictures after casting their votes PTI

CONTINUED ON >> P4

The strategist in the shadows who turned Bihar whispers into a mandate

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ Patna

When Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar appointed Sanjay Kumar Jha as the national working president of JD (U), many within and outside the party questioned the decision. With no dynastic background Jha was seen by critics as a risky choice. Yet, Nitish remained resolute. As the NDA celebrates a resounding win in the 2025 Bihar Assembly elections, Jha's unconventional leadership stands vindicated.

Throughout the campaign, Rajya Sabha MP and now a force to reckon in Bihar politics, Sanjay Jha was subjected to relentless personal and political attacks. From being branded an agent of the BJP to being accused of plotting a merger of the JD (U) into the saffron party, the Opposition painted him as a usurper.

Jha never took the bait. He remained composed, reiterating his unwavering loyalty to Nitish Kumar and steering clear of personal mudslinging. "Every decision is being taken with the Chief Minister's full consent," he would calmly assert in interviews, subtly shifting the spotlight back to JD(U)'s collective leadership.

Behind this stoicism was a leader deeply engaged in the nuts and bolts of electioneering. Jha oversaw ticket distribution with an eye not just on caste equations but on local credibility and performance. Bypassing conventional templates, he chose fresh faces and pragmatic alliances that reinvigorated JD(U)'s presence at the grassroots. His strategy focused on showcasing Bihar's two-decade-long development journey under Nitish Kumar and laying out a vision for the next five years - industrial hubs in every district, better job opportunities, and steps to curb outmigration.

Sanjay Jha (centre) with Nitish Kumar and Lalan Singh WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Where others got mired in rhetoric, Jha stuck to results. Whether in media debates or on the campaign trail, his message remained clear: development, not distraction, was the agenda. That disciplined messaging helped neutralise the opposition's barbs, including concerns around Nitish Kumar's health.

In many ways, Jha epitomised a new kind of political operative-measured, modern, and mission-driven. While Nitish Kumar remains the face of the mandate, Jha has emerged as the silent architect of the NDA's success in Bihar. As votes are counted and verdicts analysed, his rise from a low-profile loyalist to the party's strategic spearhead marks a turning point in Bihar's political narrative.

Delhi Govt scraps mandatory renewal of shop registration

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

In a step toward simplifying business processes by making them easier, more convenient, and free from unnecessary formalities, the Labour Department of the Delhi Government has abolished the mandatory renewal of Registration under Section 5 of the Delhi Shops and Establishments Act, 1954. The Government said that the move will help to promote 'Ease of Doing Business'.

Currently, the Act mandates renewal of registration every 21 years from the date of registration. Eliminating this renewal requirement is a major relief for traders and will further strengthen 'Ease of Doing Business' in Delhi.

Delhi Labour Minister Kapil Mishra said that removing the mandatory renewal of registration after 21 years will provide real relief to traders. With simplified processes, Delhi's business environment will become more entrepreneur-friendly. This decision by the Delhi Government will move the registration process toward a one-time registration model, freeing traders from the hassle of periodic renewals. This step will give new momentum, transparency, and strength to 'Ease of Doing Business' in Delhi and further empower the trade and service sector of the Capital.

It is also noteworthy that the registration process under the Delhi Shops and Establishments Act, 1954, is already fully online. No documents are required to be submitted, no fee is charged, and the registration certificate is issued immediately based on the information provided by the applicant. This online registration system has been in effect since 2009.

While Mishra continues to emphasise promoting 'Ease of Doing Business', he has also implemented several important reforms for the welfare of workers and women. The most significant among these include an enhancement in minimum wage rates for workers and allowing women to work night shifts in Delhi. This permission comes with mandatory safety provisions such as secure transportation, CCTV, security guards, and an ICC committee.

For workers, the Government has introduced facilities like free medical treatment through the Ayushman card. To increase women's workforce participation, 500 'Palna Ghars' (crèche facilities) are being established. Additionally, proposals have been made to set up special welfare boards for various categories of workers-including gig workers, domestic helpers, taxi and auto drivers.

Delhi's severe AQI streak ends, back to very poor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi's three-day streak of 'severe' air quality ended on Friday, with the city's overall AQI settling at 387 in the 'very poor' category, according to the Central Pollution Control Board's (CPCB) 4 pm bulletin.

Despite the respite, the national Capital's monitoring stations continued to record toxic air, with 12 stations in the 'severe' category and 24 in the 'very poor' range out of the 37 stations monitored on Friday.

Wazirpur reported the day's highest AQI at 433, followed by Bawana at 429, according to the CPCB's Sameer app. Tiny airborne particles — PM10 and PM2.5, referring to particulate matter measuring ten micrometres and 2.5 micrometres, respectively —remained the dominant pollutants.

CM reviews cleanliness in Tehkhand, Tughlakabad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday carried out a review of cleanliness, waste management, and veterinary services in the Tehkhand and Tughlakabad areas of South Delhi. During the visit, she issued clear directions to officials to ensure the timely, transparent, and high-quality execution of all related works.

The Chief Minister inspected the CTU/GVP (Cleanliness Target Unit/Garbage Vulnerable Point) locations, the proposed C&D waste collection site, and the proposed FCTS (Fixed Compactor Transfer Station) in Tehkhand village. She then visited Tughlakabad village to review the CTU/GVP points and the proposed C&D waste collection site there.

She conducted a detailed assessment of the existing arrangements, progress of proposed structures, and future requirements related to sanitation and waste collection. The Chief Minister directed officials to ensure that all projects are completed within stipulated timelines and in accordance with stringent quality standards. Strengthening Delhi's solid waste management infrastructure, she emphasised, remains a top priority for the Government, and work continues in mission mode to build a cleaner and more efficient Capital.

The Chief Minister also paid a surprise visit to the Rajesh Pilot Veterinary Hospital in Tughlakabad to review cleanliness, available facilities, and veterinary services. She instructed the hospital administration to immediately ensure proper hygiene, systematic arrangements, and a clean and safe environment.

Calling for urgent improvements, she directed that essential repairs be undertaken without delay and that veterinary healthcare services be made more efficient, timely, and of high quality. She asked officials and medical staff to enhance the availability of animal care services so residents and livestock owners in the surrounding areas can receive better access to treatment.

The CM said that animal welfare services are an important priority for the Delhi Government and that any negligence in this regard will not be tolerated. 'Viksit Delhi' as a clean, safe, and modern Capital equipped with robust civic infrastructure remains the Government's objective.

AIIMS HONOURED WITH NATIONAL RANK FOR INSTITUTIONAL EXCELLENCE

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi has been honoured with the highest national ranking and top award for overall performance and institutional excellence at the DHR-ICMR Health Research Excellence Summit 2025, the hospital said in a statement.

Organised by the Department of Health Research (DHR) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the Summit was inaugurated by Union Minister of State for Health Anupriya Singh Patel on Thursday. In her address, the minister highlighted India's growing global prominence in health research and innovation under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, citing initiatives such as MedTech Mitra, Rotavac, and the COVID-19 vaccines as milestones of self-reliance and scientific excellence.

She reaffirmed the government's commitment to ensuring that the benefits of research and innovation reach people at every level of society.

The Overall Performance Excellence (Gold) ranking awarded to AIIMS, Delhi acknowledges its exceptional contributions across multiple dimensions — research output and quality, innovation and translation, public-health impact, capacity building, and extramural collaborations and funding, the hospital statement said.

The institute's sustained record of high-impact publications, translation of laboratory findings into diagnostics and therapeutics.

Rekha Gupta inaugurates Delhi Pavilion at Trade Fair

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday inaugurated the 'Delhi Pavilion' at the India International Trade Fair in Hall No 2 at Pragati Maidan. During her visit, the Chief Minister toured the various stalls and interacted with women entrepreneurs, MSMEs, start-ups and other business owners from across the Capital.

Commending their products, skills and dedication, she said that Delhi's local entrepreneurs, particularly women are carving a new place for themselves on the global stage through their talent and perseverance.

The Chief Minister urged people to visit the 'Delhi Pavilion' and extend their encouragement to the city's women entrepreneurs and local artisans who are showcasing exceptional skill, hard work and self-reliance.

She noted that the fair serves as a dynamic platform for India's art, culture, innovation and enterprise. She further stated that the India International Trade Fair not only enhances business opportunities but also brings the country's cultural diversity and socio-economic progress to the global forefront.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta during the inauguration of the Delhi Pavilion at the India International Trade Fair on Friday PANKAJ KUMAR

The 'Delhi Pavilion' offers a dedicated platform for MSMEs, artisans, start-ups and small entrepreneurs from different districts of the Capital to exhibit their products and services. The pavilion features a Red Fort-themed design reflecting Delhi's historical and cultural heritage; a blend of local art, culture and modern entrepreneurship; selfie points and interactive exhibits; special representation for women entrepreneurs and SC/ST-based units; and a display of Delhi's diversity and creative potential through 49 stalls. The stalls have also been organised district-wise to ensure greater visibility for the city's unique products, innovative start-ups and emerging local talent.

The IITF 2025 will feature India's journey towards realising the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, and will reflect the innovations in artificial intelligence, deep tech, cybersecurity, and agriculture, as well as handlooms and handicraft and heritage products of India.

The Pioneer
NEW DELHI | SATURDAY | NOVEMBER 15, 2025

Grief struck: A Delhi family's agony after Red Fort blast

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

In a small Delhi home, a three-year-old boy keeps glancing at the main door. It has been three days since his father, 34-year-old Amar Kataria, last knocked, and he rushed into his arms. Now, his hope fades a little each day as he watches the silent rooms and his grief-struck mother, unaware that his father was among the 13 lives lost on Monday evening.

"He keeps looking at the door. Every sound outside, he turns around. He thinks someone is coming. You can see it in his eyes. He is realising something is wrong, but he does not know what," the victim's relative, Swadesh Sethi, said.

Among the victims of the tragedy was Amar Kataria, a pharmaceutical businessman from Chandni Chowk's Bhagirath Palace. He had stepped out after finishing work, unaware that within minutes his family's life would be torn apart.

Amar and his wife Kriti, had been married for four years and were happy in their little world. Until the clock struck 6:52 in the evening, when a blast shattered the dreams of his and 12 other families.

For his family, the hours that followed unfolded in disbelief and panic. They searched for information, clung to hope and prayed. By the time the confirmation arrived, their home had already fallen silent. He described the scene when Amar's three-year-old son stood beside his father's body, confused and frightened by what he was seeing.

Sethi's voice trembled as he recalled it. "He kept tugging my hand and asking, 'Papa zameen pe kyun so raha hai?' (Why is Dad sleeping on the ground?) He kept asking again and again. I could not hold myself. I was crying and brawling. How do we answer a child who still thinks his father is only asleep?" he said.

Speaking about Amar's wife, Kriti, Sethi said she has barely moved since the news arrived. "She just sits in one place. She has not spoken much. She is in complete shock," he said, adding, "She is three months pregnant. She has not cried loudly. She is not reacting. She is just there, staring." At this point, Sethi broke down again. He said Amar and Kriti had big and beautiful plans for their future.

"They were married for four years. They were planning for another baby. Planning to build their own little world. Everything was going smoothly. And now everything is gone," he said. "Her life has just stopped, like it is frozen in time."

Kataria's family said that there are no words for the gloom that has settled over their home. Sethi added that the family is shattered beyond anything they could have imagined. He broke into tears repeatedly as he spoke about the moments that followed the news.

Sethi also said that no representative from the Delhi Government has visited them since the blast. "Our constituency's MP came on the day of the cremation, and the next day, the BJP president came. Not one person from the Delhi Government has come. We are mourning alone," he said.

Amar's father, Jagdish Kataria, spoke quietly about the final moments before the tragedy. "Amar was our only son. He got married four years ago and has a three-year-old son. He had called us to say he was on his way home," he said. When the family tried calling him again, a stranger answered. "A woman picked up and told us she had found his phone near the Red Fort, where a blast had happened," Jagdish said and added, "We did not know what to do. We just left immediately."

The family rushed to the spot and then to LNJP Hospital, where they waited through the night among other grieving families. "We waited till five in the morning and then we got his body," he said. His body was found charred beyond recognition, and the tattoos on Amar's arms helped them recognise him when almost nothing else remained.

One read 'Mom, my first love'. Another said, 'Dad, my strength'. A third carried the name 'Kriti'.

Amar, who ran a medicine shop in Chandni Chowk, leaves behind an elderly father who depended on him, a young pregnant wife who cannot yet process the loss and a little boy who still waits at the door. Their family was still being built. Now it has been broken in a moment that changed everything.

Investigation reveals terror module communicated through email drafts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Members of the terror module under scanner for the deadly blast near the Red Fort, relied on an unusual yet effective method of communication to avoid detection —through unsent emails kept as drafts.

According to investigators, the suspects, including Dr Umar Un Nabi, who is believed to have driven the car that exploded, and his associates, Dr Muzammil Ganaie and Dr Shaheen Shahid, communicated using a single email account accessible to all in the module.

Instead of sending, they saved emails as drafts, a police source said. The intended recipient would log into the same account, read the draft, and delete it immediately, leaving no digital trail of communication, the source said. This method was chosen to evade surveillance and prevent interception of their conversations, as nothing was transmitted across networks, police said.

Officials said the technique reflects a high level of caution and planning within the module, allowing them to coordinate activities related to the conspiracy without relying on traceable channels.


Pankaj Kumar

Members of the terror module were also in constant contact, mainly through a Swiss communication application called Threema and other such apps. They allegedly used the encrypted messaging app to plan and coordinate the terror conspiracy while also staying in touch with their foreign handlers, police said. "Unlike conventional messaging platforms, Threema does not require a phone number or email ID for registration, making it extremely difficult to trace the users," a source said.

The app assigns each user a unique ID not linked to any mobile number or SIM card and offers end-to-end encryption with an option to be run on private servers. Investigators suspect the accused doctors set up a private Threema server to communicate securely and evade detection. This server was allegedly used to share sensitive documents, maps, and layouts related to the Delhi blast conspiracy.

"Detailed planning, including location sharing and task allocation, is believed to have been conducted through this private network," a police source added. Threema also allows messages to be deleted from both ends and does not store metadata, further complicating forensic retrieval, the source added.

Preliminary findings suggest the app was used to transfer restricted material and coded messages among the members of the terror module, officials said.

Cyber crooks use blast to spread malware: Police

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Cyber fraudsters are exploiting public curiosity surrounding the recent blast near the Red Fort by circulating malicious files through messages claiming to contain "blast-related evidence", police sources said on Friday.

According to a source, several people, including Delhi Police personnel, have received messages from foreign-based numbers. "These messages purportedly come from a woman who claims to possess crucial proof or videos linked to the November 10 blast that killed 13 people and injured over two dozen," said the source.

To lend authenticity, the senders are attaching APK files and zip folders, urging recipients to download them to see the truth behind the explosion, he added.

The source described the development as a "new modus operandi" crafted to take advantage of heightened public anxiety and widespread online discussions about the attack.

"This is a new modus operandi of cyber fraud. Since the blast near the Red Fort took place recently, people want to know every possible detail. Fraudsters are exploiting this curiosity," added the source.

Explaining further, he said that the moment a recipient downloads the attached APK or zip file, malware is silently installed on the device, granting cyber criminals direct access to the user's phone.

"The APK or zip file, once installed, gives remote access to the fraudsters. They can enter the victim's mobile banking apps, read OTPs, intercept messages and siphon off their hard-earned money within minutes," he said.

He also said that many personnel within the force have also reported receiving such messages, which further raised an alarm. Investigators also believe the fraudsters are deliberately using the sensitive matter to increase the likelihood of victims engaging with the message.

"People tend to click more when the subject is linked to a major issue. The fraudsters know this very well," a cyber-expert said.

CM praises Bihar's vote for change


Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, MLAs Bansuri Swaraj, Ashish Sood, and other leaders during celebrations for the NDA's victory in the Bihar elections at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi PTI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday congratulated the people of Bihar for "choosing the path of development" after the NDA appeared to be heading to a landslide victory in the State. Speaking at an event, the CM said Delhi and Bihar are interconnected.

"Congratulations to the people of Delhi and Bihar. The trends show that NDA is heading towards victory. I hope that Bihar progresses on the path of development under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," she said.

Later, talking to reporters, she said that the State had chosen the path of development. "My wishes to the people of Bihar for choosing the path of development under the leadership of our prime minister," she added.

Gupta, who is the lone woman to hold the chief minister's post among the 14 BJP-ruled States, had made multiple visits to the state to campaign for BJP candidates.

The Delhi CM had conducted rallies, roadshows, public meetings, etc in as many as 21 Assembly segments in Bihar this time out of which the party won 20 seats while lost just 1 seat. Gupta had extensively campaigned in regions like Lkahi Sarai, Bihar Sharif, Patna, Muzaffarpur, Gaya, etc where the NDA registered their victory. She not only campaigned from the BJP candidates while for LJP, JDU and RLP also where they registered their win. The only Warisaliganj seat lost by BJP where Gupta participated in a rally.

Campaign for Bihar elections had witnessed participation of Delhi BJP leaders as they were assigned election duties in various parts of the state. Delhi government ministers were assigned election responsibilities in phases.

Party sources had claimed that a large number of Purvanchali voters in the national capital voted for the BJP and the reason Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta is among the demanded leaders for campaigning for the party. They said that after transfer of ₹10,000 in the account of women besides other announcements for them, the election campaign of a woman Chief Minister gave a positive impact.

The CM, who was in the list of star campaigners of BJP for Bihar, first participated in a public meeting for Deputy CM Vijay Sinha who won from Lakhi Sarai.

Dr Pankaj Singh, Health Minister of the Delhi government, had arrived in Bihar much earlier. He was assigned to campaign in various parts of Bihar. Pankaj Singh was the first Delhi Government minister to reach Bihar. Singh is originally from the Buxar district of Bihar. Delhi has a large population of people from Bihar who are originally from Bihar. Keeping this in mind, Pankaj Singh has been sent to Bihar.

Delhi Power Minister, Ashish Sood, was also sent to Bihar for election campaigning. He was assigned to the Siwan region in Bihar. During the 2020 elections also, he had spent three months in Bihar, overseeing the organisation. Additionally, the results in the areas he was assigned to were quite positive.

Bhojpuri superstar and North East Delhi MP Manoj Tiwari was given the responsibility of organising the public in favour of BJP through small meetings and street plays across Bihar. Manoj Tiwari has a huge fan following in Bihar. His songs and films have left a distinct impression on the people of Bihar. Consequently, he has been given the responsibility of campaigning in every part of Bihar throughout the election.

Landlord kills tenant over suspicion of theft, says cops

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

A man died and another was injured after their landlord allegedly assaulted them on suspicion of phone hacking and stealing rare coins from his collection.

The accused, identified as Irshad (31), was arrested on November 11 and was addicted to using Termin injection vials for gym workouts and had used one during the assault, police said.

"The incident came to light on November 9 when the victim, Tamanney, arrived at Subhash Place police station with two acquaintances and alleged that he had been beaten by his landlord," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northwest) Bhisham Singh said.

He soon began losing consciousness and was taken to Bhagwan Mahavir Hospital, where doctors declared him dead. During the inquiry, police learnt that the deceased worked at a factory in Lawrence Road and lived in Shakurpur.

His co-worker, Nazim, told investigators that the victim and his roommate, Virender, were confined and beaten by their landlord, Irshad, for two days- Wednesday and Thursday- over suspicions of phone hacking and theft of rare coins. The assault involved kicks, fists and a belt, he said.

Nazim said the duo managed to escape on Friday morning and reached his residence. Over the next two days, Tamanney sought treatment at multiple clinics after complaining of abdominal pain. An ultrasound later revealed heavy internal bleeding, prompting them to report the matter to the police station, he added. Virender, the second victim, reportedly fled to his native village in Bihar out of fear, Nazim told police. Raids were conducted across Delhi and in multiple locations in Uttar Pradesh, including Etah, Kasganj and Aligarh, to nab the accused.

Acting on a tip-off, police apprehended Irshad from Rohini on November 11. During interrogation, he confessed to assaulting both victims, claiming he suspected them of trying to hack his phone to erase evidence related to a robbery at his Wazirpur factory. He also accused them of stealing some rare coins from his collection.

Police said a case was registered under Section 103(1) (Murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. A belt used for beating, a rope used for tying the victims, a Termin injection vial and the deceased's mobile phone were recovered at the instance of the accused, they added. Police said Irshad has previously been involved in a case related to causing hurt and wrongful restraint in Subhash Place earlier this year. Further investigation is underway, police added.

DFS refuses to renew fire safety certificate for annexe building of Talkatora stadium

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi Fire Services (DFS) has declined to renew the fire safety certificate for the annexe building of Talkatora Stadium after inspectors found multiple violations during a recent check. The decision was communicated to the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) on Thursday, with DFS listing 12 safety lapses that it said make the building unfit for certification.

DFS officials inspected the annexe on November 6 in the presence of NDMC representatives. The inspection found that several key systems designed to alert and protect occupants during a fire were either broken, missing, or not functioning. According to the DFS letter, the fire control room panel on the ground floor was non-operational. The public address system, manually operated alarm units, smoke detectors, and the smoke management system were also found dead.

The inspection revealed that the 900 LPM terrace pump was removed, leaving the building without an essential emergency water supply. Multiple hydrants were damaged, and hoses were missing. Critical fire escape staircases were locked and blocked by furniture and stored materials.

DFS stated that these conditions rendered the building unsafe for public use. "In view of these shortcomings, the application for issuance of the fire safety certificate is rejected," the letter stated. It warned that continuing to occupy the structure without fixing the violations would be at the "risk and liability of the owner and occupier." The fire department also requested that NDMC initiate necessary corrective action immediately.

In a separate decision, the DFS rejected the application for a fire safety certificate for the 600-bed Ambedkar Hospital in Dakshinpuri. The building had first been inspected in May 2023, when DFS flagged major failures in its safety infrastructure. Officials found the pressurisation system for staircases, lift shafts, and lobbies to be non-functional. Fire check doors lacked self-closing devices, and smoke management arrangements were not operational.

Although the hospital had an automatic fire detection and alarm system installed, DFS noted that it, too, was non-functional at the time of the 2023 inspection. Manually operated electronic alarms were also not working.

A follow-up inspection was carried out on October 30 this year. According to a DFS letter sent to NBCC on Thursday, the department found that none of the earlier shortcomings had been rectified. The letter noted that the hospital still lacked functional smoke management systems and had not fixed its pressurisation units. Fire control systems remained inactive. DFS officials said the failure to correct the lapses despite repeated notices left them with "no option" but to deny certification again.

Delhi Police deport 23 foreign nationals for illegal stay in Dwarka

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Police have deported 23 foreign nationals who were found living illegally in the Dwarka district. The deportation happened after a month-long crackdown carried out through October, officials said on Thursday. DCP Dwarka, Ankit Singh, said the police will continue strict action against illegal stays and will keep pressure on those misusing the system. "Our teams are conducting regular checks. We will not allow any illegally staying foreign national to hide in the district," he said.

Police teams from Bindapur, Dabri and Mohan Garden traced the individuals during prolonged field verification drives. Bindapur police accounted for 20 of the 23 cases. Dabri police tracked two, and Mohan Garden police traced one.

All 23 were produced before the FRRO, which later issued deportation orders. They were then sent to a detention centre, officers said.

> OFFICERS SAID MANY OF THE INDIVIDUALS HAD BEEN LIVING IN INDIA LONG AFTER THE EXPIRY OF THEIR VISAS

The police said those detained were from Nigeria, Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Tanzania and Liberia. Officers said the enforcement drive was carried out because overstaying foreign nationals put pressure on local resources and create security gaps. They said Dwarka district has seen an increase in such cases over the past few months.

The Operations Unit and police stations have been developing intelligence on foreign nationals staying in rented flats, shared rooms and temporary housing. Police teams conducted checks in residential colonies, market stretches, narrow lanes and high-density rented areas. Officers said the target was individuals who had overstayed visas or entered the country without valid documents.

Police said landlords who rented out premises without submitting tenant verification forms were also questioned. Checks were conducted early morning and late evening to track those who frequently change locations.

Of the 23 detainees, 15 were from Nigeria. Police said the Nigerian nationals were found in different pockets of Bindapur, Dabri and Mohan Garden. Four were from Senegal. Two were from the Ivory Coast. Each was from Tanzania and Liberia.

Police said the detained group included both men and women.

Police recorded the details of all foreign nationals and submitted the documentation to FRRO. Deportation orders followed after scrutiny of each case.

Officers said many of the individuals had been living in India long after the expiry of their visas. Further, police added that the district will continue with similar verification drives in the coming weeks. Officers said the crackdown is part of preventive policing and is necessary to ensure that no illegally staying individual is able to move unchecked in the region. The district police are also working with RWAs and property owners to strengthen compliance with tenant verification rules.

Officials said October's operation is one of the largest actions against illegally staying foreign nationals in recent months. They added that more checks will be carried out as part of a sustained monitoring plan.

IN FOCUS

President Droupadi Murmu interacts with a student on the occasion of Children's Day, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre, in New Delhi

Nabi's house demolished after Delhi blast

MOHIT KANDHARI
Jammu

A multi-storey house, belonging to Dr Umar Un Nabi, who allegedly triggered the car blast near the Red Fort Metro station on November 10, was demolished using explosives during the intervening night of November 13-14 in south Kashmir's Pulwama district.

A total of 13 people were killed and 20 others were injured in the terror attack orchestrated by the members of a 'White Collar' terror module.

Investigation into the blast has so far revealed that Umar, a doctor at Al-Falah University in Faridabad, was driving the Hyundai i20 car that exploded near a traffic signal on the Netaji Subhash Marg near Red Fort.

His presence in the car was later confirmed by matching DNA samples found at the blast site and collected from his mother.

To avoid collateral damage in the built-up area, the neighbours and the family members of the terror suspect were directed to shift to safer locations before the house was demolished. The local police authorities have not issued any statement on the demolitions till late evening.

The demolition of his house in Kashmir is aimed at sending a stern message to those backing terrorist activities on Indian soil.

Earlier, homes of local terrorists of Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba—Adil Hussain Thoker of Bijbehara and Aasif Sheikh of Tral and others were razed to the ground after the Pahalgam terror attack.

Their names figured in the list of local terrorists who were part of the bigger terror module behind the Pahalgam massacre.

The car blast near Red Fort was triggered within hours after a recovery of about 2,900 kg of bomb-making material and sophisticated weapons such as assault rifles from Faridabad. This recovery was made from Muzammil and Shaheen Saeed, doctors and associates of Umar. Both doctors are now in custody and are being questioned to unravel the conspiracy behind amassing explosives in Faridabad. Investigators suspect that the module linked to Jaish-e-Mohammed and Ansar Ghazwat Ul-Hind plotted to carry out a much bigger attack, and the Delhi blast was the result of Umar panicking after his associates were arrested.

Reacting to the demolition of Dr Umar Nabi's home, former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti said the "harshest recourse" should be taken against those involved in the Delhi blast, "but as per the law".

Srinagar MP Aga Ruhullah Mehdi said that demolishing a home doesn't deliver "punishment", but that it only inflicts collective suffering. "Making an entire family homeless during the harsh winter of Kashmir without evidence/court order, or any law linking them to the incident is an act of cruelty. It doesn't bring justice to the innocent lives that we lost in the terror attack, and it doesn't achieve the ends of justice," he said.

Rail Ministry prioritises staff training amid safety concerns

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

The Railway Ministry has advised its zones to focus on staff training and fill faculty vacancies, as it took note of recent reports of parliamentary committees on safety issues that flagged gaps in periodic induction, refresher and promotional training of personnel.

The ministry, while referring to the reports, said the lack of advanced training of railway employees and a large number of vacancies in training institutes are potentially jeopardising the safety of train movement.

Acting on the recommendations of the parliamentary committees, the ministry wrote to all railway zones, saying that developing an efficient, safety-oriented workforce aligned with future technological requirements is of utmost importance.

"It is therefore advised that a robust mechanism be established to effectively monitor training at the induction, refresher, and promotional stages, ensuring that no staff at the field or supervisory level misses the mandatory training at any stage and that all related training data are comprehensively recorded," the letter said. "Further, necessary steps may be taken to ensure that all sanctioned faculty positions across various training institutes are duly filled," it added.

The ministry said the Public Accounts Committee on "Derailment in Indian Railways" and the Standing Committee on Railways in their reports have observed gaps in periodic induction, refresher and promotional training.

Nitish Kumar posters dominate Patna

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Patna

As the NDA appeared to register a landslide victory in Bihar on Friday, Patna's skyline saw a visual grammar of its own-bold, swaggering and unmistakably centered on one man: Nitish Kumar.

As the NDA's advantage solidified through the morning, freshly minted posters began appearing across the city, leaving no ambiguity about who, in the JD(U)'s telling, remained Bihar's central axis of power.

Outside the chief minister's residence, a massive poster of Nitish Kumar standing beside a crouching tiger, with the tagline 'tiger abhi zinda hai' (the tiger is still alive), became the first showstopper of the morning. The imagery was not subtle. It was defiant, triumphant, and unmistakably aimed at setting the tone before the numbers settled. Through the day, more posters sprouted across arterial stretches, roundabouts, party offices and neighbourhood corners, as though Patna itself had been cast in a JD(U) production. One declared: 'Humaare Bihar mein ek star, hur baar Nitish Kumar' (in our Bihar, there is only one star; every time, it is Nitish Kumar). The design was more striking, a towering image of Nitish, with a smaller photograph of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the backdrop.

Another went even further, stating simply, *Bihar ka matlab Nitish Kumar* (Bihar means Nitish Kumar), a sweeping assertion that sought to blur the line between individual and the state's identity.

Political observers said the visual grammar made the JD(U)'s message crystal clear: In Bihar's political theatre, Nitish Kumar is not just the protagonist, he is the plot. "The line 'Hamaare Bihar mein ek star' is not just praise. It is a reminder that whatever the arithmetic at the Centre, Bihar's leadership mantle is that of Nitish ji," a JD(U) worker told a TV channel, pointing to the posters. The timing was even more telling.

Even though the BJP was leading in more seats than the JD(U), the posters doubled as a calibrated counter to weeks of speculation, fanned by the Mahagathbandhan and pockets of the political commentariat that the BJP might project a new CM face after the polls.

Both parties had publicly dismissed the buzz, but the visuals on Friday morning appeared crafted to silence it once and for all.

For the JD(U) cadre, the posters worked as reassurance and assertion in equal measure: reassurance that Nitish was firmly in command, and assertion that within the NDA, hierarchy had its own logic, and Nitish Kumar remained its senior-most partner in Bihar. The visuals appeared almost in lockstep with counting trends.

Mizoram CM vows boost for cooperatives, MSMEs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Aizawl

Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Friday said the government is committed to strengthening cooperative societies and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME).

Speaking at the 72nd All India Cooperative Week here, Lalduhoma said the government is taking steps to promote local products.

He said, "The Mizoram Procurement Preference Policy for Small & Medium Enterprises 2025 has already come into force after its publication in the official gazette in February." The CM said cooperative spirit is deeply embedded in the Mizo way of life as it is reflected in the long-standing tradition of collective labour, unity, and mutual support.

He said Mizo people are recognised for their discipline, hard work, and readiness to take on challenges for the welfare of the community. With strong cooperative initiatives, the people of Mizoram are capable of taking up even greater economic responsibilities, he said.

He lauded Mizoram Milk Producers' Cooperative Union (MULCO), a government undertaking for milk production, for its efforts to fully tap local milk production. Lalduhoma also hailed Mizoram Apex Handloom and Handicraft Cooperative Society Ltd (MAHCO)'s ambition to make Mizo handloom products recognised across the country as significant steps towards enhancing the cooperative sector.

He also thanked Mizoram State Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry and Marketing Cooperative Federation Limited (MAHFED) for its efforts to strengthen its support for farmers, producers, and entrepreneurs by ensuring effective marketing of the state's agricultural and horticultural outputs.

Anti-terror mock drill in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Commandos of the National Security Guard (NSG) along with other agencies on Friday conducted a mock counter-terrorism drill onboard a cruise ship on the Ganga river in Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi, an official statement said.

According to officials, the mock drill, codenamed 'Operation Ganga Guard', was conducted at the Ravi Das ghat.

Five juveniles held for murdering auto driver in Rohini

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Police have apprehended five juveniles, all aged between 15 and 16, for the alleged murder of a 52-year-old autorickshaw driver in Rohini. The victim, Rakesh Kumar, was fatally stabbed during a robbery attempt orchestrated by the group, who sought money to purchase drugs and alcohol. The arrests were made swiftly, and authorities have since recovered a blood-stained knife and two stolen scooters from the accused.

. "The incident took place around 12:30 am on the night of November 13 when the victim, Rakesh Kumar, was stabbed during a robbery attempt in Budh Vihar area," stated Deputy Commissioner of Police (Rohini) Rajeev Ranjan.

Kumar, who sustained grievous injuries, was rushed to Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital but succumbed to his wounds during treatment. An FIR was promptly registered, and investigation was initiated.

KUMAR SUSTAINED GRIEVOUS INJURIES, WAS RUSHED TO SANJAY GANDHI MEMORIAL HOSPITAL BUT SUCCUMBED TO HIS WOUNDS DURING TREATMENT

"We got to know that two of the accused had hired Kumar's auto from Mangolpuri, while the remaining three followed them on two stolen scooters. On reaching an isolated stretch, the group attempted to rob the driver. When Kumar resisted, one of them stabbed him, following which all five fled on the scooters," the DCP said

Police utilised CCTV footage to track the accused, leading to raids at their hideouts where all five were subsequently apprehended. During questioning, they revealed they routinely engaged in robbery and theft to procure intoxicants. The decision to commit robbery on Thursday resulted in the death of Rakesh Kumar.

Police disclosed that the accused are linked to multiple prior offences, including snatching, theft, and burglary. Their arrest has led to the resolution of six other cases. Furthermore, police confirmed that two of the apprehended juveniles are history-sheeters, and the criminal records of the others are currently under inspection.

FROM PAGE - 1

MY win for Bihar

The NDA's landslide rested on a re-engineered caste coalition that stretched well beyond its traditional anchors. The BJP secured a consolidated upper-caste vote, while JD(U) retained its Kurmi base and made substantial inroads among Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs).

At the same time, LJP (Ram Vilas) and HAM(S) succeeded in strengthening their standing among Dalit and Mahadalit communities.

This broad coalition outpaced the Mahagathbandhan's dependence on the Muslim-Yadav axis. A new voting bloc emerged in the form of the "MY" (Mahila-Youth) factor - a demographic that the NDA dominated. Strategic welfare initiatives and targeted outreach enabled the alliance to knit together groups that were once electorally scattered. Women voters ultimately shaped the outcome. In several districts, female turnout surpassed male turnout by 10 to 20 percentage points. The extensive network of Jeevika Didis ensured smooth mobilisation, particularly in rural areas where women often face barriers to reaching polling stations. Nitish Kumar's long-term focus on female empowerment - through welfare schemes, educational incentives and social support networks - paid off at the ballot box. The addition of more than 1.4 million first-time voters, many of them young women, created an advantage that the Opposition struggled to counter.

Verdict redraws Bihar's power equations

The BJP's winning streak extended across the state: Shreyasi Singh dominated Jamui with a margin of 54,498; Nitin Nabin protected urban BJP turf in Bankipur by 51,936 votes; and Nitish Mishra triumphed in Jhanjharpur with 54,849 votes. The successes of Jibesh Kumar in Jale, Prem Kumar in Gaya Town, and Renu Devi in Bettiah underscored the party's rural-urban equilibrium and its well-distributed leadership.

The JD(U) matched the BJP stride for stride, powered by veteran anchors who ensured stability in the party's core belts. Leading the pack was Kaladhar Prasad Mandal, who delivered the single largest winning margin of these elections: 73,572 votes in Rupauli.

In Gopalpur, seasoned JD(U) leader Shailesh Kumar (Bulo Mandal) captured 1,08,630 votes and won with a margin of 58,135, reinforcing the party's dominance in Extremely Backward Class pockets. Senior minister Vijay Kumar Choudhary, handling key portfolios including Water Resources and Parliamentary Affairs in the Bihar government, secured Sarairanjan with a margin of 20,798 votes. Minister Shravon Kumar protected Nalanda with 33,008 votes, a seat central to JD(U)'s political identity. Other major JD(U) gains included Kaushal Kishore in Rajgir (margin 55,428), Sheela Kumari in Phulparas, Leshi Singh in Dhamdaha, Maheshwar Hazari in Kalyanpur, and Aniruddha Prasad Yadav in Nirmali. The much-watched battle of Mokama went to Anant Singh, who defeated RJD's Veena Devi by 28,206 votes, delivering yet another blow to the RJD's senior ranks.

For the RJD, the election was a mixed ledger tilted sharply toward disappointment. While Tejashwi Yadav held Raghopur with a margin of 14,532 votes, the reduced gap from his 2020 margin signalled weakened momentum. The losses of leaders like Awadh Bihari Chaudhary and Veena Devi further deepened the party's concerns. A few bright spots offered some consolation. First-time candidate Osama Shahab claimed Raghunathpur with 9,248 votes, and former minister Alok Kumar Mehta held on to Ujiarpur by 16,283 votes.

Taken together, Bihar's 2025 verdict is more than a numerical win. It is a recalibration of political strength, fortifying the NDA's pillars, expanding its base with new entrants, and leaving the RJD facing a critical test of strategy and leadership renewal.

Bypolls deliver setbacks to ruling parties

In Nagrota, BJP's Devyani Rana defeated Jammu and Kashmir National Panthers Party (JKNPP) candidate Harsh Dev Singh by 24647 votes. NC candidate Shamim Begum, who got 10872 votes, lost her deposit. Rana is the daughter of former MLA Devender Singh Rana, whose death necessitated the bypoll. Opposition PDP's Aga Syed Muntazir won the Budgam bypoll in Jammu and Kashmir, defeating ruling NC candidate Aga Syed Mehmood by a margin of 4,478 votes. The bypoll in Budgam was necessitated after Chief Minister Omar Abdullah vacated the seat and chose his family bastion of Ganderbal after winning from both constituencies in the assembly elections last year. This is the first time that the NC has lost in its bastion of Budgam, in central Kashmir, since the first elections for the legislative assembly were held in 1957.

Congress' wins came in Anta assembly constituency in Rajasthan and Jubilee Hills in Telangana. In Anta, Pramod Jain Bhaya defeating his nearest rival and BJP nominee Morpal Suman by a margin of 15,612 votes. The bypoll was necessitated after BJP MLA Kanwar Lal Meena was disqualified following his conviction in a criminal case.

The ruling AAP retained the Tarn Taran assembly seat in Punjab with its candidate Harmeet Singh Sandhu defeating his nearest rival and SAD nominee Sukhwinder Kaur Randhawa by a margin of 12,091 votes. The Tarn Taran seat fell vacant after the death of AAP MLA Kashmir Singh Sohal in June.

JMM candidate Somesh Chandra Soren beat his nearest rival Babulal Soren of the BJP in the by-election to the Ghatshila assembly seat in Jharkhand by over 38,500 votes. Somesh is the son of JMM MLA Ramdas Soren, whose death on August 15 necessitated the bypoll. The Dampa seat fell vacant following the death of incumbent Mizo National Front (MNF) legislator Lalrintluanga Sailo on July 21.

Phoenix soars in Patna

Women's empowerment, roads, electricity, education, and safety triumphed over rhetoric.

The NDA's women-centric policies emerged as the decisive factor, mirroring the success of similar models in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana, offering start-up grants and mentorship for aspiring women entrepreneurs, created a direct emotional and economic link with a key demographic.

Just as the Ladli Behna initiative in Madhya Pradesh and Majhi Ladki Bahin programme in Maharashtra cemented a loyal female vote, Bihar's version created a quiet but powerful groundswell. Even recipients awaiting their first instalment voiced confidence that "as long as Nitish is there, the money will come." A record-high turnout among women — outnumbering men by almost 10 percentage points — appears to have decisively favoured the BJP-led coalition.

Beyond women-focused outreach, the Nitish government targeted grassroots benefits: free electricity for the first 125 units, tablets and smartphones for Vikas Mitras and Shiksha Sevaks, and enhanced pensions for the elderly and disabled. Construction workers received new clothing allowances, while ASHA, Anganwadi, and Jeevika workers saw their honorariums rise. Together with the promise of one crore jobs over five years, these measures crafted an image of inclusive governance and welfare continuity-helping replicate the success of women-driven victories seen in other BJP bastions.

Kumar's own revival mid-campaign also played a critical role: his high-energy rallies and emphatic speeches countered speculation over his health and suitability for another term. His declaration that he had "never sought personal gain in life," captured in a widely shared video, seemed to strike a chord across Bihar's caste divides. Nitish Kumar's staying power lies in a rare political equation. Through careful social engineering —bringing together Extremely Backward Classes, Mahadalits, and non-Yadav OBCs — he has maintained a durable coalition of trust.

RJD wins votes, loses Bihar polls

The BJP stands at 20.40 per cent, while the JD(U) has 18.83 per cent.

The RJD entered the 2025 race relying on its traditional Muslim-Yadav (MY) base, which forms roughly 30 per cent of Bihar's electorate. Tejashwi struggled to win over Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs), Dalits, and aspirational youth, who over the past decade have steadily shifted toward the JD(U)-BJP combine. The MY formula, crafted by Lalu Prasad Yadav in 1990 after the Bhagalpur riots, once powered the party's uninterrupted rule until 2005. But in 2025, Tejashwi failed to expand beyond this core.

The much-publicised 2023 caste survey, pitched by the RJD as a milestone for backward caste empowerment, failed to generate broader traction, with critics dismissing it as a political tool rather than a transformative step.

Tejashwi's failure to treat allies — the Congress, Left parties, and smaller partners — as equals led to major strategic errors and weakened coalition cohesion. Seat-sharing tensions and his RJD-centric approach caused internal friction and poor vote transfers. He branded the alliance manifesto as Tejashwi's Pledge and sidelined allies in campaign material, where Rahul Gandhi's photos appeared notably smaller.

His campaign leaned heavily on big populist promises — government jobs for every household, expanded pensions, and a review of the liquor ban — but lacked credible implementation plans. The absence of a clear blueprint for funding and executing the job for every household pledge fueled voter distrust.

Tejashwi's attempt to balance Lalu Prasad Yadav's complex legacy produced a muddled strategy. While he embraced Lalu's social justice plank, he simultaneously distanced himself from the *jungle raj* image by reducing Lalu's presence on posters — a contradiction the NDA capitalised on. Despite efforts to recast the RJD as a governance- and welfare-focused party, the shadow of the 1990-2005 period - widely labelled *jungle raj* — remained a major deterrent. The NDA, especially the JD(U), reinforced this contrast by noting that elections today see minimal violence compared to earlier decades, citing that in the 1985, 1990, and 1995 polls, dozens were killed and repolling was ordered in hundreds of booths. Nitish Kumar's reputation for stability and improved law and order further overshadowed Tejashwi's promises.

This election marks the RJD's second-worst performance in Bihar. In the 2005 Assembly elections — when Nitish Kumar swept to power with a thumping NDA victory — the RJD won 55 seats. At the time, Rabri Devi was Chief Minister and the party was battling deep anti-incumbency. Nitish Kumar, in alliance with the BJP, ended the RJD's long rule. The party's worst performance came in 2010, when it secured just 22 seats.

CM Yogi congratulates voters, NDA workers for win in Bihar

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday congratulated the voters, workers and office bearers of the NDA for their resounding victory in the Bihar Assembly elections.

NDA's cash pitch to women swung Bihar polls: VIP chief

Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) founder Mukesh Sahani on Friday attributed his party's rout in the Bihar Assembly polls to the NDA's aggressive cash outreach to women voters, as the INDIA bloc ally failed to take a lead in any of the 12 seats it contested. Projected as the alliance's deputy chief ministerial face, Sahani insisted that the verdict was the "people's mandate", not a reflection of organisational slack.

People want development, says Haryana Minister Anil Vij

As the BJP-led NDA inched closer to a landslide victory in Bihar, Haryana Minister Anil Vij on Friday said the big message from the election is that "people want development".

Congress will deliberate on Bihar results: Hooda

After the Congress' worst-ever drubbing in the Bihar polls, former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda Friday said that the election results in the state were not "in accordance with the public support" the 'Mahagathbandhan' had anticipated."The alliance did not expect such an outcome," he further said. "Therefore, the Congress party will carefully analyse the reasons behind the Bihar defeat and conduct a thorough review," he said.

BJP credits historic Bihar win to PM's development agenda

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Terming the NDS's victory in the Bihar Assembly polls as 'historic,' the BJP on Friday said people have once again expressed their trust in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "development-focussed" politics.

The BJP-led NDA has impressive leads in more than 180 of the state's 243 assembly seats, with trends indicating that the saffron party was on track to post its biggest tally with an excellent strike rate.

Senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad said people have voted for development and good governance, rising above caste and community. "This vote is of hope and trust. People have shown faith in Prime Minister Modi's leadership and his guarantee for development (of Bihar)," the former Union minister told reporters here.

BJP supporters celebrating as the NDA alliance leads during the counting of votes of the Bihar Assembly elections in Patna PTI

Prasad said the people of Bihar have seen "Lalu Prasad's jungle raj" during the RJD rule and the change that took place in the state during the NDA's tenure.

People of Bihar have seen the NDA's good governance and the measures taken for their welfare, including for women, he said while hailing the poll results as "historic".

"They also remember Lalu's jungle raj," the BJP MP from Bihar's Patna Sahib Lok Sabha constituency said.

"People have shown faith in Modiji, BJP and NDA...I am proud of the fact that our Bihar is today ready to march on a new path of development," Prasad said.

Bihar will now move faster on the path of development, he added.

In a social media post in Hindi, BJP MP and chief spokesperson Anil Baluni said, "NDA heading towards a landslide victory in Bihar."

Baluni also posted a video footage of Prime Minister Modi's poll campaigns in Bihar where he had asserted that the NDA would register its biggest-ever poll victory in the state.

No party big or small in NDA: Dilip Jaiswal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Patna

Bihar BJP president Dilip Jaiswal on Friday said that "no party is big or small in the NDA" as the alliance headed for a massive victory, with the saffron party poised to outperform ally JD(U) for the second consecutive assembly election. The NDA was heading to sweep the Bihar polls with its constituents leading in 206 of the 243 assembly constituencies in the state.

Jaiswal said the verdict reflected the people's overwhelming endorsement of the development model under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the chief minister.

"The people liked the development brought by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. They have given us an enormous victory, an unprecedented success. For this, we bow our heads before them," he told reporters amid a swirl of congratulatory handshakes and celebratory drumming outside the BJP office.

Asked whether the BJP's stellar performance, leading in 95 of the 101 seats it contested, and comfortably ahead of the JD(U)'s 84, would upset the internal balance of the alliance, Jaiswal said, "No party is big or small in the NDA."

"Please don't get into that," he repeated, even as the party "pulling ahead again", just as it did in the 2020 assembly polls. On questions about women voters' support, he remained measured in his reply. "The people have given us a huge mandate. We must accept it with humility and bow before them. That is all that matters right now," he said. The trends underscored a broader political realignment: the RJD's swagger from being the single-largest party in 2020 evaporated, the Congress struggled with just a handful of leads, and the Mahagathbandhan (the opposition INDIA bloc in local parlance) appeared adrift.

Within the NDA, JD(U)'s strong performance, nearly doubling its 2020 tally, was attributed by party workers to the seamless blend of the "Modi guarantee" and Nitish Kumar's "good governance - Sushashan imprint". Still, the BJP's projected dominance for a second straight assembly cycle is expected to revive quiet demands within sections of the party for a "BJP chief minister".

The PM and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, however, have so far been ambivalent on the issue, insisting that the NDA was "led by Nitish Kumar in Bihar", a strategy that may have been adopted in view of the fact that the BJP, which does not have a majority in Lok Sabha, and is dependent on allies like JD (U), and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's TDP for survival in power.

Firecrackers at NDA offices, silence in RJD

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Patna

As the Bihar Assembly results swept in on Friday, Patna's Veerchand Patel Marg, the city's political artery, split into two starkly different worlds.

At one end, the BJP and JD (U) offices throbbed like festival outposts, alive with drums, firecrackers and the smell of fresh laddoos. At the other, the RJD headquarters sat in a tightening hush, its corridors marked by long faces, hesitant murmurs and a disbelief that deepened with every fresh tick of the EC's screen.

As the NDA headed for a resounding victory, the BJP headquarters had already burst into a full-blown carnival. A tide of workers pushed past the iron gates, many cycling in from the old city, and some tumbling out of auto-rickshaws stuffed with party flags that fluttered like festival buntings.

The party office's courtyard changed colours with every firecracker, orange from the saffron smoke, grey from the debris, and red from the gulal smeared on jubilant faces.

Workers wearing Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar masks held their position at the entrance, breaking into impromptu jigs each time the BJP tally flickered upward on the large LED screen fixed above the porch. "*Modi ka Parivar*!" they roared in unison, waving miniature cut-outs of the PM.

JD(U) supporters celebrating as the NDA alliance leads during the counting of votes of the Bihar Assembly elections in Patna PTI

Close by, women workers in saffron saris punched the air with scarves, chanting, "*Bharat Mata ki Jai!*", "*Narendra Modi zindabad!*", "*Nitish Kumar zindabad!*" The drumbeats were relentless, threatening to drown out even the fireworks.

"With one-sided leads, the NDA appears invincible! The public has rejected the politics of lies, loot and illusion," shouted a woman worker from Purnea, raising her voice above the crescendo.

A young man, perched precariously on a guardrail, added: "Bihar is once again with the NDA, this is the verdict against the *Thugbandhan!*"

Inside, senior leaders exchanged restrained smiles, cautious, but widening steadily as the BJP shot past the 90-seat mark of the 101 it contested. Workers distributed laddoos, declaring the party "on course for its biggest-ever assembly tally in Bihar, burying the ghost" of its Lok Sabha dip last year.

A few hundred metres away, the JD(U) office was exploding in its own shade of euphoria — green.

As the EC trends nudged the party to an 82-seat lead, the compound erupted with rolling dhols, green gulal clouds and crackers.

NOTA's share up from 2020

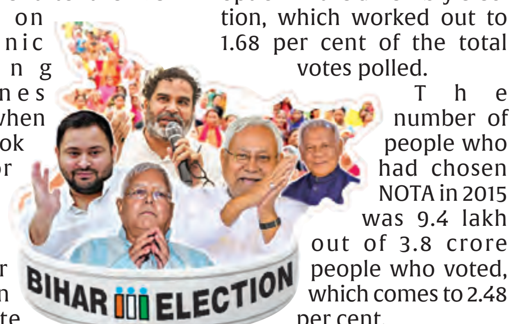
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Election Commission of India's (ECI) data shows that the share of None of the Above (NOTA) option went up marginally this time in the Bihar assembly polls as compared to the last elections but is still much lower than 2015.

After two-phased election held on November 6 and 11, votes are being counted on Friday. The NDA was set to sweep the Bihar Assembly polls, surging ahead in close to 200 out of the total 243 seats, with the BJP emerging as the single largest party with nearly 95 per cent strike rate.

The Mahagathbandhan, which includes the RJD, the Congress and three Left parties, was struggling to cross the 35-seat mark.

According to the latest figures, 1.81 per cent or 6,65,870 of the total votes polled went to the NOTA option on electronic voting machines (EVMs) when voting took place for the 243-member House.



Bihar has an electorate of over 7.45 crore. With 66.91 per cent voter turnout, it was the highest since the first Bihar elections in 1951. As many as 3.51 electors turned up at polling stations to cast their vote. Bihar recorded the highest female voter turnout in its history

In 2020, about 7,06,252 people chose the NOTA option in the assembly election, which worked out to 1.68 per cent of the total votes polled.

The number of people who had chosen NOTA in 2015 was 9.4 lakh out of 3.8 crore people who voted, which comes to 2.48 per cent.

The NOTA option had recorded its lowest percentage share in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Introduced in 2013, the NOTA option on EVMs has its own symbol — a ballot paper with a black cross across it.

From resurgence to renaissance: Bihar's march toward a new era

DR SANJAY MAYUKH

The people of Bihar have spoken with clarity and conviction. This mandate is not merely an electoral victory; it is a reaffirmation of Bihar's collective faith in the path of development, stability, and good governance.

As we step into a new term, the responsibility ahead is immense, but so is our determination to accelerate the journey of progress that has transformed millions of lives over the past decades.

Under the visionary guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the steady and experienced leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Bihar has been on a remarkable path of transformation. This mandate is a reaffirmation that the people want this journey to continue with greater momentum.

Over the past decade, Bihar has undergone an extraordinary shift in its development trajectory. What was once a state struggling for basic roads, healthcare access, electricity, and administrative stability is today a state that is building expressways, attracting industries, empowering women, strengthening agriculture, and expanding welfare delivery with remarkable speed. None of this happened overnight. It is the result of consistent effort, collaborative governance between the Centre and the State, and a clear commitment that the fruits of development must reach every home, every village, and every citizen. Infrastructure has been the backbone of Bihar's resurgence. The expansion of national highways and state roads has fundamentally changed the pace of life and commerce in the state.

Through major projects like the AIIMS-Digha elevated road, the Patna-Buxar highway, the Patna Gaya route, and the fast-progressing Ganga bridge projects including the monumental Kacchi Dargah Bidupur bridge Bihar's connectivity has been reshaped. Roads that once took hours to traverse can now be covered in minutes. Markets have become more accessible, schools and hospitals easier to reach, and transport of goods more efficient. Whether it is the Muzaffarpur-Darbhanga corridor, Sitamarhi link roads, or other regional connectors, Bihar's road network has become a symbol of its new aspirations.

Railways have witnessed a similar transformation. Modern trains such as Vande Bharat Express have begun operating in Bihar, bringing faster and more comfortable travel to the people.

Station redevelopment in Patna, Rajendra Nagar, Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, and Begusarai reflects the state's growing infrastructure ambitions. Electrification and doubling of tracks have improved safety and efficiency, benefiting both passengers and industries dependent on freight movement. Under Prime Minister Modi's national vision for rail modernisation, Bihar has been an important beneficiary.Healthcare in Bihar has expanded rapidly.

AIIMS Patna now serves as a major centre of advanced treatment, and new medical colleges in Purnea, Madhepura, Bettiah, Nalanda, Vaishali, and Chhapra are strengthening both medical education and district-level services. Ayushman Bharat has provided lakhs of families with crucial financial protection, while Health and Wellness Centres have brought primary care closer to rural homes. Under the combined leadership of the Centre and State, healthcare has moved from scarcity to steady, structured growth.

Agriculture too has seen major transformation. The Kosi-Mechi Link Project and over ₹11,000 crore in central assistance have strengthened irrigation and flood management across vulnerable regions. Modernisation of the Sone canal, soil testing, mechanisation, agricultural credit, and PM-KISAN have significantly improved farmers' financial stability. Guided by the vision of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Bihar's agricultural sector has become more resilient, productive, and future-ready, with targeted policies bringing real change to rural lives.

Social welfare programmes have transformed lives across Bihar. Under PM Awas Yojana, lakhs of families now have permanent homes an outcome of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's unwavering commitment to ensuring dignity and security for every household. Ujjwala Yojana has provided clean cooking fuel to lakhs of women, improving their health and easing daily hardship.

The Jal Jeevan Mission has brought reliable tap water to rural homes that once depended on distant or uncertain sources, reflecting the Prime Minister's focus on essential services for all. Swachh Bharat has strengthened sanitation infrastructure and awareness, driving a major shift in rural hygiene practices and advancing the nationwide cleanliness movement inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Bihar's industrial landscape is gaining new momentum. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, new industrial parks in Gaya, Purnea, Motihari, and Sitamarhi are drawing investment in food processing, agro-industries, textiles, and small manufacturing, giving a decisive push to regional growth.

MSMEs, strengthened by Mudra loans and the Credit Guarantee Trust, have become major engines of employment and entrepreneurship across the state.

> OVER THE PAST DECADE, BIHAR HAS UNDERGONE AN EXTRAORDINARY SHIFT IN ITS DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORY

Youth skill development centres, upgraded ITIs, and vocational institutes are preparing young people for modern trades from logistics and hospitality to IT and digital services reflecting the Prime Minister's unwavering focus on skill enhancement and future-ready employment.

Education has expanded significantly, with new universities, engineering colleges, and agricultural institutions, alongside the implementation of the National Education Policy, opening wider opportunities for students. Digital India, driven by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has bridged the urban-rural divide by bringing broadband connectivity, e-governance, and digital financial services to every corner of Bihar.

Atmanirbhar Bharat has provided a powerful national framework for Bihar's aspirations. Under this vision of self-reliance articulated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the State has embraced local production, skill development, agricultural mechanisation, and empowerment of small and micro enterprises. The emphasis on building domestic capacity, strengthening supply chains, promoting rural industries, and encouraging innovation has fuelled a new sense of purpose among Bihar's youth and entrepreneurs.

Atmanirbhar Bharat is not merely a slogan, it has become a road map through which Bihar is positioning itself for sustained economic independence and future-ready growth.

Self-employment and entrepreneurship have emerged as engines of transformation in Bihar. Thousands of youth are now turning to self-employment not out of compulsion, but out of ambition whether through food processing units, small manufacturing setups, digital service centres, agri-based enterprises, or rural startups. Schemes such as Mudra Yojana, PM SVANidhi, Stand-Up India, and access to collateral-free credit have helped young entrepreneurs overcome traditional financial barriers.

Simultaneously, skill development centres, upgraded ITIs, and digital training hubs are equipping youth with capabilities for modern trades. This surge in self-employment reflects a deeper economic awakening in which Bihar's youth are becoming job creators, innovators, and contributors to local economies.

Urban development, too, has progressed. Under the Smart Cities Mission, cities like Patna, Bhagalpur, and Muzaffarpur have seen improvements in traffic systems, surveillance, solid waste management, public service integration, and infrastructure. AMRUT projects have strengthened water supply, sewerage networks, urban transport, and green spaces. These improvements have contributed to more organised and sustainable urban life.

Energy infrastructure has expanded rapidly. Bihar today has almost universal household electrification, supported by new substations, upgraded transmission lines, and reduced outages. The extension of gas pipelines under the Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga Yojana has introduced cleaner energy for households and industries.

It is in the context of this large-scale progress that the contrast with the past becomes unmistakable. Bihar has moved far away from the era once described as "jungle raj", a period associated with fear, administrative paralysis, and a breakdown of law and order.

The transformation from that uncertainty to today's environment of stability, infrastructure expansion, and welfare delivery is a testament to what focused governance can achieve. The people's mandate has made it clear that Bihar must never lose the progress it has gained, and must never return to an atmosphere where insecurity overshadows opportunity.

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's leadership, Bihar has seen what cooperative federalism and purposeful governance can accomplish together. Today, Bihar stands on a stronger foundation with better roads, robust welfare programmes, improved healthcare, expanding educational institutions, and systems built on transparency and efficiency.

With this new mandate, the people have expressed their desire for development to move even faster. They want more industries, more jobs, stronger agricultural support, better healthcare access, modern schools, advanced digital infrastructure, and continued focus on women, youth, and the most vulnerable.

They want Bihar to align itself with India's goals for 2047 to become a state that contributes confidently and meaningfully to the national journey towards becoming a developed nation.

This victory is a reminder of responsibility more than celebration. It is an assurance that the people believe in a development-first model of governance. It is a call to deepen our commitment, accelerate our work, and ensure that the benefits of growth reach every corner of the State.

Bihar today moves forward with steady leadership, visionary national guidance, and the collective hope of millions. With humility and determination, we remain committed to building a Bihar that is stronger, more prosperous, and more confident than ever before.

BJP National Media Co-Head, National Spokesperson and Chief Whip of the BJP in the Bihar Legislative Council

The Pioneer
NEW DELHI | SATURDAY | NOVEMBER 15, 2025

States Focus

PM TO LAUNCH DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN GUJARAT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Gujarat on Saturday to mark Janjatiya Gaurav Divas and participate in the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Bhagwan Birsa Munda. He will also inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for development projects worth over ₹9,700 crore in Narmada district, with a strong focus on tribal welfare, infrastructure, health, education and heritage, the Prime Minister's office said in a statement. The Prime Minister will also review the progress on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project.

BIHAR POLL OUTCOME EXTREMELY UNNATURAL: CPI(ML) LIBERATION

CPI(ML) Liberation general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya on Friday termed the outcome of the Bihar Assembly polls "extremely unnatural", and said the party would undertake a thorough analysis of the results.

In a statement issued by Bhattacharya, whose party could win only two of the 20 seats it contested, said, "The outcome of the assembly elections. Has the scars of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls all over it". "The party will undertake a thorough analysis of the outcome and draw necessary lessons," he said.

Bihar polls: Cracks appear in Congress-SP alliance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Lucknow/Patna

With Congress being blamed squarely for routing of the RJD in its bastion in Bihar, doubts are being raised about the prospect of another major INDIA bloc partner the Samajwadi Party (SP) to continue with the Congress as alliance in Uttar Pradesh when the State goes to polls in 2027.

Akhilesh Yadav-led SP, in partnership with the Congress, had exhibited a stupendous performance by claiming victory on 37 of the 80 Lok Sabha seats, which was instrumental in spoiling the BJP's arithmetic in the 2024 General Elections.

While Congress called for an introspection on its massive loss despite of an aggressive campaign together with RJD's Tejashwi Yadav as the Mahagathbandhan Chief Ministerial candidate, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav on Friday alleged that the "game" carried out through the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar will no longer be possible in other States.

Posturing for a bold move, Yadav said that the "game" carried out through SIR in Bihar has now been exposed, and that such "election conspiracies" will not be possible in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh or anywhere else. "Like CCTV, our 'PPTV,' or 'PDA (Backwards, Dalit, Minority) Prahari (watchdog)' will remain vigilant and thwart the BJP's plans," he said.

The months-long SIR in Bihar concluded with the Election Commission (EC) publishing the final voters' list on September 30. The exercise drew sharp protests from the opposition, which accused the poll panel of working at the behest of the ruling BJP, a charge it flatly rejected. Yadav further said the BJP is "not a party, but a fraud".

Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav

As the Congress and the Mahagathbandhan suffered a humiliating defeat in the Bihar elections, calls for introspection and course correction started emerging from the opposition bloc, with some criticising the concentration of power in a few hands.

Congress stalwart late Ahmed Patel's daughter Mumtaz Patel alleged that the party's failures are a result of giving power in the hands of leaders who are totally disconnected from the ground reality. In a social media post, she said it is time to look within and accept the reality. She asked how long the loyal party workers have to wait to witness success.

Another partner of the INDIA bloc, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Priyanka Chaturvedi, who was formerly with the Congress, urged opposition leaders to speak to the women of the country. "Dear Opposition Leaders. Unsolicited advise. Speak to the women of the country. An alternative cannot be without them. Thank you," she said in a social media post.

Congress leader and Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor said the party would examine the results, do some serious introspection, and look into the organisational mistakes that led to such a verdict.

He also said he was not invited to campaign in the Bihar election, while noting that the Congress would examine the reasons for its defeat. "Remember, we were not the senior partner in the alliance, and the RJD also has to look carefully at its own performance," he told reporters.

According to him, in a mandate like Bihar's, it is important to examine the totality of the party's performance. He noted that elections are due to a number of factors. Another Congress leader and former state chief Akhilesh Prasad Singh said, "We will introspect where Congress lagged."

J&K bypolls: National Conference suffers twin defeats in Budgam, Nagrota

MOHIT KANDHARI
Jammu

In a stunning reversal of fortunes just one year after the National Conference (NC) dominated the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections, the ruling party on Friday lost its longstanding stronghold of Budgam to the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Nagrota to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the bypolls on Friday.

In Budgam (central Kashmir), PDP candidate Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi clinched victory with 21,534 votes, defeating NC's Aga Syed Mehmood (17,382 votes) by a margin of 4,152 votes. An independent candidate, Jibran Dar, disrupted JKNC calculations by siphoning off 7,152 votes, enough to dent Mehmood's tally and hand PDP the edge in a three-way split.

BJP's Syed Mohsin languished in sixth place with a paltry 2,619 votes, underscoring the party's waning influence in the Kashmir Valley despite its dominance in Jammu.

Since 1977, the National Conference has won the seat in every contested election.

The bypoll in the constituency was necessitated after Chief Minister Omar Abdullah vacated the seat following his election from the family bastion of Ganderbal as well in last year's assembly polls. The NC's high-stakes campaign in Budgam, led by the Chief Minister himself, ministers, and top leaders, failed to sway voters, underscoring fissures within the party and its alliances.

From the Nagrota Assembly constituency, Devyani Rana, daughter of deceased BJP leader Devender Singh Rana, scripted a historic victory by defeating her nearest rival, Harsh Dev Singh, by a huge margin of over 24,000 votes. National Conference candidate Shamima Begum stood third in the final tally.

The seat fell vacant after the death of her father, Devender Singh Rana, a prominent BJP leader in Jammu & Kashmir. Voters entrusted Devyani to carry forward her father's vision for the constituency. Devyani's decisive win from Nagrota has increased women's share in the legislature to 4.44 per cent.

The other elected women members of the current assembly are National Conference (NC) leader Sakina Masood Ittoo, who is also a Cabinet minister in the Omar Abdullah Government, Shamima Firdous (NC), and Shagun Parihar (BJP).

The results clearly signal deepening anti-incumbency against Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's Government and a resurgence for regional rivals.

In Budgam, estranged National Conference MP from Srinagar, Aga Ruhulla, also contributed to the party's defeat. He purportedly stayed away from campaigning due to differences with Omar Abdullah. On the other hand, the grand victory of a PDP candidate from Budgam is also seen as a 'historic comeback' by PDP supporters.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday said NC leader Aga Ruhullah "killed himself politically" by withdrawing from the Budgam bypoll campaign, adding that his decision was meant as a message to the party but ended up hurting him more than anyone else. Speaking to reporters, Omar used the English phrase "you cut your nose to spite your face" to describe Ruhullah's move.

"Ruhullah killed himself to give me a message," he said. "But remember, the person who has won from there will never let Ruhullah rise again."

He said Ruhullah's political future in Budgam will now depend entirely on whether he can rebuild his space.

"Only Ruhullah can decide if he will be able to rise again in Budgam or not," he added. "Whatever happened, happened." Omar admitted that NC knew the contest would be difficult, even before the campaign began.

"In Budgam, people do not vote only based on work," he said. "There is a large section that does not vote on issues at all. Many voters make their choice quietly, behind the curtain. So I already knew it wouldn't be easy for us."

Rift between Ajit Pawar, State NCP chief

TN RAGHUNATHA
Mumbai

Ahead of the local body polls in Maharashtra, a major rift has developed between the camps of the founder-president of NCP (AP) and deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar and State NCP President Sunil Tatkare. In the newly released 2025 star campaigners' list for the local body polls is anything to go by, there are two power centres in the NCP (AP) – one led by Ajit Pawar and another headed by Sunil Tatkare.

The rift over the star campaigners' list has cropped up at a crucial time when Ajit Pawar finding it difficult to handle his personal crisis arising out of his son Parth Pawar's alleged involvement in the Pune land scam.

Tatkare released the list of NCP's star campaigners on Thursday. Among others, the names of the party's founder-president Ajit Pawar, national working president Praful Patel, Sunil Tatkare, Medical Education Minister Hasan Mushrif, former minister Dhananjay Munde, Women & Child Development Minister Aditi Tatkare, senior leader Sayaji Shinde, Minorities Commission Chairman Mushtaq Antulay and former MP Sameer Bhujbal figure in the NCP's star campaigners' list.

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar

Significantly enough, the campaigners' list includes four members from Tatkare's own family - he himself, his daughter and Women and Child Development Minister Aditi Tatkare, son Aniket Tatkare, nephew Sanjay Tatkare and four leaders from his home district, Raigad, including his close associate Mushtaq Antulay.

However, the names of important part leaders like veteran OBC leader and Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Minster and veteran OBC leader Chhagan Bhujbal, Rajya Sabha MP and Pawar's wife Sunetra Pawar, MP Nitin Patil, Dilip Walse Patil, National General Secretary Subodh Mohita, State Vice President Saleem Sarang, and Nationalist Students Congress National President Chaitanya (Sunny) Mankar.

Informed party sources said that the omissions in the star campaigners' list was a clear indicator of the ongoing internal power struggle within the NCP. Tatkare is said to be getting directions from former Union Minister and party's national working Praful Patel.

Surprisingly, senior Muslim leader and former minister Nawab Malik has been ignored despite his seniority and stature within the party.

Unlike the 2024 list of NCP's star campaigners which bore the stamp of Ajit Pawar's influence, the 2025 list has been prepared under the direction of Tatkare.

"Tatkare has been steadily consolidating his control over the party's organisational machinery. The new list is an attempt to reduce the influence of Ajit Pawar in the party set-up," a senior state party leader said.

This move appears to be a calibrated step to reduce Ajit Pawar's immediate influence," a senior leader commented.

The elections to 246 municipal councils and 42 nagar panchayats will be held on December 2. The counting of votes will be held on December 3.

Bengal will remain pipe dream for the BJP: TMC

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
Kolkata

The Trinamool Congress has asserted that the Bihar election results will have no effect on Bengal, as it is Chief Minister "Mamata Banerjee who matters in Banga." The TMC's remarks came after the State BJP leaders gave a call for a "final putsch" to throw out Banerjee from power.

"Out of Anga (Bihar), Banga (Bengal) and Kalinga (Odisha), two have fallen. Now it is the turn of Banga. The BJP workers are called upon to prepare for the final battle in 2026 when the corrupt Mamata Banerjee government will be pulled down from power," Bengal Opposition Leader Suvendu Adhikari said.

Another senior saffron leader said, "Abki bari Didi hari (now it is the turn of Mamata Banerjee)" even as the BJP workers descended on the streets celebrating and distributing sweets all over Kolkata, Howrah and several parts of Bengal.

The TMC was prompt to react, saying, "This time also the BJP will face a humiliating defeat in Bengal like they did in 2021 when they targeted 200 out of 294 seats but ended up winning 77 seats only."

TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh

TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh claimed in a post on X that the TMC would return to power for the fourth time with over 250 seats, with an additional jibe at the Congress, saying the Bihar elections once again showed that the tri-colour outfit was not fit to lead the opposition.

"Bihar has its own equation, which has no connection with Bengal. Once again, I loudly iterate that Bihar will not affect Bengal. Whereas the factors are different in Bengal, the factors are only development, unity, harmony, rights, and self-respect. Mamata Banerjee will once again return to power with 250 seats and become the Chief Minister again," Ghosh said, advising the Congress once again to "introspect why some parties are repeatedly failing to give leadership."

He said, "People's love cannot be won by hurting their rights and self-respect. The way Bengal and Bengalis have been insulted and the way their self-respect has been hurt, they will never vote for the BJP. In Bengal, love only matters, and the people's love is with Mamata Banerjee, whether it is winter, summer, or monsoon.

"Saying that the TMC would keenly watch the direction the BJP-JD(U) relationship would go, Ghosh said that "all the tricks being applied by the BJP via Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in Bengal would go in vain. SIR and other tricks based on which the BJP is exuding such confidence will have little or no impact in Bengal. They will use agencies and other modes to browbeat us, but we will continue to fight them and defeat them here."

Another senior leader and MP said, "In Bihar they could not catch the BJP's tricks and track SIR and thwart its manipulation as they were not in power, and those who were in power played the game. But in Bengal, the khela (game) will be played by none other than the TMC and Mamata Banerjee."

CM Yadav's outreach emerges as key factor in Bihar polls

GIRISH SHARMA
Bhopal

The trends from Bihar's vote count have thrown the spotlight on the NDA's calibrated, data-led campaign architecture—and at the centre of this strategy is Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav.

His targeted outreach across Bihar's competitive constituencies is emerging as one of the most consequential factors in the alliance's strong early performance. NDA-backed candidates are leading in 21 of the 25 seats where Yadav campaigned, a statistic that party strategists view as evidence of his growing electoral traction beyond Madhya Pradesh.

Yadav's campaign in Bihar was designed as a tactical intervention rather than a symbolic visit. The brief was clear: energise voter groups that had remained politically dormant, create visible momentum in constituencies with narrow margins, and tighten booth-level mobilisation using his reputation for organisational discipline. His rallies were built around sharp, governance-focused messaging—centred on economic stability, welfare delivery and alignment with national priorities—which resonated strongly with voters looking for predictable, execution-driven politics.

According to party insiders, what strengthened Yadav's impact was his communication style. While Bihar politics often leans towards emotive rhetoric, Yadav brought a data-backed, administrative approach, emphasising measurable outcomes and performance indicators. This contrast, strategists say, allowed the NDA to broaden its appeal among undecided voters who were fatigued by political theatrics and wanted a more grounded narrative.

The NDA's Bihar playbook this cycle reflects a corporate-style deployment model that prioritises operational efficiency. High-performing leaders are assigned to low-traction geographies to unlock incremental vote share, energise cadres, and stabilise campaign messaging. Yadav's assignment suggests the alliance's confidence in his growing brand equity—an asset the party is now deploying strategically across state borders.

If the current leads consolidate into actual wins, it would offer empirical validation for the NDA's cross-state leadership mobility strategy. It would also strengthen the case for expanding the roles of regional chief ministers in national campaigns—particularly those with a reputation for administrative precision and on-ground delivery.

For the opposition, Yadav's successful intervention exposes a strategic weakness: the absence of a comparable leadership pipeline capable of driving momentum in unfamiliar terrain. Bihar's early trends indicate that voters responded to consistency and credibility—two areas where the NDA's messaging, aided by Yadav's presence, held a clear advantage.

The broader political takeaway is straightforward. Bihar's electorate rewarded a campaign anchored in discipline, governance outcomes and structural clarity. As the NDA prepares for upcoming electoral cycles, the momentum generated in Bihar will likely reinforce the alliance's reliance on cross-state campaigners like Mohan Yadav. For the opposition, the runway for course correction is getting shorter.

NDA's win emphatic vote of confidence in PM's leadership, says Shrikant Shinde

TN RAGHUNATHA
Mumbai

Averring that the people of Bihar had chosen *Mangal-raj* over *Jungle-raj*, the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena said that the NDA's spectacular electoral success was an emphatic vote of confidence in the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"The historic mandate in Bihar is an emphatic vote of confidence in the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji. The people of Bihar have delivered a clear and unmistakable message — they have rejected the forces of corruption, chaos and *jungle raj* and chosen the path of *Mangal Raj*, development and dignity," Kalyan MP and Shiv Sena Parliamentary Party leader Dr Shrikant Shinde said.

Dr Shinde, who is the son of the deputy chief minister Eknath Shinde, said, "The Congress slipping to single digits exposes a simple truth that (Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha) Rahul Gandhi commands zero political credibility in one of India's most politically-aware states. Their caste card, their communal card, their fabricated narratives — everything has collapsed."

"Bihar's poor, backward communities, women, youth, farmers and workers have overwhelmingly backed the NDA. This mandate is a ringing endorsement of Nitish Kumar's clean governance, stability and people-first approach. Despite relentless attacks from the so-called opposition, the people have chosen security, trust and progress over opportunism and empty promises," the Sena's Parliamentary Party leader said.

"The powerful pro-incumbency wave in Bihar demolishes the opposition's propaganda that India wants 'change'. Yes — India wants change, but a change from disorder to stability, from corruption to accountability, from jungle raj to good governance. And only the NDA represents that change," Dr Shinde said.

Slamming Rahul for "stooping" to make the SIR issue the centre of the Congress' campaign, Dr Shinde charged that the leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha had attempted to undermine the credibility of the Election Commission of India (ECI) — an institution respected across the world.

"The people of Bihar have rejected this reckless and irresponsible politics outright. They have chosen democracy over disruption," the Shiv Sena leader said.

The Pioneer
NEW DELHI | SATURDAY | NOVEMBER 15, 2025

CJI to deal with claim of bias at Chennai NCLAT

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The sensational claim that a senior High Court judge approached a judicial member of NCLAT, Chennai for an order favouring a company came under the scanner of the Supreme Court on Friday which said that the matter will be dealt with by the Chief Justice of India on the administrative side. Advocate Prashant Bhushan claimed before the top court that according to his information, "the message came from the Chief Justice of a High Court" to the judicial member of the company's appellate tribunal.

Justice Sharad Kumar Sharma

Taking note of the sensational claim, a bench comprising Chief Justice of India-designate Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi transferred the case, in which the said judicial member has recused itself from hearing, from the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) bench at Chennai to the NCLAT, Principal Bench at New Delhi.

"The larger issue raised in the matter is of vital importance and will be dealt with by the Chief Justice of India on the administrative side," the bench told Bhushan, appearing for a private firm AS Metcorp Private Ltd, in whose matter the judicial member of the NCLAT, Chennai recused himself.

It requested the NCLAT Chairperson Justice Ashok Bhushan to hear the matter in a bench headed by him and adjudicate the dispute at the earliest.

The top court also directed the interim resolution professional (IRP) appointed by the National Company Law Tribunal at Hyderabad to proceed in the insolvency dispute. According to the bench, the said judicial member has recorded the incident in his order before recusing himself from hearing the matter, is enough for looking at the issue on the administrative side. "Consequently, we direct that the company appeal pending before NCLAT, Chennai be transferred alongwith all records to the Principal bench, NCLAT at New Delhi in the peculiar facts of the case. We request the President, NCLAT to list the company appeal before his bench and decide the same after notice to the contesting party at the earliest," the top court ordered. The Bench said that there can be no qualm that all other issues are of vital public importance and the competent authority must have examined the available material and taken necessary steps as may be required.

"In any case, all these issues can be effectively dealt with by the Chief Justice of India on the administrative side. We thus deem it appropriate to keep this writ petition as a representation bringing on record information for consideration by CJI. Let the law take its own course," the top court said.

Bhushan said that based on the material, it is evident that it is an offence under the Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA) and an appropriate course would be to lodge the case against the senior judicial officer who approached him. He submitted that according to his information, "the message came from the Chief Justice of a High Court".

Bhushan further said the judicial member of the NCLAT has kept the screenshot of the WhatsApp message and shown it to the party in the insolvency dispute, saying he was approached by one of the most revered members of the higher judiciary seeking an order favouring a particular party. The bench said it would not like to comment any further as it has ordered the matter to be placed before the Chief Justice of India, who will look into the issue on the administrative side. The petition, filed by AS Met Corp Private Ltd, arises from proceedings before the NCLAT Chennai relating to the insolvency of KLSR Infratech Ltd.

On August 13, 2025, during the hearing in the NCLAT, Justice Sharad Kumar Sharma created a sensation by stating in an open court that he had received messages from a senior member of the higher judiciary pressing him to rule in favour of a particular party. He also showed the messages on his phone to one of the counsels present and immediately recused himself.

According to the petitioner private firm, the approach was allegedly made to favour the other party. Justice Sharma recorded in the order, which was uploaded later the same day, that he was approached by "one of the most revered members of the higher judiciary" but did not mention on whose behalf the approach was made.

The writ petition before the top court sought registration of an FIR for offences under the PCA disclosed by the incident, including provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). It said the Supreme Court's earlier ruling had held that a criminal investigation into alleged judicial corruption cannot be substituted by any internal "inhouse" fact-finding. The private firm has also sought a court-monitored probe by an independent agency after preserving the electronic evidence, including video and audio of the August 13, proceedings, which the NCLAT registrar has refused to share, citing a lack of enabling rules.

Jharkhand HC pronounced 32 judgements in 61 pending cases: SC told

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Supreme Court was on Friday informed that the Jharkhand High Court has delivered 32 judgements out of the 61 cases, where verdicts were reserved for over six months.

The Jharkhand High Court had come under the top court's scanner for not pronouncing verdicts for years, particularly in criminal matters including death and life sentence cases.

A bench of justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi was told by senior advocate Ajit Sinha, appearing for the High Court, that the remaining judgements will be pronounced within a month's time and judges have been working on them.

"They have delivered 32 judgments till now and the remaining will be done in a month's time. The oral message of the court was placed before the judges of the High Court and they are working on giving verdicts in remaining cases," Sinha said. The bench told the counsel that the court will be taking a holistic view in the matter and posted it for hearing in January and tagged it with pending matters.

On August 8, the top court suggested the Jharkhand High Court judges to take leave for penning verdicts after observing there were dozens of cases in which judgments weren't pronounced.

It had asked the judges to take their sanctioned leaves and complete the pending work. Sinha had earlier informed the court that till January 31, there were 61 cases in which judgements were not pronounced after reserving the verdicts for over six months.

The top court had passed the order in a batch of pleas in which students of faraway tribal areas of Jharkhand complained of judgements not being pronounced since 2023 in cases on appointments of home guards. On May 16, the top court asked the High Court to file a status report of pending cases in which judgements were reserved on or before January 31 in both criminal and civil cases.


Jharkhand High Court

Students complained their case was last heard on April 6, 2023 but no verdict was pronounced.

According to the pleas, the aspirants of home guard positions have sought a direction to the High Court for pronouncement of the verdict in their cases. The petitioners moved the High Court after the Jharkhand Government cancelled the recruitment for over 1,000 posts of home guards advertised in 2017, despite their names having featured in the merit list. The High Court, after having heard the matter since 2021, reserved the pleas filed by over 70 aspirants for orders on April 6, 2023.

Similarly, on July 21, the top court was informed that the High Court has delivered verdict in cases of 10 convicts out of which six were on death row in a week, after they moved the Supreme Court complaining of delay in deciding their appeals against conviction despite the verdicts having been reserved years ago. Advocate Fauzia Shakil, appearing for the convicts had submitted that the High Court pronounced verdicts in a week's time after the top court on July 14 issued notice on their plea. On May 13, the top court, which was hearing the pleas of life convicts, observed that the High Court judges were taking breaks "unnecessarily" and called for their performance audits.

SC lambasts Punjab Govt over lack of infrastructure for judiciary

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

The Supreme Court (SC) on Friday lambasted the AAP led Government in Punjab for not creating requisite infrastructure for the judiciary and rather building houses for itself besides misusing central grants. A bench of justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi pulled up the State Government for failing to create even basic infrastructure despite repeated directions from the Punjab and Haryana High Court and pointed out that funds provided by the Centre meant for judiciary may have been utilised somewhere else by the State officials.

"If we order an inquiry, we will find out that they have already consumed the central grant for other purposes. They are building houses for themselves but cannot construct courts and create judicial infrastructure," Justice Kant observed.

The top court was hearing a plea of the Punjab Government challenging the orders of the Punjab and Haryana High Court for creating appropriate judicial infrastructure and transit accommodation for judicial officers in the newly-created Malerkotla district of the state. Punjab advocate general Maninderjit Singh Bedi submitted that the State has created posts and facilities for Malerkotla judges and required infrastructure is being created.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, who also appeared for the Punjab Government, submitted that the High Court's criticism of the State Government was unjustified and unwarranted.

He added that the issue before the High Court was limited to the establishment of a court at Malerkotla.


Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann

Justice Kant told Singhvi, "You don't know what is happening in the state of Punjab. I know the State very well. Even if the funds are sanctioned by the Centre, they don't even allocate a site. They have enough money to spend on so many other things." The top court also questioned the logic of the state Government behind creating new districts without first planning necessary infrastructure including courts.

"First of all why did they declare Malerkotla a revenue district. It was only for political appeasement. When they knew infrastructure was not created, they should not have done it. You say you require a house for SP, but you don't require a house for a sessions judge," Justice Kant said.

Justice Bagchi pointed out that the court infrastructure often depends on centrally sponsored schemes and that state contributions are either delayed or diverted.

He then suggested that a more systematic budgetary commitment may be needed and there should be some minimum allocation in State and central budgets for the judiciary.

"It's not even one percent of the GDP at present," Justice Bagchi remarked.

Sensing the mood of the court, Singhvi said that he would like to consult the state Government and sought permission of the court to withdraw the appeal and approach the High Court instead. "We will place a detailed status report with explanation before the High Court and seek suitable extension of time," he submitted.

The bench allowed the petition to be withdrawn with liberty to move the High Court and asked it to look into the issue of extension of time. The High Court while hearing a PIL had recorded that Malerkotla was declared as a revenue district in June 2021 and a separate sessions division was approved in August 2023, but the State had not created permanent courtrooms or residences for the district and sessions judge and other judges.

On August 22, it directed the state to issue fresh administrative and financial approval for two additional courtrooms in the existing complex and asked the High Court's building committee to examine whether the deputy commissioner's guest house and other buildings occupied by executive officers could be used for judges.

The High Court in September took a strong view and flagged repeated delays despite the building committee's resolution and directed that the guest house presently occupied by the deputy commissioner and another house occupied by the Senior Superintendent of Police be vacated and allotted to the district and sessions judge as residence and, if possible, as a courtroom space.

Aggrieved by the order, the Punjab Government challenged the order before the Supreme Court.

World Cup: SC rejects Kolkata civic body plea over advertisement tax


Eden Gardens stadium

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Supreme Court (SC) on Friday dismissed the Kolkata Municipal Corporation's plea challenging an order which quashed the demand notice claiming ₹51.18 lakhs from Cricket Association of Bengal on account of advertisement tax for the 1996 Cricket World Cup held at Eden Gardens.

The corporation had issued a demand notice on March 27, 1996, claiming ₹51,18,450 from the association on account of advertisement tax for the inaugural ceremony and a semifinal match of the 1996 World Cup held at the Eden Gardens.

The inaugural ceremony of the World Cup was organised by the association on February 11, 1996, while the semifinal match was held on March 13, 1996.

A plea filed by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation challenging an order of June this year by a division bench of the Calcutta High Court came up for hearing on Friday before a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta.

The High Court's division bench had dismissed an appeal filed by the corporation against an April 2015 order of its single judge. The division bench had said Eden Gardens stadium cannot be held to be a "public place". The single judge had allowed a plea filed by the Cricket Association of Bengal challenging the demand notice.

The top court dismissed the corporation's plea against the High Court's order.

In its order, the High Court's division bench had noted that the Cricket Association of Bengal enjoys a lease of the Eden Gardens in Kolkata and the owner of the property is the Ministry of Defence, Government of India. It had said that certain advertisements were put up both inside and outside the stadium during the 1996 Cricket World Cup. The corporation had issued a demand notice on account of advertisement tax for the two days of the World Cup by invoking a provision of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation Act, 1980, which deals with tax on advertisements.

The association had challenged the demand notice before the High Court contending that the concerned advertisements were displayed within the Eden Gardens stadium which was not a public place and the same were not visible to the public from a public street or a public place.

A single judge of the High Court had quashed the demand notice after which the corporation had moved the division bench.

Before the High Court's division bench, the counsel appearing for the municipal corporation had argued that when advertisements were deployed either inside or outside the Eden Gardens stadium, such advertisements were visible from a public place.

"In our opinion, as soon as conditions are imposed on members of the public for having access to a place, that place ceases to be a public place. A public place must be accessible to an indeterminate number of people without any hindrance or condition," the division bench had said.

It had said that the public does not have absolute or unrestricted right of access to Eden Gardens and just because the stadium can accommodate a huge number of people, that would not per se make it a public place.

The division bench of the High Court had refused to interfere with the single judge's order and dismissed the appeal filed by the corporation.

Order Order

Kerala HC refuses to entertain State's plea to defer SIR

The Kerala High Court (HC) on Friday refused to admit the plea filed by the State Government seeking deferment of the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls being undertaken by the Election Commission of India (ECI) Justice VG Arun said that judicial discipline requires the High Court to not entertain the plea since petitions concerning SIR in other States are already pending before the Supreme Court. The Judge said that the State may approach the Supreme Court, as matter is pending there.

"Judicial discipline and comity requires this court to not entertain this petition. Therefore this writ petition is closed leaving it open for the petitioner to move the Supreme Court or approach this court depending on the outcome of the petitions pending before the Supreme Court," the Court said. The Kerala Government filed the plea in light of the upcoming panchayat elections in the State.

According to the plea, the elections would require about 1,76,000 Government personnel apart from 68,000 security personnel. The conduct of SIR would require the services of an additional 25,668 personnel. The same officials would have to be deployed for duties in connection with SIR and panchayat elections and this would strain the human resources of the State, it was argued.

ED moves Kerala HC seeking case files in Sabarimala gold case


Sabarimala temple

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Kochi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday approached the Kerala High Court seeking documents related to two cases probed by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) in the Sabarimala gold theft incident, for initiating a probe under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

In its petition, the ED said it had received information indicating that the accused's modus operandi in the two cases probed by the SIT showed that valuable temple property was illicitly diverted and its proceeds converted for personal gain, thereby giving rise to proceeds of crime as defined under the PMLA.

The agency said that as the sole authority to investigate money laundering activities, it was duty-bound to initiate an inquiry under the PMLA to trace, identify, and attach the proceeds of crime arising from the alleged offences.

The ED stated that it had approached the Judicial First Class Magistrate Court in Ranni, Pathanamthitta, last month seeking certified copies of the FIRs and First Information Statements (FISs) in the two cases.

However, the Magistrate dismissed the request on October 17, citing the sensitive nature of the case and noting that the investigation was being monitored by the Kerala High Court.

The ED argued in its petition that the Magistrate had incorrectly held that an investigation by another agency was prohibited by the High Court. It said the High Court had earlier directed that the FIRs registered by the Crime Branch be handed over to the SIT.

"There is no prohibition whatsoever on another investigation agency probing offences under a special legislation.

The wrong interpretation of the order of the Division Bench is far-fetched and liable to be interfered with," the agency said.

The High Court will hear the ED's petition on Monday. Meanwhile, former Travancore Devaswom Board secretary S Jayashree on Friday moved the High Court seeking anticipatory bail in the case related to the loss of gold from the Dwarapalaka (guardian deity) idols.

She approached the HC after her anticipatory bail plea was dismissed by the Pathanamthitta District Principal Sessions Court.

In her petition, she expressed apprehension about her possible arrest, citing health issues, and denied any involvement in the case.

The High Court will consider her petition on Tuesday.

Editor's TAKE

Exit polls were right: NDA wins fair and square

NDA's thumping victory shows that elections in Bihar are won not with rhetoric alone, but with organisation and careful social-coalition management

The exit polls were right all along. Bihar has chosen to give another five years to the NDA with thumping majority. What may be debated is not the victory itself, but the margin of it. The National Democratic Alliance's emphatic win in the Bihar elections marks one of the most decisive mandates the state has witnessed in recent years. What makes this outcome remarkable is not merely the scale of the majority, but the clarity with which voters opted for continuity over change, organisation over loose alliances, and national issues over the local ones.

The opposition's inability to convert anti-incumbency into electoral advantage saw the smooth sailing for the NDA. Although dissatisfaction existed, it did not consolidate into a demand for change. Voters preferred stability and alignment of state politics with the central government . Moreover, Nitish Kumar, despite long years in power and multiple political shifts, remains a towering figure in the state's political landscape.

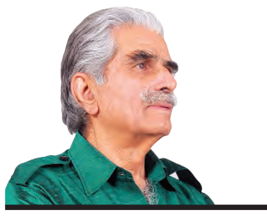
The NDA's campaign strategically positioned him as the anchor of stability and good governance, a tag he has earned over the years. While anti-incumbency was expected to weigh in favour of Mahagathbandhan, the NDA managed to turn the narrative towards experience, predictability and steady administration. This perception proved crucial tipping the balance in favour of the NDA. What truly powered the NDA, however, was its broadened social coalition. Beyond its traditional upper-caste and OBC support, the alliance made significant inroads among Economically backward castes (EBCs), Dalit communities and, critically, women voters. Women emerged as a silent yet decisive constituency whose turnout strongly favoured the NDA.

Equally important was the alliance's disciplined and highly coordinated election machinery. It ran a focused, message-driven campaign that highlighted development, welfare continuity and social stability. Booth-level workers, constituency-level organisers and well-networked local leaders ensured that the NDA's messaging travelled uniformly and effectively across the state.

In contrast, the Mahagathbandhan struggled to match this coherence. Despite generating enthusiasm in several pockets and fielding energetic leaders such as Tejashwi Yadav, the opposition failed to convert sentiment into structured mobilisation. Internal contradictions, an uneven ground presence and reliance on a narrow caste base weakened its effort. The dependence on the traditional Muslim–Yadav combination further limited its reach. Attempts to expand into EBCs and non-Yadav OBC groups did not significantly alter the electoral arithmetic. The underperformance of key partners – particularly the Congress – dragged down the coalition's overall tally. The entry of new players such as the Jan Suraaj Party further fragmented the anti-NDA vote, weakening the Mahagathbandhan in several constituencies without yielding compensatory gains.

Nepal: Will the elections be held on time?

The country is caught between competing demands for electoral reform, a restive youth movement seeking deep structural change, and a judiciary questioning the very legitimacy of the current government



ASHOK K MEHTA

The question on everyone's lips is whether the elections in Nepal, slated for 5 March 2026, can be held on time — or even at all. The alternatives being discussed include the reinstatement of the dissolved Parliament with a new election date and the reappointment of former five-time Prime Minister SB Deuba; or an extension of the existing election date, something Prime Minister Sushila Karki herself has mentioned. So far, sixteen petitions have been filed in the Supreme Court seeking the restoration of the House. Former Prime Minister KP Oli, ousted three times, has called the present government unconstitutional and demanded Parliament's revival. On 29 October, a constitutional bench of the Supreme Court asked President R. C. Paudyel to provide justification for the dissolution of the House and directed petitioners seeking its revival to appear before the Court on November 20.

The establishment has not yet responded to the Court. Prime Minister Karki has attributed the formation of her government to the GenZ Andolan, for which its members seek national recognition as MOV 082. The real question now is whether the reforms demanded by GenZ — a directly elected Prime Minister, a stable government, voting rights for overseas Nepalis, and a reduction in the voting age from 18 to 16 — can be implemented before March 5. Some reforms could be enacted through a Presidential Commission empowered to amend the Constitution, should the government agree. On October 19, Miraj Dhungana, who had earlier released a video outlining GenZ's demands, announced the formation of a new political party.

However, some maintain that GenZ itself will not contest the elections. Several of their initial eight-point demands were found to be unimplementable — such as the core issue of eradicating corruption, which is best addressed by an elected government rather than an activist movement.

GenZ itself remains deeply fractured. Nineteen different groups, many infiltrated by vested interests, have rendered the reform movement lacking in cohesion and clarity. In neighbouring Bangladesh, students recently hammered out the "July Charter", which includes electoral reforms that must be implemented before the February 2026 elections. Although the Charter was initially opposed as unconstitutional by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), it was supported by its ally, Jamaat-e-Islami. Nepal's own Andolan-led reforms of 1990 could not be fully implemented because of the "mischievous clauses" inserted by the Palace into the 1990 Constitution — clauses that eventually triggered the Maoist uprising of 1996 and paved the way for the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal in 2008, replacing the Constitutional Monarchy. The single-party Maoist rule that followed saw Prachanda attempt to bring the Nepal Army under party control.

GENZ ITSELF REMAINS DEEPLY FRACTURED. NINETEEN DIFFERENT GROUPS, MANY INFILTRATED BY VESTED INTERESTS, HAVE RENDERED THE REFORM MOVEMENT LACKING IN COHESION AND CLARITY

The 2015 Constitution sought to prevent a repeat of the 2008 scenario by introducing a mixed electoral system, but it was later manipulated by three Prime Ministers — Oli, Prachanda, and Deuba — who shared power among themselves. Nepal, which has already had seven constitutions in seven decades, now faces the urgent need for constitutional amendments that can address this entrenched instability.

Prime Minister Karki has met various political parties, engaged with GenZ representatives, and selectively addressed some of their demands. The state violence that resulted in 76 deaths and incidents of arson is under investigation. Of the 1,300 weapons lost by the police, only a few have been recovered. Many of those who fled the jails have been recaptured, though some are believed to have escaped into India. Recent arrests in Ghorai, Dang, include arsonists who torched the district court, government offices, and public facilities — evidence gathered through CCTV footage. Meanwhile, whispers are circulating that Karki is leaning towards the United States and the European Union, raising eyebrows within the establishment. Nineteen new political parties have registered, adding to the existing 122. Rising political figures such as Balen Shah, Mayor of Kathmandu, and Harka Sampang, Mayor of Dharan, are keeping their cards close to their chests. Rabi Lamichhane, the charismatic leader of the ostensibly non-ideological Rastriya Swatantra Party, is currently in jail, and his popularity has declined.

The Nepali Congress (NC) is also in turmoil. Party President and five-time Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is recovering in a Singapore hospital following an assault by GenZ activists. Acting President Purna Bahadur Khadka is overseeing Central Committee deliberations on whether to hold the national convention before or after the elections — and whether to contest the March polls at all. General Secretary Gagan Thapa favours holding the convention now, while a majority led by senior leader Shekhar Koirala wants it postponed until after the elections.

The CPN (UML), meanwhile, is in a dilemma. Its leader Oli has been tarnished by the events that led to the GenZ uprising and his eventual ouster. A majority of the party's Central Committee wants him to resign, but he has dug in his heels. This has opened a window for former President Bidya Devi Bhandari to attempt a political comeback. It is clear that the UML will not fight the next elections under Oli's leadership.

Maoist leader and thrice-elected Prime Minister Prachanda, known for his political agility and instinct for survival, has orchestrated the merger of ten leftist parties into what China has long sought — the revival of the erstwhile Nepal Communist Party, with Prachanda as its coordinator. The word "Maoist" has been conspicuously dropped. Meanwhile, the CPN (Unified Socialist) has split, with former Prime Ministers Madhav Nepal and Jhalanath Khanal parting ways — Nepal joining Prachanda's bloc. Other new entrants include Minister Kulman Ghising's Ujjailo Nepal Party and the Dynamic Democratic Party, founded by Buddha Air owner Birendra Basnet. Smaller parties are also undergoing rebranding. The Madhes parties, already splintered into at least six factions, have fractured further. Among royalists, divisions are emerging between Rajendra Lingden and Dhawal Shamsher Rana, while firebrand royalist Durga Prasain has announced a Hindu Rashtra movement and a protest for the restoration of the monarchy on 1 December.

Ultimately, the verdict on whether the elections will be held — with or without reforms — will rest with President Paudyel, Prime Minister Karki, Chief Justice Prakash Man Singh Raut, and, inevitably, GenZ and the political parties. Elections may yet be delayed, for precisely the same reasons that could hold up Bangladesh's own 2026 polls. Elections in Nepal were originally due at the end of 2027, with the expiry of the dissolved House. Prime Minister Karki remains confident that she will hold them earlier — but whether she will be allowed to do so remains the question.

The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

The writer, a retired Major General, served as Commander, IPKF (South), Sri Lanka, and was a founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, now the Integrated Defence Staff

dailypioneer
@dailypioneer
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PIC TALK

The crescent moon rises behind the Çamlica Mosque and the Galata Tower in Istanbul, Turkey. PHOTO: PTI

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

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The path to inner peace through spiritual living

SADGURU SRI MADHUSUDAN SAI

2ND OPINION
THE PIONEER

All of us seem to be in a perpetual rush, all the time. There is noise, pressure, and endless demands from the external world, and we hardly have a moment to breathe. Many of us try to manage our duties, chase desires, and somehow keep up. Yet often, we end up feeling restless, even a little lost. At times like these, finding inner peace feels deeply important. Ancient Indian wisdom has much to say about it. It shows ways to step back, calm the mind, and see things clearly. Spiritual living, founded on truth and balance, offers a way forward.

The *Bhagavad Gita* says that peace begins with the mind. In Chapter 6, Verse 6, it mentions:

"For one who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best friend; but for one who has failed to do so, the very mind will be the greatest enemy."

It is a simple idea, yet so true. When the mind is restless, even small issues seem huge. But when it is calm, even big problems appear small. Spiritual living helps us look inward, away from distractions, and notice what truly matters.

The Kathopanishad tells a story that makes this clear. A young seeker, Nachiketa, asks Yama, the lord of death, about life and peace. Yama says:

"The good and the pleasant approach the human being. The wise, examining both, distinguish one from the other. The wise choose the good over the pleasant."

It is easy to see why so many of us remain stuck in chaos. Often, we choose what feels easy or pleasant on the surface, even if it becomes a source of trouble later.

The spiritual path asks something different: it asks us to choose what is good over what is merely pleasant — truth, discipline, and compassion. At first, it may seem difficult and even unattainable, but it leads to ultimate freedom and joy.

Inner peace also comes from knowing oneself. The Kathopanishad compares the body to a chariot, the senses to horses, and the mind to reins. The Self, or Atman, is the master. If the senses run wild, life becomes messy and confusing. But if the mind holds the reins carefully and listens to the Self, the way forward becomes clear.

In practice, this means taking moments of quiet every day — praying, meditating, or simply sitting and observing our minds. Like a pond settling when the wind dies down, the mind can become still if we pay attention. In that quiet, we feel connected to everything. The Gita says: "The yogi, uniting the self with the Self, sees the same in all beings." Such vision reduces fear, anger, and restlessness.

Spiritual living is also about kindness. Seeing others as part of the same Self makes compassion natural. Hearts soften and minds become clear. Peace is no longer only personal; it spreads to families, friends, communities, and even the wider world.

In the end, clarity is not somewhere out there — it is within. Following the Self, guided by the Gita and the Upanishads, shows us how to live in harmony. The world may remain noisy, chaotic, and messy, but within, there can be silence, strength, and joy. That is the gift of spiritual living — the kind of peace that remains untouched, unperturbed, and timeless.

The writer is a Global Humanitarian, Spiritual leader & founder of the One World One Family mission

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GLOBAL CLIMATE WARNINGS DEMAND SWIFT COLLECTIVE ACTION

This refers to the Editor's Take, "The Clock is Ticking on Carbon & Climate". The article rightly reminds us that the world is running out of time; with only a few years left within the global carbon budget to keep warming below 1.5°C, incremental action will no longer suffice. The weakening of natural carbon sinks – from the Sundarbans in our own neighbourhood to the Amazon rainforest – shows how ecosystems that once protected us are now under severe and accelerating strain.

Ever since Al Gore and organisations such as Greenpeace began sounding the alarm, climate science has only become more definitive. Yet political will has repeatedly been undermined by misinformation, including reckless assertions that climate change is a "Chinese hoax". Such irresponsible claims have cost humanity precious momentum. The real lesson is that economic growth and clean energy can advance together – but only through deliberate, consistent policy. For developing nations, the shift from fossil fuels to clean fuels is not anti-development; it reduces long-term energy costs, improves public health, and strengthens climate resilience.

What is now required is resolute global and domestic action: investment in renewable infrastructure, restoration of threatened ecosystems like the Sundarbans, and protection of global lungs such as the Amazon.

Developed nations must meet climate finance commitments, while emerging economies must reject the false binary between sustainability and prosperity.

HARSH PAWARIA | ROHTAK

US shutdown leaves economy strained

The recent situation in the United States reflects a difficult period of economic and administrative disruption caused by the prolonged government shutdown. President Donald Trump signed a funding bill to end what became a record 43-day closure, a crisis that inflicted considerable hardship on federal employees and disrupted essential public services. Airports experienced severe delays, while many workers were compelled to rely on food banks for basic support.

Although the shutdown has now ended, it brought little satisfaction to either political side. Democrats failed to secure the healthcare provisions they demanded, while Republicans, despite controlling both Congress and the White House, faced significant public criticism. The temporary agreement funds operations only until 30 January, leaving the federal government on a path to continue adding roughly \$1.8 trillion annually to its already substantial \$38 trillion debt.

While the immediate crisis has been lifted, underlying fiscal and political tensions persist. Attempts are being made to improve overall conditions, yet the shutdown has underscored deep divisions within the US political system and created enduring repercussions for ordinary citizens.

DIMPLE WADHAWAN | KANPUR NAGAR

NDA mandate must inspire responsibility

The NDA's sweeping victory in the Bihar elections, securing 197 of 243 seats, is not surprising given the strong performance of the BJP and JD(U) over previous electoral cycles. Their renewed partnership, combined with a largely clean image, naturally led to an emphatic mandate and a fifth term for Nitish Kumar as Chief Minister.

However, such an overwhelming majority must not encourage complacency. With the opposition reduced to merely 47 seats, it is essential that the government resists the temptation to dismiss alternative views.

A democratic mandate, however decisive, carries an equal responsibility to govern inclusively. The administration must focus on strengthening Bihar through sustained development, structural reforms, and welfare measures that benefit the poor, the middle class, and the wider public.

The government would do well to consider constructive suggestions from all political quarters. The progress of the state depends not merely on electoral victories, but on the collective wisdom that emerges from diverse voices in the Assembly. With cooperation, transparency, and accountability, Bihar can move steadily towards long-term growth.

PVP MADHU NIVRITI | TELANGANA

Bihar verdict shows democratic maturity

The recent Assembly election results in Bihar have reaffirmed that Indian democracy has matured considerably. The exit polls proved accurate, and the NDA secured a comfortable majority, demonstrating once again that voters cannot be influenced by last-minute promises.

The RJD's commitment to offering a government job to each family failed to sway voters, showing that unrealistic assurances hold little weight when people assess credibility. The NDA's success can be attributed to several factors. The consolidation of the BJP-JD(U) alliance worked effectively, reflecting stability after the turbulence that followed the 2020 polls. The BJP's expanding organisational strength in Bihar, combined with its capacity to translate national themes —welfare delivery, infrastructure expansion, and confidence in the Centre's leadership — into local appeal, may have significantly shaped voter sentiment.

This election also witnessed broad agreement across parties on key issues such as employment, job creation, and education. As these concerns were widely shared, the outcome hinged less on the promises themselves and more on the electorate's faith in who could actually deliver.

YASH PAL RALHAN | JALANDHAR

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In not more than 250 words. We appreciate your feedback.

Before the ice melts, the ego must: The real crisis behind COP30

Destructive attitudes arise from flawed notions of self-identity. One feels a void within, clamouring to be filled, yet ignores it. The result is a simplistic conclusion: I must consume the world to feel fulfilled. This urge for consumption, born of an absence of self-knowledge, lies at the root of the climate catastrophe

FIRST Column

ACHARYA PRASHANT

The 30th UN Climate Conference has opened in Belém. The world meets in a burning forest to discuss how to stop the fire. For decades, we have spoken of cooperation but practised postponement. Finance is sidelined, attendance is thin, and the absence of the United States, the world's second-largest emitter, is dismissed as "less disruptive than expected". Yet the Earth does not hear declarations; it registers only emissions.

The Thresholds We Have Crossed

We are well past uncertainty. The world has already crossed the 1.5 °C threshold above pre-industrial levels. Each of the past eleven years has been the hottest on record. The planet's fever mirrors our own: restless, rising, unwilling to abate.

The Global Tipping Points Report 2025 confirms the first irreversible Earth-system collapse: warm-water coral reefs, more than 80 per cent bleached since 2023, are dying, threatening nearly a billion people who depend on them. The Amazon is nearing dieback below a two-degree rise; 17 per cent has already turned to savanna, releasing more carbon than India emits in a year. The Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets are destabilising, together capable of raising sea levels by up to five metres.

The Arctic is warming 3.5 times faster than the global average, releasing methane and fuelling record wildfires. The United States has already endured fourteen billion-dollar climate disasters this year, with losses exceeding $100 billion. Global emissions, instead of falling 44 per cent by 2030 as pledged, have risen by 3 per cent. Even if every COP30 promise is kept, we remain on track for 2.3–2.5 °C of warming. The fever will not subside because the disease lies not in the atmosphere but in ambition.

Policy and Technology Alone Will Not Help

Governments cannot impose what voters refuse. The same person who demands climate action as a citizen demands consumption as a buyer. No political system survives long by asking its people to live with less, so nations sign accords and return home to preserve comfort. The richest five per cent of humanity produce most emissions, and the levels generated by the top one per cent are criminally excessive. Yet those who contribute least will suffer most. We worship technology as our saviour without examining the worshipper. Technology is the new theology. Each new gadget is a prayer for redemption without reflection. Electric vehicles may halve lifetime emissions, yet the same mind that buys a "green" SUV demands wider roads on which to drive it faster, and then buys additional green SUVs.

Yes, we need renewables and carbon removal. But technology without wisdom is surgery performed on a patient still drinking poison. The tools are innocent; the user is not. Until wisdom guides invention, cleverness will remain our curse.

BE CAUTIOUS OF YOUR ROLE MODELS. CELEBRITIES AND GURUS WHO PREACH FREEDOM WHILE FLYING PRIVATE JETS OR ENDORSING LUXURY BRANDS ARE EDUCATORS OF DESIRE.

The Existential Root

The deeper crisis is an artificially implanted existential sense of incompletion. The two drivers of the climate crisis — population growth and consumption — share a single root: the illusion that consumption brings fulfilment. The richest produce most emissions; the poor almost none. A billionaire's jet may emit more in one flight than a farmer emits in an entire lifetime, yet both, as human beings, are driven by the same restlessness to acquire and accumulate. Beyond the biological hardwiring of loneliness, social forces work constantly to make people feel incomplete so that they keep buying. Loneliness is sold as a problem and products as companions. Relationships and family become engines of commerce. We exploit the Earth for the same reason we exploit one another: because we feel hollow within. Climate change is the symptom; ignorance is the disease.

Two centuries of industry have given us immense power but not the wisdom to use it. Real sustainability begins not with technology but with wisdom. With wisdom, restraint is not even required, because excesses are not desired. A mind that knows itself needs no slogans to behave sanely. Consciousness is the ultimate regulator; when it shifts within, systems shift without.

Pledges to consume less, save the planet, or generate less waste matter only when they arise from insight. Otherwise, one buys fewer plastics but more gadgets. The storm within rages on: the urge to upgrade and display. That same storm heats both the mind and the planet.

Self-Knowledge for Right Action

Destructive attitudes arise from flawed notions of self-identity. One feels a void within, clamouring to be filled, yet ignores it. The result is a simplistic conclusion: I must consume the world to feel fulfilled. This urge for consumption, born of an absence of self-knowledge, lies at the root of the climate catastrophe.

When one observes her thoughts and the predictable outcomes of her actions, she begins to check her tendencies. Change begins with attention. Before clicking 'buy', she pauses and asks what she seeks: the object, or a fleeting sense of fulfilment through the object.

Self-knowledge is solid action. Inner clarity can take social form. Cooperatives in Europe run solar grids owned by residents rather than corporations. Bhutan's "Gross National Happiness" demonstrates that even states can measure success using internal parameters rather than external growth.

One begins voting for policies that curb planned obsolescence, limit luxury emissions, and reward circular design. One demands that governments tax waste, not work, and that corporations disclose ecological facts rather than glossy pledges. One supports a green cess and a carbon border tax. And all this arises not from morality or ethics but from the same inner place that, if left unexamined, leads to destruction.

Can personal transformation reshape political reality? It must, because politics ultimately reflects the consciousness of the populace. When enough individuals see through manufactured desire, industries lose their grip. When consumption is recognised as compensatory behaviour, markets adapt or collapse.

Multiply inner awakening a millionfold, and industries will shift, because demand creates supply. Policy without inner change breeds resentment; introspection without public action is hypocrisy. The atmosphere will not cool while the mind burns. Humanity has always had insight, but wisdom was rarely lived by the masses. Religion became ritual rather than realisation; belief rather than understanding. The Gita calls Kama (desire) the destroyer of knowledge; the Buddha named Trishna (craving) the root of suffering; Lao Tzu counselled knowing when enough is enough. Yet economies were built on stoking desire.

What went wrong? Wisdom was kept separate from commerce, confined to temples while society walked blindfolded. The crisis is not that wisdom was absent, but that it never left the books to challenge the factory floor. Forests fell while prayers rose; rivers died as shrines multiplied.

The philosopher's task does not end with meditation or publication. He must enter society and ensure that the light he has seen becomes the living light of the common man. He must be both rebel and builder: challenging the system while shaping new institutions. If he retreats, his self-absorption becomes the planet's ruin.

Reclaiming Joy and Responsibility

Be cautious of your role models. Celebrities and gurus who preach freedom while flying private jets or endorsing luxury brands are educators of desire. Cricketers marketing lifestyles obscenely high in emissions, actors presenting consumption as virtue, influencers monetising aspiration, and politicians selling deforestation as development — all profit from planetary harm. Stop funding them through your wallet, your vote, and your like button.

Demand public disclosure of celebrity carbon footprints; hold fame to the same scrutiny as factories. Concert tours that burn millions of litres of fuel and sporting events that leave mountains of plastic waste are industries disguised as entertainment.

Above all, seek deeper joy. Would you burn fuel if a book brought you joy? Seek retail therapy if music could heal you? Scroll endlessly if one conversation could move you? Watch a five-hundred-crore spectacle if a simple wisdom talk touched you more deeply? Chase distant resorts if a nearby forest could quieten you? Yearly upgrade devices if you saw that technology cannot fill an inner void? Buy status symbols if self-respect no longer needed proof? Hoard possessions if you discovered that lightness is freedom? Accept the extinction of species once you recognised consciousness in all beings?

When joy is rediscovered within, compulsive consumption loses its power. A person with self-knowledge cannot be sold dissatisfaction. The greatest cleansing force on Earth is consciousness.

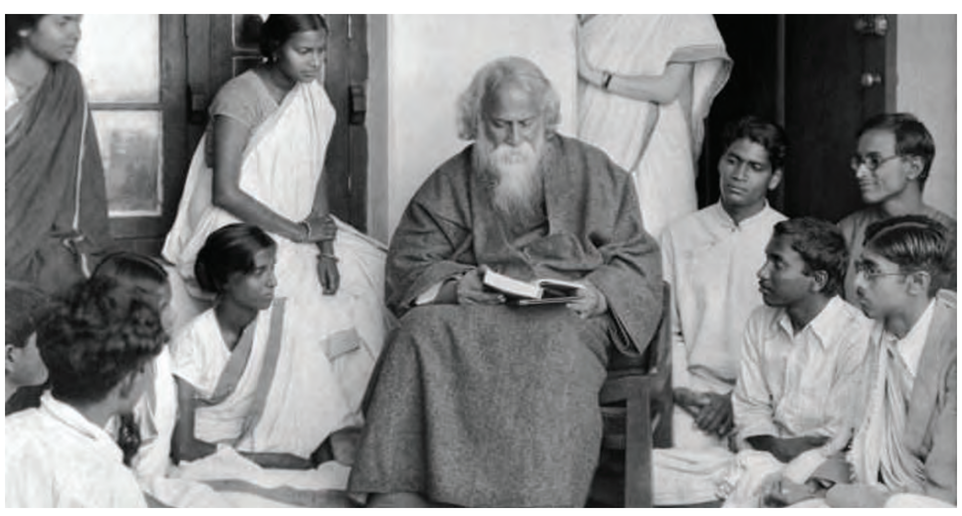
The writer is a teacher, founder of the PrashantAdvait Foundation, and an author on wisdom literature

acharya_prashant_ap
@Advait_Prashant
prashantadvait

The world in a single nest: How India's education is embracing Tagore's global vision

PREM KUMAR KALRA

J K VERMA



When Rabindranath Tagore founded Visva-Bharati University, he envisioned it as a place "where the world makes a home in a single nest". His dream was not to Westernise Indian education, but to universalise it — to let the winds of the world blow freely through India's corridors of learning without uprooting the Indian tree. A century later, that vision appears to be taking root once again. The decision to allow foreign universities to establish campuses in India marks a defining moment in the nation's educational journey. India's civilisation has always been broad, inclusive, and intellectually open.

The ancient universities of Takshashila and Nalanda remind us of our rich tradition of cosmopolitan scholarship. History is replete with accounts of scholars from China, Greece, and Central Asia travelling to India in search of wisdom and dialogue.

Today, the arrival of foreign universities is often viewed through economic or competitive lenses. Yet its deeper significance lies in something more profound — the revival of India's ancient spirit of dialogue between seekers of truth across cultures. It signals India's readiness to engage with the global education ecosystem on its own terms. Diversity, excellence, and affordability will soon stand at our doorstep. For thousands of Indian students, the dream of an international degree no longer demands the crushing expense of studying abroad. The world, quite literally, is coming home.

This exchange, however, will not be one-way. The partnership between Indian and foreign institutions promises to be both cooperative and competitive. Indian students will benefit from exposure to global pedagogies, research methods, and multidisciplinary learning environments. In return, foreign universities will gain unique insights into the opportunities and challenges of one of the world's fastest-growing knowledge economies. The "global classroom" is already taking shape — where a student from Jaipur debates a peer from Japan, and a professor in Delhi co-guides a thesis with a mentor in Melbourne.

Yet the road ahead is not without challenges. The internationalisation of education, if left unchecked, could become a luxury reserved for the privileged. Many global programmes still cater primarily to affluent learners. India must therefore establish strong frameworks for scholarships, flexible credit transfers, and "earn while you learn" opportunities. Equity and access must remain at the heart of this transformation. The true spirit of Indian education lies in balancing public good with private growth. The nation must ensure that education does not become a commodity, but continues to serve as a catalyst for character and creativity.

Importantly, India is no longer merely a recipient of global influence; it is also emerging as a contributor. Several premier Indian institutions, including the IITs and IIMs, are now setting up campuses abroad. This represents not just the export of curriculum, but the sharing of an Indian educational philosophy — one rooted in moral reasoning, inclusivity, and holistic growth.

Among the most promising innovations in this evolving landscape is the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC). This initiative allows students to accumulate and combine credits from both Indian and foreign universities, paving the way for dual or joint degrees. It recognises that learning is a lifelong, borderless pursuit.

A student might begin her degree in India, complete a semester in Singapore, and finish her research in London — all within a single academic framework. The result is not only greater mobility, but a deeper intellectual maturity born of diversity.

Meanwhile, the classroom itself is transforming. The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI), virtual laboratories, and hybrid learning models has made education more interactive and cost-effective. Students can now attend lectures by global faculty, collaborate with peers across continents, and simulate experiments in real time. Yet technology cannot replace the human touch. The teacher's role as a mentor, guide, and moral compass has never been more vital. We must ensure that machines do not erode the spark of curiosity and the depth of reflection that define true learning. This transformation calls for introspection. What do we truly value in education? As India opens its universities to global influences, it must also nurture critical thinking, empathy, and ethical awareness. The test of education lies not merely in employability, but in enlightenment. The challenge is to engage with global diversity without losing one's distinct identity.

The global winds, then, need not uproot the Indian tree — they can help it bloom. India's entry into the global education marketplace is not merely a policy shift, but a cultural evolution. It signals a confident assertion that Indian education can stand shoulder to shoulder with the best in the world while retaining its moral centre.

If pursued with vision and vigilance, this initiative will allow India's universities not only to absorb global knowledge but also to radiate their own light outward. The Tagorian nest, it seems, is ready once again — for the world to make its home.

Prof Prem Kumar Kalra is the Senior Director of the Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra, and a former Director of IIT Jodhpur. Prof JK Verma is the Head of the Department of English at the Dayalbagh Educational Institute

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New US Bill Targets Outsourcing, Threatens India's IT Engine

AJAY SRIVASTAVA

The HIRE Act bill introduced in the U.S. Senate on 5 September 2025 seeks to penalise outsourcing through a 25 per cent excise tax and denial of tax deductibility for payments to foreign service providers.

For India's $280-billion IT, BPO and GCC ecosystem—dependent on the U.S. for over 60 per cent of revenues—this would sharply erode the cost advantage that underpins offshore delivery.

Though still at an early legislative stage, the bill signals rising U.S. hostility to offshoring, and India's tech sector must monitor it closely.

The new 'Halting International Relocation of Employment (HIRE) Act' bill, introduced in the U.S. Senate on 5 September 2025—if it becomes law—would pose a serious threat to India's IT and BPO sector.

With the United States accounting for more than 60 per cent of the industry's revenues, the introduction of this bill has triggered unease across India's $280-billion technology services ecosystem.

For a sector built on offshore delivery and cost arbitrage, the proposed law strikes at the heart of its operating model.

It is essential to distinguish this legislation from the similarly named Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment (HIRE) Act of 2010, which was a post-financial-crisis stimulus package offering payroll tax holidays and retention credits to U.S. employers. The 2025 HIRE Act is entirely different—a new, standalone bill crafted to deter outsourcing by U.S. companies and shift work back onshore.

Key Proposals

Introduced in the U.S. Senate on September 5, 2025 by Senator Bernie Moreno (R-Ohio), the bill proposes a suite of aggressive anti-outsourcing provisions. The most far-reaching among them is a 25 per cent excise tax on payments that U.S. firms make to any "foreign person" for labour or services that ultimately benefit U.S. consumers, even if the services are performed entirely abroad.

In parallel, the bill seeks to deny tax deductibility for such payments, dramatically increasing the net cost of sourcing work from countries like India.

It also introduces enhanced reporting requirements, forcing firms to disclose all "outsourcing payments" and exposing them to significant penalties for non-compliance.

If enacted, these measures would apply to all relevant payments made on or after 31 December 2025, effectively beginning January 1, 2026.

For India, the implications are stark.

- A 25 per cent tax surcharge combined with loss of deductibility could make offshore delivery meaningfully more expensive for U.S. companies, prompting some to renegotiate contracts, rebalance delivery toward onshore or near-shore hubs, or slow down the pace of new outsourcing.

High-volume functions such as application maintenance, customer support, and back-office processing are particularly vulnerable. Even GCCs—captive centres that serve U.S. parent companies—may not be sheltered, as the proposed tax applies to any payment benefiting U.S. consumers, including internal cost allocations.

- Indian firms could face pressure to expand onsite U.S. staffing, accept margin compression, or accelerate a pivot toward higher-value digital, AI, cybersecurity, and consulting services.
- Meanwhile, uncertainty could chill new GCC investments at a time when India has become a global hub for such centers.

That said, the bill is at a early stage. It has only been introduced—without committee referral, hearings, or co-sponsors—and its passage is far from assured. U.S. technology and services companies are likely to lobby aggressively against measures that raise their operating costs.

Still, the political signal is unmistakable: Washington is re-examining the economics of offshoring. India's IT sector would be wise to monitor the bill's progress closely—and prepare for a world where U.S. outsourcing policy could turn structurally less favorable.

The writer is former Indian Trade Services officer worker at Ministry of Commerce

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BLASÉ CAPITAL

LOAN NOT INTEREST

Speed and simplicity in getting the loans is more important than the interest rates as the deciding factors for the consumers. According to a survey by Paisabazaar, India's largest marketplace for consumer credit, which was conducted among more than 10,200 respondents across the country, 42 per cent of the borrowers chose the lenders primarily for quick disbursals and easy processes, while 25 per cent prioritised lower interest rates. The findings underline a clear shift in borrowers' behaviour convenience and digital accessibility in shaping loan decisions compared to costs and interest rates.

A majority 80 per cent of the respondents said that they preferred guided digital platforms for comparing and applying for loans, with 53 per cent citing faster approvals and seamless processing as their top expectations from lenders. "The growing confidence among the consumers across segments to take personal loans not just for essential needs but for aspirations, lifestyle, and festive spends, reflects a maturing credit ecosystem," said Santosh Agarwal, CEO, Paisabazaar. "Conversations with the consumers clearly indicate a preference for seamless digital processes that make access to credit convenient, transparent, and easy," he added.

The survey pointed to the rising first-time adoption of festive personal loans. About 41 per cent of the respondents said that they took the loans for the first time this year, and 46 per cent indicated that they were likely to borrow again during the future festive seasons, suggesting growing comfort with short-term credit. When asked about the reasons for borrowings, home renovation and furnishings topped the list at 18 per cent, followed by shopping, gifting, appliances, and electronics (15 per cent). Other popular categories included precious metals, debt consolidation (10 per cent), and fashion and lifestyle purchases (10 per cent).

Nearly 60 per cent of the borrowers opted for loans below ₹5 lakh, while 42 per cent preferred tenures under five years, which signals prudence, and an attempt to keep liabilities in check. According to the recent Reserve Bank of India (RBI) figures, while financial assets added between 2019 and 2025 grew by about 48 per cent, annual liabilities during the same period more than doubled, rising just over 100 per cent. In GDP terms, assets added accounted for 12 per cent of GDP. Financial liabilities, which were just below four per cent of GDP in 2019–20, climbed to 4.7 per cent in 2024-25.

The only relief lies in the fact that the liabilities fell sharply from 6.2 per cent in 2023-24, marking a 1.5 per cent dip in just one year. Which is a rare and noteworthy correction that merits deeper analysis. One possible explanation, economists suggest, lies in the "confidence factor." As households see their wealth, particularly paper wealth from booming stock markets rise, they tend to borrow more freely, confident in their ability to repay. More importantly, as the asset values rise, they do repay, and reduce liabilities.

However, when markets correct, this confidence quickly erodes, leaving families more leveraged than they realise. The recent moderation in stock prices could therefore serve as a timely reminder about the risks of overreliance on market-linked wealth for debt decisions. It also implies that the moment the asset values turned southwards, households reduced liabilities instantly, and tried to be in sync with the current scenario. The only reason why the liabilities came down is because of the consumers' mindset.

India's credit ecosystem has undergone a remarkable transformation over the last few years. Rising digital adoption, instant approvals, and improved credit awareness have made personal loans more accessible than before. The Paisabazaar report reinforces this shift, portraying borrowers as more tech-savvy and confident yet still largely prudent in terms of loan size and tenure. Experts note that the focus on digital-first borrowing is likely to deepen as fintech platforms expand partnerships with banks and NBFCs. They bring speed, transparency, and competition into the credit landscape.

One can look at various factors to explain this phenomenon. There is a shift from paying EMIs to buy a house or a plot to one where families borrow to fund consumption over traditional assets. A move away from the traditional model to instantaneous consumers can create a new culture. When borrowers feel more comfortable to loan money, without any hassles, but with ease, this indicates a credit culture. There is no angst about borrowings, interest rates, or payments. The only worries are whether the loans will be available without any problems. This is both a positive, and a negative.

In a country like India, the ease of borrowing can be a classic trap. Just because the money is available, we borrow, and then use the money for things we do not need, or anticipate. As we bank on higher incomes in the future, or our abilities to pay the loans, and interest, we do not realise that things can go wrong. This is why the assets-liabilities mismatch within the Indian households is a matter of concern, not just for the policy-maker, but the society. If loans stare in our face, we need to turn it away. It is not easy. It is more convenient to accept the money that comes in, and worry later about the cash that will go out as principal and interest.

The grand tariff-trade ballroom

OUR TAKE

The US President Donald Trump appears to have sudden changes of heart since he firmed a plan to replace the East Wing of the White House with a $300 million ballroom. It picked up pace during his recent three-nation Asia tour last month, and has concretised since his return. In recent times, Trump has altered, or indicated changes to, the specifics related to several nations. His administration has engaged in negotiations to change the final tariffs.

Notable examples of the tariff transformations include the temporary, proposed, and specific rates, either through negotiations or unilateral decisions, with China, India, Japan, Brazil, among others. The around-Asia-in-five-days connected Malaysia, Japan, and South Korea to boost regional agenda, and ink major deals. After sealing deals in Malaysia, he managed more in Japan, which resulted in a landmark framework on nuclear energy, and critical minerals. In July, America and Japan set tariffs at 15 per cent, a reduction from a threatened 25 per cent. It was the same month that the White House announced the construction of a new ballroom.

After Japan and South Korea, Trump beamed for the cameras with China's Premier Xi Jinping. After the temporary truce between them, the media headlines screamed that the trade war was coming to an end, albeit not too silently. Since the widely-splashed meeting, the world's largest economies reached key agreements that signaled a reset in economic cooperation. Xi emphasised that China and the US need to aim to be "partners and friends," despite the differences. He called for the two nations to shoulder global responsibilities together.

China's People's Daily stated that this week's meeting between senior officials from Beijing and Washington "would further enhance the favorable atmosphere, demonstrating that a stable and sound bilateral relationship serves the interests of both sides, and that the US business community highly values such certainty as it plans to expand further in the Chinese market." A US representative felt that the US business community was "inspired by the historic meeting between the leaders of China and the US in Busan, South Korea," and another observed how the six months preceding the meeting was a "period of uncertainty," which has possibly ended.

Since the last week, the two nations successively announced a one-year suspension of port fees on each other's vessels, and a parallel halt to related investigations in the shipping and shipbuilding sectors. This marked the latest step to implement the consensus reached at the bilateral talks during Trump's Asia tour. China agreed to end the retaliatory measures against the US semiconductor firms, and others, which could ease the pressures. The agreements were described as a "great success" by Trump, and were viewed by the more humorous voices as possible rehearsals for the grand dance among the global leaders at the new ballroom.

Trump identified India as the next success after months of uncertainty, and ongoing trade talks. Though the thaw was apparent with the US president waxing eloquent about the India Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it went up a few notches at the swearing-in of the new US Ambassador to India. His statement temporarily lifts the doubts that the Trump-Xi waltzing in the new ballroom would sideline India. Mark the word "temporarily" since Trump's framing of the US-China summit as a "G-2" encounter signals a bipolar global power structure that is dominated by Washington and Beijing.

If the new ballroom intends to host only the elite, it could reduce New Delhi's leverage in multilateral forums, and negotiations. Thus, India could lose its edge as an alternative manufacturing hub unless it accelerates domestic reforms, and supply chain integration. While waiting for a formal opening of the ballroom, amidst the "ifs," and the "buts," Trump's choice of a staunch loyalist, Sergio Gor, to become the ambassador in New Delhi shows his diplomatic priorities. He does not want anyone to interfere with his wishes.

"The tariffs on India are really high because of the Russian oil... but they have now substantially reduced Russian oil... so we will be bringing the tariffs down," said the US President. However, according to latest trade reports, India's crude oil imports from Russia remained almost the same in October, compared to September. Trump believed that they will substantially go down in December. Apart from this oil slick, there is the visa amnesia. The views on H-1B visa regime changes as fast as the Internet speeds.

The Pioneer SINCE 1865

Trump first imposed high visa fees, even as he talked about a change in the regime from lottery-based system to a merit-salary-based one. Then he claimed that Americans need certain skills and talents available with the foreigners. Recently, he maintained, "You also have to bring in talent." Earlier, he urged a South Korean firm to bring in specialists to train the Americans. It seems like the US president seeks the help of the East to get a few "teachers." It is a kind of reverse skill flow, from Delhi to Washington.

Someone needs to seriously ask Trump if he intends to use the "ornately designed and carefully crafted" ballroom for a dance with limited partners, or fill up the entire 90,000 sq ft (which has a "seated capacity" of 650 people, and maybe slightly less for dance space). Sadly, the space may not allow all the partners, accompanied as they are with paraphernalia of delegates. After all, imagine the following leaders in the same room. Russia's Vladimir Putin, China's Xi, and India's Modi may exchange handshakes with each other, and Trump. So will many others from Asia and Europe.

What may not gel with many may be the entry of Syria's President Ahmad al-Sharaa, whose bonhomie with Trump marks another dramatic reconciliation with a former wanted al-Qaeda insurgent. This meeting followed coordinated actions such as the removal of Syria from the sanction list, which cleared the legal and diplomatic obstacles. Politics can indeed make strange bedfellows, but al-Sharaa's inclusion may create a mess. Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, the Gulf states, and Israel will need to reassess Syria-related policies. They will figure out how to balance prospects for reconstruction, and the return of the refugee against security concerns and rivalries.

Trump has scripted new texts, and language in his private book on diplomacy, business, economics, and politics. In his view, past relationships do not matter much. Past friends can be enemies (Putin and Modi), past enemies can become part-friends (Xi), and past enemies can become strong friends (al-Sharaa). This is an apt time to accommodate more, rather than less, in the ballroom.

Quiet caution on inflation

For ardent fans of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it has been a few weeks of celebrations, joy, and congratulations. First, there was the news from the agriculture ministry that farm and horticulture output were set to break existing records in the current year. Then came the news from the big rating agencies, and other institutions that the GDP growth rate will exceed the earlier estimates. The icing on the cake was the sales of two-wheelers, which crossed the three-million mark in October 2025, the first time in history.

Sutanu Guru
Author, Journalist and Academician

This augurs well for the aspirational middle class. How can one forget that retail inflation, which is based on the consumer price index, fell to an incredible low of 0.25 per cent. This is the lowest in the 11 years that Modi has been the prime minister. One cannot remember the last time the figure was so low. No wonder the fans of Modi are beating the drums, and dancing in the aisles. But I wish to add a note of caution, and precaution for them.

For one, the 0.25 per cent number is possibly a one-off one. Do not be surprised, or shocked, if it goes up to 3-4-5 per cent in a few months. The low number, while welcome, is not a sign that the country has completely and unflaggingly contained inflation. For instance, vegetable inflation, or let us say, the prices of vegetables, have crashed by more than 25 per cent in October, and by more than 20 per cent earlier in September. No wonder there is negative food inflation. When it comes to cereals like rice, a large majority get free rice, and do not need to suffer the implications of inflation.

GST 2.0 is a one-off, and the rates and slabs will remain the same for a few years. So do not expect the GST effect to continue as it will wear off in a few months. The central bank, which sets the core interest rate, does not have much control over inflation because it is caused due to a sustained rise in food prices. Thus, the events and decisions that pushed prices down, and which were aided by good monsoons, good Kharif production, and other factors, may change.

Now, let us focus on the really jarring

data, which is included in the official press release on retail inflation in October. While the national average is 0.25 per cent, the figure for Punjab is more than seven times higher at 1.81 per cent. Karnataka is worse at 2.3 per cent, and the number for Jammu and Kashmir is close to three per cent. As you ponder, the kicker, shocker, or a punch lies in Kerala, where the price rise is 8.95 per cent to be precise. One wonders how the inflation can be so different in different states located in different regions.

The massive difference between Kerala and India can be caused only by two factors. One, the rate of the price rise in regular consumption items in Kerala was incredibly high. Two, the consumption basket in Kerala is drastically different from Punjab, Karnataka, and Jammu and Kashmir, as also the other states. Remember, in Bihar, Odisha, and a few states, the retail inflation is extremely low, and borders on the negative. Clearly, both the factors seem absurd, and cannot be explained logically. There is something missing.

The Pioneer SINCE 1865

The solution may be simple. Several committees, which created a representative Consumer Index. repeatedly asserted that the diversity of India means that a single inflation rate is a difficult proposition. We are being forced to live with it, just as Indians are forced to live with a single time zone. We know that when the sun sets in Guwahati, Assam, and it is pitch dark, there is bright sunlight in Mumbai. Something similar seems to be happening with retail inflation, and the way India measures it.

Hopefully, this will change, and mercifully, the Government has announced that in February, 2026 it will launch a new consumer price index, which will be more representative, and give adequate weights to the items of regular consumption. This may sort out, and eliminate obsolete items in the current basket of goods used to measure consumption. I may point out that C Voter has launched a serious academic exercise to launch an aspirational Consumer Price Index in 2026. In Bihar, it recently conducted preliminary surveys.

Bihar is an excellent starting point for a pilot because its per capita expenditure is the lowest in the country, and this will help C Voter to gradually arrive at a truly representative index. It is the lower classes, and the poor, whose spend needs to be accounted for, and not the middle class and rich. The latter two segments may crib about inflation, but are not really bothered about it. What matters is the rate of inflation for those who buy scooters, motorcycles, and bicycles.

In fact, most experts feel that the Consumer Price Index is biased towards the big cities, and undermines the situation in the smaller towns, and villages. Similarly, there is an inherent inability to account for the introduction, and purchases of new kinds of goods, improvements in quality, and substitution effects. New goods bias overestimates inflation. Quality upgrades may do the same, as a product may be expensive, but more productive. The fixed basket approach may lead to wrong calculations. The same reasons may achieve the opposite results in some cases.

One should never forget the base effect syndrome. Since food inflation was high a few months ago, the huge negative rates in September and October were driven by the higher earlier bases. This is why when one looks at sector-wise changes in prices, housing inflation was almost three per cent in October, healthcare was nearer to four per cent, and fuel and light was two per cent. These figures are way higher than the national average. This implies that even as consumers suffer with higher prices in these areas, their gain was in terms of food purchases, which were driven down by the Kharif crop.

As ardent consumers of data and information, we need to be aware of these issues. An average is an average, and not indicative of the nuanced changes across sectors, and states. One needs to go beyond the average to understand how price rise is affecting different segments of the society, and how changing consumption patterns have a differing impact on different sections. The one-size-fits-all does not work.

The author has worked for leading media houses, authored two books, and is now Executive Director, C Voter Foundation

Asia's Potential Bipolarity: A vision of harmonious power between India and China

BHASKAR JYOTI MAHANTA

In the evolving geopolitics of the 21st century, the idea that Asia might become a new global power centre is increasingly compelling. Within this vision, two giants — India and China — naturally stand out. But rather than framing their roles in adversarial terms, what if India and China developed a cooperative relationship, each strong and independent, yet mutually respectful and supportive? What if that sort of partnership became the axis of Asia's rise — not a bipolar rivalry, but a constructive bipolarity? We explore that possibility: how it might come about, what it would look like, what the core factors of success and failure are and how this might translate into Asia becoming the world's strategic fulcrum.

Imagine India and China as the twin pillars of Asia's future. Each commands massive demographic, economic and strategic weight. Together, they would represent an Asian axis of power: China bringing scale, infrastructure, and manufacturing prowess; India bringing innovation, a relatively youthful population and soft-power resonance rooted in its democratic system. The key nuance is not merging into one hegemon, nor one country subsuming the other, but a bipolar axis of two complementary major powers, cooperating rather than contending. Their geopolitical outlook would shift from zero-sum competition to a shared recognition that a rising Asia benefits both and that in a global order marked by uncertainty, unity yields dividends. Asia thus ceases to be a theatre of great-power competition dominated by external actors, and instead becomes a platform for endogenous growth, innovation and influence, with India and China at its heart. If realised, Asia might shift from being perceived as a region to be contested, to being a region that leads.

The sheer power of this combined entity forms the foundational strength of this vision. Together, India and China already account for a huge fraction of global economic activity; on a Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) basis, their combined output is already immense. This scale creates an unshakeable base for Asia-wide demand and investment. Critically, their economic profiles are complementary: China's strength lies in large-scale manufacturing and sophisticated supply chains, while India's is rooted in its consumption-driven growth, its vast digital economy, and its leadership in services exports. If China's capital and industrial expertise were leveraged with India's consumer base and human capital, the resulting synergy could create an unparalleled economic engine for Asia. Furthermore, with the two Asian powers aligned, their influence on global Governance would be amplified. Both nations are key voices for the Global South and their coordinated action-whether on climate change negotiations or demands for multilateral institutional reform-would solidify Asia's voice, moving the world toward a truly multipolar structure. Moreover, successful cooperation itself would be a strategic win, reducing the immense cost and risk associated with a classic zero-sum rivalry, freeing up resources for domestic development.

However, the path to this harmonious bipolarity is riddled with formidable obstacles-the very realities that currently shape the relationship. The single most critical deterrent is the deep-seated mistrust stemming from their long, unresolved border. Historical conflicts and recent clashes mean that territorial disputes remain an active and potentially fatal flashpoint. This fragility is compounded by a structural economic issue: the massive and widening trade imbalance. India's fears of being structurally dependent on China for critical imports, coupled with the low level of mutual investment, breeds strategic anxiety and undermines confidence in long-term economic alignment. Beyond economics, the divergent political systems and strategic cultures pose inherent challenges to trust and transparency.

China's party-led system and its vision for a regionally centralised power structure conflict with India's democratic and federal system, which seeks a multipolar Asia where its autonomy is paramount. Past initiatives like the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor have ultimately stalled, demonstrating the difficulty of sustaining high-level cooperation mechanisms when core strategic friction persists. Furthermore, both countries face immense domestic pressures-China managing its ageing population and debt, India tackling infrastructure and inequality-which can easily force them to turn inward and sideline the cooperative agenda.

Yet, if these weaknesses can be managed, the opportunities unlocked are transformational for Asia. A cooperative axis could, for the first time, deliver pan-Asian connectivity. Infrastructure corridors, moving beyond old, stalled proposals, could be built with shared finance and technology, knitting South, Southeast and Central Asia more tightly and making regional supply chains more resilient. This would be a crucial step in accelerating the shift of the world's economic centre toward Asia. Moreover, in the critical area of technology and green transition, the potential synergy is enormous.

By combining China's overwhelming manufacturing capacity in solar and EV components with India's market scale and innovation ecosystems, the two giants could lead the green tech revolution and set new global standards for sustainable development. This coordinated leadership, backed by jointly reformed regional institutions, could truly empower the Global South, allowing these nations to partner with Asia on their own terms, rather than being subject to the strategic manipulations of external powers.

The successful realisation of this vision, however, is constantly shadowed by significant threats. A resurgence of border escalation remains the most dangerous risk, capable of instantly collapsing any framework of cooperation and plunging the region into crisis. This threat is amplified by the external great-power dynamic. The involvement of the US, Japan, and others in the Indo-Pacific, through mechanisms like the Quad, introduces persistent centrifugal forces.

These alliances inherently pull India in one direction and China in another, risking the fragmentation of the cooperative axis into competing blocs. Even without conflict, the underlying competition for regional primacy-who influences neighbours, who leads global fora-may reassert itself, eroding the necessary trust. If the India-China axis is viewed by smaller nations not as a partnership for prosperity but as a new form of dominance, they may resist, creating fragmentation and undermining the entire Asia-wide project.

The future, therefore, hinges on a single, audacious pivot. Imagine a scenario in the early 2030s. India has sustained high growth and expanded its manufacturing base; China has upgraded its economy and consolidated its infrastructure networks. The two nations establish a "Shared Asian Prosperity Framework"-a commitment to structurally reduce India's trade deficit, jointly invest in advanced manufacturing in India and co-finance regional green technology corridors. They commit to a high-level strategic mechanism to manage the border, freeing up resources and attention.

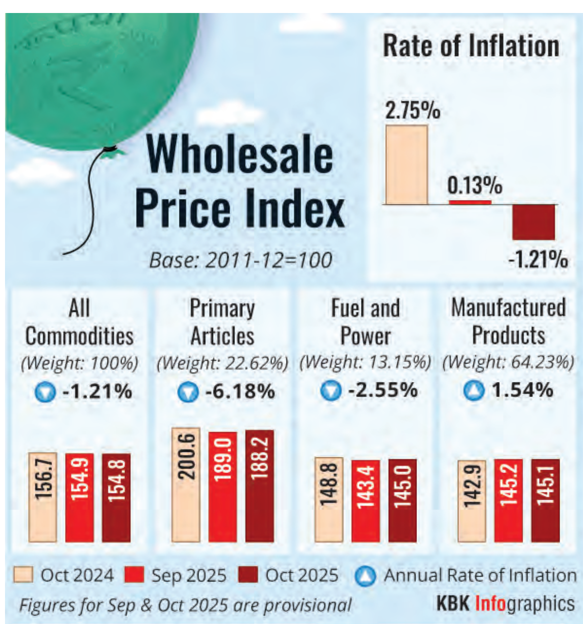
This strategic choice-to opt for managed cooperation over antagonism-allows for the creation of an Asian architecture where both are strong, respected, and autonomous, yet interdependent. If India and China manage to align interests, build trust, invest together and lead regionally, Asia's rise could be orderly, inclusive and dominant.

The ultimate challenge for policymakers, business leaders and strategists is to foster the frameworks and mind-sets that turn rivalry into partnership. Because if the two most populous nations on earth, neighbours with massive stakes in each other's stability, opt for cooperation, the strategic centre of gravity could very well shift to Asia.

The author is a former DGP Assam and the General Secretary of the Think Tank Society to Harmonise Aspirations for Responsible Engagement-SHARE

WPI inflation falls to 27-month low in October on GST cut, favourable base

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi



Wholesale price inflation fell to a 27-month low of (-) 1.21 per cent in October, led by a sharp deflation in food items like pulses and vegetables and lower prices of fuel and manufactured items, Government data showed on Friday.

Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation was 0.13 per cent in September and 2.75 per cent in October last year.

"The negative rate of inflation in October 2025, is primarily due to decrease in prices of food articles, crude petroleum and natural gas, electricity, mineral oils and manufacture of basic metals etc ," the industry ministry said in a statement.

According to WPI data, deflation in food articles was 8.31 per cent in October, compared to 5.22 per cent in September, with onion, potato, vegetables and pulses seeing a decline in prices.

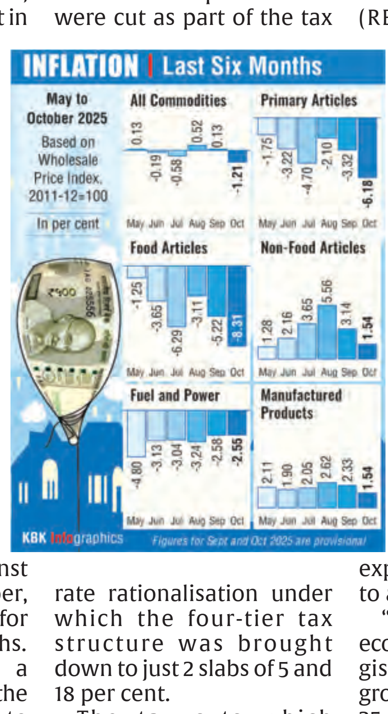
In vegetables, deflation was 34.97 per cent in October, against 24.41 per cent in September. In pulses, deflation was at 16.50 per cent in October, while in potato and onion it was 39.88 per cent and 65.43 per cent, respectively.

In the case of manufactured products, inflation eased to 1.54 per cent, from 2.33 per cent in September. Fuel and power witnessed a negative inflation or deflation of 2.55 per cent, against 2.58 per cent in September, thus recording a decline for seven consecutive months.

"Looking ahead, a favourable base effect in the rest of FY26 is expected to keep the wholesale index into deflation. Consequently, Ind-Ra anticipates wholesale deflation in November 2025 to be under 1 per cent," said Paras Jasrai, Associate Director at India Ratings and Research.

The fall in WPI inflation is on expected lines after the rates of Goods and Services Tax (GST) were slashed effective September 22.

GST rates on daily use mass consumption items were cut as part of the tax rate rationalisation under which the four-tier tax structure was brought down to just 2 slabs of 5 and 18 per cent.



The tax cuts which lowered prices of goods, plus a favourable inflation base of last year, has pulled down both wholesale and retail inflation.

Data released last week showed, retail inflation was at an all-time low of 0.25 per cent in October, driven down by GST rate cuts and a high base of last year. In September retail or consumer price index inflation was 1.44 per cent.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which takes into account retail inflation, had kept benchmark policy rates unchanged at 5.5 per cent last month.

The decline in both retail and WPI inflation would put pressure on the RBI to cut benchmark interest rates in the next monetary policy review meeting scheduled on December 3-5.

Jasrai , however, said based on the trend of India's economic growth, the rationale for monetary easing is not very strong. FY26 retail inflation is now expected to be going down to around 2.5 per cent.

"However, to prevent the economy going deep in sluggish and weak economic growth, the RBI may go for a 25-50 bp cut in repo rate in its December 2025 monetary policy," he added.

PHDCCI, CEO and Secretary General, Ranjeet Mehta said the chamber expects WPI inflation to remain range-bound due to benign international crude oil prices, comfortable buffer stocks of food-grains and healthy kharif harvest.

India, Canada to boost partnership in critical minerals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

India and Canada have agreed to encourage long-term supply chain partnerships in critical minerals and clean energy collaboration essential for the energy transition and new — age industrial expansion.

Besides, both countries have agreed to identify and expand investment and trading opportunities in aerospace and dual-use capabilities partnerships, leveraging Canada's established presence in India and the growth of India's aviation sector.

Canada's Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development Maninder Sidhu was on an official visit to India between November 11 and 14 at the invitation of India's Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal.

The ministers reaffirmed the strength and continuity of the India-Canada economic partnership and reiterated their commitment to deepening bilateral cooperation through sustained dialogue, mutual respect and forward-looking initiatives, a joint statement said.

"Recognising the importance of supply chain resilience, the ministers exchanged views on global developments and reflected on lessons from recent disruptions.

They underscored the relevance of strengthening resilience in critical sectors, including agriculture and highlighted the need for diversified and reliable supply chains as essential for supporting long-term economic stability," it said.

The ministers expressed satisfaction with the progress made in strengthening bilateral economic engagement and reaffirmed their shared commitment to elevate the economic partnership to reflect global developments and evolving supply chain and trade dynamics, it said.

They emphasised the importance of maintaining momentum in the bilateral dialogue and supporting people-to-people ties, which provide a strong foundation for the partnership, it said.

The ministers agreed to sustained ministerial engagements with the trade and investment community in both Canada and India early next year, it added.

On the bilateral trade, the statement said, it has reached $23.66 billion in 2024, with merchandise trade valued at nearly $8.98 billion, a substantial 10 per cent increase over the previous year.

The ministers emphasised the importance of continued engagement with the private sector to unlock new opportunities for trade and investment, it said.

They welcomed the steady expansion of two-way investment flows, including notable Canadian institutional investment in India and the growing presence of Indian firms in Canada, which together support tens of thousands of jobs in both economies, it said.

The ministers committed to maintaining an open, transparent and predictable investment environment and to exploring avenues for deeper collaboration across priority and emerging sectors, it added.

Germany to subsidise industry's energy prices in bid to revitalise economy

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Berlin

Germany's Governing coalition agreed to subsidise energy prices for heavy industry over the next three years as it tries to breathe new life into a stubbornly slow economy that is weighing on Europe's performance. Chancellor Friedrich Merz said he and other coalition leaders agreed Thursday evening to introduce an electricity price of about 5 euro cents per kilowatt hour starting January 1, through 2028, to "support companies that use a lot of electricity and face international competition."

Talks on the plan with the European Union's executive commission are near-complete and "we assume we will get permission for this," Merz said. The German economy, Europe's biggest, has shrunk for the past two years and has not seen significant growth for much longer. The conservative Merz's coalition Government with the centre-left Social Democrats has made revitalising it a priority since taking office in early May.

Still, results haven't shown through yet, with gross domestic product stagnating in the third quarter. This week, the Government's panel of independent economic advisers forecast it will grow by an unimpressive 0.9 per cent next year after edging up 0.2 per cent this year. The country's economy, which is heavy on manufacturing and exports, has been held back by multiple factors including high energy prices, competition from Chinese producers of autos and industrial machinery, a lack of skilled workers and excessive bureaucracy.

India should be a leader of reform process at WTO: Ngozi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Visakhapatnam

World Trade Organisation Chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala on Friday said India should be a leader of the reform process at the WTO. She said that India's economy is growing at a healthy pace and it is a leader in areas such as technology. She said that there is a need to look at areas in the WTO which are not working and discuss ways to correct that.

"...and here India can be a leader, India should be a leader in the reform process at the WTO. India should be a leader in making sure that we do not stay in a system that becomes more power based instead of rules based," Director-General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said here at

CII's partnership Summit 2025. She added that India is a fast growing economy and has the scale and credibility to provide leadership not just in this region but globally.

Referring to high tariffs imposed by the US, she said the member nations should pay attention to the concerns flagged by America.

India too has flagged concerns on issues like public stockholding, she said adding repeating past grievances will not help to build a strong global trading system. She appealed to all the members of the WTO to work together to strengthen the global trading system. The US has raised concerns over the way WTO arms are functioning and has called for reforms in the WTO including in its dispute redressal mechanism.

WTO is a 166-member Geneva-based multilateral body that deals with trade related issues. India has been a member since 1995. The WTO also said that a country may need bilateral trade agreements to push their growth but "you also need a multi-lateral system to move forward.

"That is why the WTO is important," she said, adding the world is witnessing huge disruptions in global trade at present.

FROM THE WORLD

UAE

Kerala teen dies in Dubai

A Kerala teen, who was visiting Dubai, died after falling from the top of a building in Deira, local media reported. Mohammed Mishal, 19, from Kozhikode district of Kerala, was visiting his cousins and had been in Dubai for about 15 days, *Gulf News* reported.

The incident occurred on November 7 when Mishal reportedly went to the terrace of a multi-storey building to take photographs of flights. "He was staying with his cousins while his parents remained in Kozhikode. He had been in Dubai for about 15 days," Haneefa K K, a family friend, told. Mishal was rushed to Rashid Hospital immediately after the accident, but could not be saved, *Khaleej Times* quoted M K as saying.

INDONESIA

Landslides in Java, 2 dead

Landslides triggered by torrential rains in Indonesia's Java island killed two people and left 21 others missing. Rescuers are still searching for the 21 reported missing. Several days of heavy rainfall in the region caused the landslides that hit dozens of houses in three villages in Indonesia's Central Java province on Thursday evening, officials said in a statement. "The unstable ground conditions posed a challenge for the search and rescue team in searching for victims during the golden hour.

Russian drone, missile attack on Kyiv kills 5

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Kyiv

Rescuers working on the scene of a building damaged after a Russian attack in Kyiv Ukraine AP

Russia unleashed a major missile and drone barrage on Kyiv early in Friday, killing five people, starting fires and scattering debris as the sound of explosions boomed across the city, Ukrainian authorities said. A pregnant woman was among at least 34 people injured.

Emergency crews responded to multiple strikes during the night, said Tymur Tkachenko, head of Kyiv's military administration.

Russia used at least 430 drones and 18 missiles in the attack that left gaping holes in some city buildings, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said.

Russia has waged a devastating aerial campaign against Ukraine since its all-out invasion of its neighbor nearly four years ago. U.S.-led diplomatic efforts this year to stop the fighting have so far come to nothing.

Friday's aerial assault, which also targeted Odesa in the south and Kharkiv in the northeast, was mostly aimed at Kyiv, where drones and missiles smashed into high-rise apartment blocks, according to Zelenskyy.

It was "a specially calculated attack to cause as much harm as possible to people and civilians," he said in a post on Telegram. Moscow denies targeting civilian areas, with the Russian Defense Ministry saying Friday it carried out an overnight strike on Ukraine's "military-industrial and energy facilities." Ukrainian officials scoff at those claims, showing repeated damage to homes and public buildings.

The attack was the biggest on Kyiv in almost three weeks. Most recent Russian aerial attacks have aimed at electricity infrastructure around the country ahead of the bitter winter months. Ukraine used its American-made Patriot air defense systems to repel the attack and shot down 14 missiles, Zelenskyy said.

The Ukrainian leader has pleaded with foreign supporters to send more of the sophisticated systems. In the Odesa region, Russian drones struck a busy street in Chornomorsk, killing two people and injuring seven others, regional military administration chief Oleh Kiper said. Mariia Kalchenko said it was a miracle she survived after her building was hit. "I didn't hear anything, I just realized that my hair was on fire," the 46-year-old volunteer rescue dog handler told The Associated Press.

She turned on her flashlight and saw that her dog had moved away in fright. "I turned around and saw that there was no wall, and there was a neighbor's apartment, the neighbor was screaming, there was no door, and the flames were going from the front door into the apartment," she said.

Oleh Hudyma, 59, said she became aware of the attack and intended to go to a bomb shelter but she wasn't quick enough. "I got up, got dressed, went out, and there was an explosion. I couldn't hear the (drone) engine running, just an explosion, flames, everything flew," she said. "I was in the kitchen and just fell to the floor."

City authorities warned that power and water outages are possible.

Eight of the capital's 10 districts reported damage. Emergency crews fought fires in apartment blocks, debris from explosions was strewn across yards and cars parked in the streets were set ablaze.

In the wider Kyiv region, Russian strikes damaged critical infrastructure and private homes, injuring at least one civilian, the head of the regional military administration, Mykola Kalashnyk, said. A 55-year-old man in Bila Tserkva suffered burns and was hospitalized, he said. Fires broke out in private houses in the capital's suburbs.

The strike came as European Union officials warned this week that Ukraine must continue to crack down on corruption following a major graft scandal that has put top nuclear energy officials under scrutiny. But they also offered assurances that aid will continue to flow as Kyiv strains to hold back Russia's invasion.Russia accuses Ukraine of hitting civilian sites

Ukraine has responded by launching its own domestically developed drones and missiles against targets on Russian soil, especially oil refineries and depots that provide Moscow with income and manufacturing plants that supply the armed forces.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Friday that its air defense forces shot down 216 Ukrainian drones overnight over a number of Russian regions, including the annexed Crimea. It did not mention missiles.

However, Zelenskyy said Ukraine used a modification of domestically produced Neptune missiles to strike targets deep inside Russia. The Russian Defense Ministry accused Ukraine of hitting civilian facilities and claimed the overnight strike on Kyiv came in response to that.

Over 60 Ukrainian drones were intercepted over the southern Krasnodar region that borders Crimea, according to the Defense Ministry. A total of 45 drones were destroyed over the Saratov region deeper inside Russia, while another 19 were shot down over Crimea.

In Novorossiysk, a port city in the Krasnodar region, the attack damaged an oil depot at the Sheskharis transshipment complex, as well as unidentified "coastal structures," local authorities said.

According to the Meduza independent news outlet, Sheskharis is one of the largest oil loading complexes for transshipment of oil and oil products in the south of Russia.

Jaishankar meets UN Chief Guterres in New York

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ United Nations

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres here and said he valued the UN chief's assessment of the current global order and its implications for multilateralism and also thanked him for consistent support for India's growth.

"Good to meet with UNSG @antonioguterres in New York today. Valued his assessment of the current global order and its implications for multilateralism. Also appreciated his perspectives on various regional hotspots," Jaishankar said in a post on social media on Thursday (local time). Jaishankar met Guterres in the UN headquarters and was accompanied by India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador P Harish, Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Yojna Patel and officials from the Permanent Mission of India to the UN.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres during a meeting in New York AP

China, Thailand pledge closer ties

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Beijing

China's leader Xi Jinping and Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn pledged closer ties on Friday during the first-ever visit to China by a reigning Thai monarch.

Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, greeted Vajiralongkorn and his wife, Queen Suthida, at Beijing's vast Great Hall of the People. The visit was intended to mark the 50th anniversary of the countries establishing diplomatic ties.

Xi described China and Thailand as "truly good relatives, good friends and good partners," according to the state-run Xinhua news agency. Beijing was looking forward to boosting agricultural imports from Thailand and advancing cooperation in fields such as railway development, artificial intelligence and aerospace, Xi said.

Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn and Chinese President Xi Jinping review the honour guard during a welcoming ceremony in Beijing AP

Bodies of 15 Palestinians returned by Israel: Gaza health officials

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Khan Younis

Israel returned the bodies of 15 Palestinians to Gaza on Friday, officials at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis said, in the latest step to fulfilling the terms of the fragile US-brokered ceasefire agreement.

The bodies were returned after militants late Thursday handed over the body of one of the last four remaining Israeli hostages taken during the October 7, 2023, attack that launched the war in Gaza. Israel identified the returned body as that of Meny Godard, who was abducted from Kibbutz Be'eri in southern Israel.

His wife, Ayelet, was killed during the attack. The armed wings of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad said Godard's body was recovered in southern Gaza.

The remains of 25 hostages have been returned to Israel since the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas began on October 10.

There are still three more in Gaza that need to be recovered and handed over. Hamas returned 20 living hostages to Israel on October 13. For each hostage returned, Israel has released the remains of 15 Palestinians, an exchange central to the ceasefire's first phase. Overall, the number of bodies of Palestinians received so far is 330, of which only 95 have been formally identified, according to Gaza Health Ministry officials. Health officials in Gaza have said identifying the remains handed over by Israel is complicated by a lack of DNA testing kits. The exchanges have gone ahead even as Israel and Hamas have accused each other of violating other terms of the deal. Israel has accused Hamas handing over partial remains in some instances and staging the discovery of bodies in others, while Hamas has accused Israel of opening fire at civilians and restricting the flow of humanitarian aid into the territory.

The next parts of the 20-point plan call for creating an international stabilization force, forming a technocratic Palestinian Government and disarming Hamas. The fragile agreement aims to wind down the war that was triggered by the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel that killed about 1,200 people and saw 251 taken hostage.

Israel responded with a sweeping military offensive that has killed more than 69,100 Palestinians in Gaza, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

Red Cross convoy carrying the body of a person believed to be a deceased hostage handed over by Hamas militants makes its way toward the border crossing with Israel, to be transferred to Israeli authorities in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza Strip AP

Palestinians held for 12 hours on South Africa plane

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Johannesburg

South African authorities faced heavy criticism on Friday after they held more than 150 Palestinians, including a woman who is nine months pregnant, on a plane for around 12 hours due to complications with their travel documents.

A pastor who was allowed to meet with the passengers while they were still stuck on the plane said it was very extremely and that children were screaming and crying.

The Palestinians landed on a charter plane at Johannesburg's OR Tambo International Airport on Thursday morning after a stopover in Nairobi, Kenya, South Africa's Border Management Authority said in a statement.

The Palestinian passengers did not have exit stamps from Israeli authorities, did not indicate how long they would be staying in South Africa and had not given local addresses, leading immigration authorities to deny them entry, the statement said.

The 153 passengers including families and children were allowed to leave the plane on Thursday night after South Africa's Ministry of Home Affairs intervened and a local non-governmental organization called Gift of the Givers offered to accommodate them. The Border Management Authority said 23 passengers had since travelled on to other countries, leaving 130 in South Africa.

THE PALESTINIAN PASSENGERS DID NOT HAVE EXIT STAMPS FROM ISRAELI AUTHORITIES

Gift of the Givers founder Imtiaz Sooliman said it was the second plane carrying Palestinians to land in South Africa in the last two weeks and that the passengers themselves did not know where they were going. He said both planes were believed to be carrying people from war-torn Gaza.

It was not immediately clear who organized the charter plane. A South African pastor who was given access to the plane while it was on the tarmac told national broadcaster SABC that many of the Palestinians now intended to claim asylum in South Africa. South Africa has long been a supporter of the Palestinian cause and the treatment of the travellers has sparked anger.

UN human rights body holds special session on Sudan

ASSOCIATED PRESS Geneva

The UN's top human rights body was holding a one-day special session Friday to highlight hundreds of killings at a hospital in Sudan's Darfur region and other atrocities committed last month by paramilitary forces fighting the army. The Human Rights Council was also debating a draft resolution calling on an existing team of independent experts to carry out an urgent inquiry into the killings and other rights violations in the city of el-Fasher by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary. "The atrocities that are unfolding in el-Fasher were foreseen and preventable, but they were not prevented. They constitute the gravest of crimes," said Volker Turk, the UN human rights chief. Last month the RSF seized el-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, and rampaged through the Saudi Hospital in the city, killing more than 450 people, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). RSF fighters went house to house, killing civilians and committing sexual assaults.

Turk said "none of us should be surprised" by reports, since the RSF took control of the city, of "mass killings of civilians, ethnically targeted executions, sexual violence including gang rape, abductions for ransom, widespread arbitrary detentions, attacks on health facilities, medical staff and humanitarian workers, and other appalling atrocities."

Druze group, Syria force clash in Sweida

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Damascus

A new round of clashes between Druze armed groups and Government forces in the province of Sweida in southern Syrian had subsided Friday but left fears of another escalation. Clashes on Thursday led to both sides blaming each other for violating a ceasefire that ended several days of violent fighting in July. There were reports of people wounded on both sides, but no deaths reported. The National Guard, the de facto military in Sweida, accused Government forces of launching an attack on the town of al-Majdal Thursday, "employing heavy and medium weapons and attack drones, in an aggressive attempt to breach our defence lines and target vital locations."

PROSPECT

Parliamentarians pays floral tributes to Jawaharlal Nehru

Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju; Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, KC Venugopal, Rajiv Shukla, JP Agarwal, Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha Harivansh; Members of Parliament, former Members and other dignitaries paid floral tributes at the portrait of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, former Prime Minister, in the Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan, on his birth anniversary, on Friday.

Secretary General of Lok Sabha Utpal Kumar Singh and Secretary General of Rajya Sabha PC Mody also paid floral tributes on this occasion. The portrait of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was unveiled by the then President of India, Dr S. Radhakrishnan, in the Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan (then Parliament House) on 05 May 1966.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is speaking while inaugurating a new office building for BDO of Ramcharini block, Kamrup Metro

STAIRS foundation launches swimming programme

The STAIRS Foundation – The Society for Transformation, Inclusion and Recognition through Sports – a National Sports Promotion Organisation (NSPO) recognised by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, announced today that Rajkumar, Senior Vice President of the Swimming Federation of India, will serve as the discipline mentor for its flagship National Swimming Development Program (NSDP).

The initiative marks a major step in the foundation's mission to transform India's swimming ecosystem from grassroots to the global stage.The National Swimming Development Program aims to establish an inclusive, sustainable and structured pathway for swimmers across India. By integrating advanced coaching techniques, modern training frameworks and access to quality infrastructure, the program seeks to nurture talent capable of competing at the Olympics, World Championships and Asian Games.

Anil Ambani offers virtual appearance before ED

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has issued fresh summons to Reliance Group chairman Anil Ambani to appear before it on November 17 in a FEMA case after he skipped his scheduled date on Friday. Ambani offered "virtual means" and officials said the agency rejected his offer to depose through virtual.

In a statement, a spokesperson of the 66-year-old businessman said he has written to the federal probe agency assuring "full cooperation" in the probe.

The agency had asked Ambani to appear before it in person on Friday and get his statement recorded under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA). The investigation pertains to the Jaipur-Reengus highway project.

In an earlier statement, the ED had said that after recently attaching assets worth ₹7,500 crore belonging to Ambani and his companies under the anti-money laundering law, a search carried out against Reliance Infrastructure Ltd found that an alleged ₹40 crore was "siphoned" from the highway project.

"Funds moved through Surat-based shell companies to Dubai. The trail has unearthed a wider international hawala network exceeding ₹600 crore," the agency had said.

The ED has recorded the statement of various persons, including some alleged hawala dealers, following which they decided to summon Ambani, said officials.

"The matter (FEMA case) is 15 years old, dates to 2010. It concerns issues associated with a road contractor," statement said issued by Ambani Group. In 2010, Reliance Infrastructure Ltd awarded an EPC (engineering, procurement and construction) contract to build the JR Toll Road (Jaipur-Reengus highway), it said.

"This was a purely domestic contract with no foreign exchange component involved whatsoever. The JR Toll Road has been fully completed and from 2021 onwards, has been with the National Highways Authority of India," the statement said, adding that Ambani is not a member of the Board of Reliance Infrastructure.

"He served the company for about 15 years, from April 2007 to March 2022, only as a non-executive director, and was never involved in day-to-day management of the company," it said.

The businessman has once been questioned by the ED in a money laundering case linked to an alleged ₹17,000 crore worth bank fraud against his group companies.

Jachep Tso adventure trek shows spirit of courage and endurance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Itanagar

The Jachep Tso Adventure Trek was successfully conducted in the high-altitude regions of Eastern Arunachal Pradesh, reflecting the adventurous spirit and unwavering determination of Indian Army personnel.

The expedition aimed to promote physical fitness, endurance and environmental awareness while nurturing a sense of teamwork and self-reliance among participants.

Trekking through rugged mountain terrain and extreme weather conditions, the team demonstrated exceptional resilience and discipline.

The initiative also sought to highlight the importance of adventure activities as a vital component of military training, streng-thening mental robustness and adapt-ability in chall-enging environments.

The trek further reinforced the Army's commitment to promoting adventure sports and fostering a spirit of exploration in the remote and scenic landscapes of Arunachal Pradesh.

Such initiatives not only build character but also inspire local youth towards fitness, environmental conservation and national pride.

During his visit to the region, the General Officer Commanding, Dao Division, lauded the participants for their spirit of adventure and perseverance, commending their efforts in exemplifying the Army's ethos of courage, camaraderie and resilience in every endeavour.

SSB-Nepal Police Force meeting concludes successfully

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The 9th Annual Coordination Meeting between the Indian delegation headed by the Director General, Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), India and the Nepali delegation led by Inspector General, Armed Police Force (APF), Nepal, concluded successfully in New Delhi today, reaffirming the mutual commitment of both nations to further strengthen cross-border security cooperation and coordination.

The Indian delegation was led by Shri Sanjay Singhal, Director General, SSB and comprised senior officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs and SSB. The Nepali delegation was headed by Shri Raju Aryal, Inspector General, APF and included representatives from the APF, Nepal Police, National Investigation Department, Nepal and the Embassy of Nepal in New Delhi.

During the meeting, both sides reviewed the implementation status of decisions taken during the 8th Annual Coordination Meeting and assessed the prevailing security scenario along the Indo-Nepal Border (INB). The discussions centered on enhancing intelligence sharing mechanisms and intensifying joint efforts to curb trans-border crimes such as narcotics trafficking, smuggling of wildlife and forest produce, circulation of Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN) and human trafficking.

Both delegations also deliberated on effective measures to regulate the movement of third-country nationals, address issues related to encroachment in No Man's Land and expedite the repair and maintenance of boundary pillars.

Emphasis was placed on expanding the scope of coordinated patrols, conducting joint training and disaster management exercises and promoting exchange programmes between SSB and APF personnel to foster greater mutual understanding and operational synergy. SSB also reiterated its commitment to extend training and capacity-building support to APF officers in specialised areas of border management.

The meeting concluded with both sides expressing satisfaction over the outcomes and reiterating their resolve to maintain seamless cooperation for ensuring peace and security along the Indo-Nepal Border.

After the successful completion of 9th India-Nepal coordination meeting the Nepali delegation members called on Shri. Govind Mohan, Home Secretary to the Govt. of India. The 10th Annual Coordination Meeting between SSB and APF will be hosted by Nepal in 2026.

Exhibitors from 11 countries at 14-day ITF

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Exhibitors and traders from 11 countries including those from Sweden, China and South Korea are showcasing their products at the India International Trade Fair (IITF) which was inaugurated at *Bharat Mandapam* here on Friday.

The 44th edition of the global trade fair will continue until November 27, with the first five days (November 14-18) earmarked as business days for B2B interactions, followed by the days for general public beginning November 19. This trade fair has emerged as one of the biggest events for not only India but for the entire South Asia, Jitin Prasada, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, said in his address after inaugurating the fair.

Folk artists at the India International Trade Fair, at Pragati Maidan, in New Delhi on Friday

He said this is not just an exhibition but a showcase of India's power, stressing upon its role in supporting MSMEs. Reflecting the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a "*Viksit Bharat* by 2047", this year's fair is themed "*Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat*".

The theme celebrates India's diversity, entrepreneurial energy and the nation's commitment to *Aatmanirbhar Bharat*, aligning deeply with the ethos of the *Swadeshi movement* promoting local enterprise, indigenous innovation and sustainable economic growth, according to an official statement. The fair, organised by the India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO), is a platform for business collaborations, technology exchange and investment partnerships. As many as 11 countries including Thailand, Malaysia, Sweden, China, South Korea, Turkey, Egypt, UAE, Iran, Lebanon and Tunisia are presenting their products and innovations at the International Pavilion, the statement said.

Besides, participating states and Union Territories are also showcasing their distinct strengths, crafts and innovations across thematic halls. Bihar, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh are the Partner States, while Jharkhand has been designated as the Focus State, it said.

Singapore-based man held in Delhi bank fraud case: CBI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The CBI has arrested a Singapore-based man from a hotel near Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport in connection with a ₹32-crore bank fraud, officials said on Friday.

The man, identified as Rajesh Bothra, was traced and picked up by the agency following a tip-off about his arrival in Delhi. The fraud case stems from a complaint by the Punjab National Bank (PNB), which alleged that ₹31.60 crore were swindled by Frost Infrastructure and Energy Pvt Ltd (FIEL), its directors, unidentified public servants, among others, according to a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) statement.

The agency said that the FIEL siphoned off Letter of Credit (LC) proceeds by submitting forged bills of lading, fraudulently depicting trade between the FIEL and two firms — FAREAST and Gulf Distribution Ltd — which belonged to Bothra.

It was alleged that the company defrauded the bank by availing the Foreign Letter of Credit (FLC) limit from the bank, it said.

"Investigation so far has revealed that Bothra played an active role in the conspiracy with the company FIEL and its directors, by providing bogus bills of lading and falsely showing sale and purchase transactions of the FIEL with FAREAST and Gulf Distribution Ltd.," a CBI spokesperson said.

The bogus bills were submitted by the FIEL to the bank, through which the company siphoned off the LC proceeds, causing a "wrongful loss of approximately ₹32 crore to PNB", according to the spokesperson.

BRIEFLY

VAIBHAV HITS SECOND FASTEST T20 TON BY INDIAN

Young sensation Vaibhav Suryavanshi struck the joint second fastest century by an Indian batter in T20 cricket, off 32 balls, for India A against United Arab Emirates in the Asia Cup Rising Stars competition here Friday.

The 14-year-old opening batter smacked a total of 15 sixes and 11 fours to make 144 off 42 balls, while equalling the mark of India wicketkeeper batter Rishabh Pant who had a 32-ball century for Delhi against Himachal Pradesh in 2018.

His blitz powered India A to a huge total of 297/4 in 20 overs in which skipper Jitesh Sharma scored a 32-ball 83 (8x4s, 6x6s).

The record for the fastest century by an Indian batter in T20s is jointly held by Indian opener and world No 1 T20I batter Abhishek Sharma and Gujarat's Urvil Patel, who both had scored 28-ball tons in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy in 2024-25.

Suryavanshi, who made his debut in the IPL last season, already holds the record for the second fastest century in the competition off 35 balls, when he scored 101 off 38 balls for Rajasthan Royals against Gujarat Titans.

SHAMI SET TO BE SOLD TO LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS

Sunrisers Hyderabad are set to trade out-of-favour India pacer Mohammed Shami to Lucknow Super Giants ahead of the 2026 Indian Premier League (IPL).

SRH had acquired the services of the 35-year-old pacer for ₹10 crore at the auction last year.

"Both franchise have agreed to the trade," a source in the know of things said

Shami endured an underwhelming season last year with SRH. In nine outings he managed just six wickets at an average of 56.16 with an economy rate of 11.23.

Once India's pace spearhead, Shami has also been unable to make the national team due to fitness concerns. He last played for the 'Men in Blue' in the final of the Champions Trophy in March this year.

The deadline to submit the list of players the franchises want to release from their squad is

FIDE World Cup: Harikrishna draws first game with Jose

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Panaji

Indian Grandmaster P Harikrishna started his fifth round campaign with a relatively easy draw against Jose Eduardo Martinex Alcantara of Mexico in the first game of the fifth round of the FIDE World Cup on Friday.

Up against someone who has defied all odds to be in the fifth round, Harikrishna knew that Martinez could be a force to reckon with if given his type of position.

However, the immense experience of the Indian came to the fore as he chose the Two Knights variation as black against the Italian opening of the Peruvian-Mexican Grandmaster.

Martinez had two upset victories in the last two matches against Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan and Alexey Sarana of Serbia but he did not get much with his white pieces against the Indian who has himself been in top form here with very clean games thus far.

The middle game featured routine manoeuvres with Martinez having an extra pawn at the cost of a fractured pawn structure and his choice of going for a queen exchange in the middle game was indication enough that he had not found his best trait in this round.

If there is one thing that does not bother Harikrishna much, it's the endgame. The Indian is known for his expertise in this department of the game and despite being a pawn less, he had no problems whatsoever in getting a draw in 41 moves.

With just 16 players out of 206 participants that started the event remaining in the fray, most of the players decided against taking undue risk and wait for the next game. As a result, the all-Russian duel between Andrey Esipenko and Aleksey Grebnev ended in a draw without much ado while Armenian Gabriel Sargissian also got a same result with Nodirbek Yakubboev of Uzbekistan.

In another drawn game among the eight rounds, Alexander Doncheko of Germany signed peace with Liem Le Quang of Vietnam.

The $2 million prize money event will see some heated battles in the rounds to come as the players train their eyes to get a place in the top three in order to qualify for the next Candidates tournament.

The Candidates will be played next year to determine the challenger for D Gukesh in the next world championship contest.

Caruana Fabiano of United States, Anish Giri of Holland and Matthias Bluebaum of Germany have already qualified for the event while Indian R Praggnanadhaa is also almost assured of a place among the eight qualifying places. Hikaru Nakamura of United States is also most likely assured a place while the remaining three will be picked from here.

Available results round 5 game 1: Javokhir Sindarov playing Frederic Svane; Arjun Erigaisi playing Levon Aronia; Sam Shankland playing Daniil Dubov; Alexander Donchenko drew with Liem Le Quang; Gabriel Sargissian drew with Nodirbek Yakubboev; Andrey Esipenko drew with Aleksey Grebnev; Sevian Samuel playing Wei Yi; Jose Eduardo Martinez Alcantara drew with P Harikrishna.

Junior hockey WC stepping stone to success: Sreejesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Indian men's junior hockey team chief coach PR Sreejesh on Friday advised his wards to consider the upcoming World Cup as a stepping stone in their careers, keeping their sights firmly set on the 2028 Los Angeles and 2032 Brisbane Olympics.

The veteran goalkeeper, who represented India in four Olympics winning two back-to-back bronze medals in the Tokyo and Paris Games, said handling pressure and gaining experience will be the most important learnings for the youngsters from the Junior World Cup.

"For the juniors this is one of the greatest milestone of their career because from here the journey starts for senior level. One thing I always tell these guys is dream about 2028 or 2032 because you are not meant to be juniors forever.

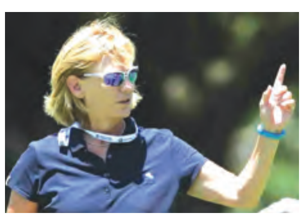
"They have a long vision about their future, their career but this is one of the best stepping stones for them from where they can start their career," Sreejesh said in a virtual media interaction after India announced an 18-member team under the leadership of dragflicker Rohit for the marque event.

"I always tell them dream big. There are a lot of players in the senior team who never played a Junior World Cup. This is a place where you gain experience because this is a World Cup. It will give them experience, teach pressure management, how to overcome challenges. This is a great platform for them," he added.

The FIH Junior Men's World Cup will be co-hosted by Chennai and Madurai from November 28 till December 10. The 37-year-old legendary goalkeeper has seen it all during his illustrious career, be it success, failure, pressure or disappointments. As a coach, he is trying to help the youngsters understand how to cope up with these things.

India men's hockey to work with Dr Calder on coordination

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi



In a bid to improve players' hand-eye co-ordination, Hockey India has roped in renowned South African eye specialist Dr Sherylle Calder to work with the men's hockey team till next year's Asian Games, chief coach Craig Fulton said on Friday.

Calder, who specialises in hand-eye, foot and body co-ordination, is the go-to woman for some of the top athletes of the world.

Her EyeGym programmes have helped improve the performance of elite athletes such as golfer Ernie Els and Mercedes F1 driver Valtteri Bottas.

Born in Cape Town and raised in Bloemfontein, she has also worked with the South African rugby and cricket teams.

"We will have a strikers camp, goalkeepers camp and hand-eye-specialist Dr Calder will be working with us in December in Cape Town," Fulton said.

"She is specialised person in improving hand-eye co-ordination. Before any decisions are made you need to be able to see the ball, see what's in front of you and it's the ability to train that and react faster.

"Hand-eye co-ordination is everything to do with goalkeepers, with hockey players.

Like being a cricketer watching the ball out of the hands, you have a split second to make a decision, so we we are working on that in the build up to the World Cup and the Asian Games.

"She will work remote mostly, sometime online and sometime on the field. Starting December she is going to work with us till World Cup and Asian Games.

The Pioneer
NEW DELHI | SATURDAY | NOVEMBER 15, 2025

India lead against South Africa in Test

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Kolkata

India's Jasprit Bumrah celebrating with teammates after taking his fifth wicket during the first day of the first Test cricket match between India and South Africa at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata PTI

Jasprit Bumrah turned a rare four-spinner gamble into his personal stage, producing a mesmerising exhibition of seam, swing and control as India skittled out South Africa for 159 on the opening day of the first Test on Friday.

On a surface that drew pre-match scrutiny for its dry look, prompting India to field four spinners for the first time since 2012, it was India's pace star who made the ball talk the loudest, returning a superb 14-2-27-5, his 16 five-wicket hauls in 96 innings.

Bumrah produced a masterclass across little over two sessions, as South Africa crashed from a commanding 57 for no loss in 10 overs to lose all 10 wickets for just 102 runs in next 45 overs, with their innings lasting just four hours and 13 minutes after opting to bat.

It's South Africa's second-lowest total after a fifty-plus opening stand in men's Tests since their readmission. The lowest is 130 in their second innings in the 2018 Cape Town Test, also against India after a 52-run opening stand.

India ended the day at 37 for one in 20 overs, with a resolute KL Rahul (13 batting from 59 balls) and Washington Sundar (six batting; 38 balls) steady at the crease after Yashasvi Jaiswal (12) dragged Marco Jansen onto his stumps while playing close to his body.

The duo looked in no hurry on a pitch offering spice and variable bounce as they cut the deficit to 122 runs in front of a sizeable Eden crowd of 36,000-plus.

As light faded, South Africa crowded the bat with close-in fielders, hoping for a late breakthrough and used five bowlers. But Rahul and Sundar stayed calm and assured, seeing out the final overs without further damage.

South Africa, missing their lead pacer Kagiso Rabada due to a rib injury, had looked primed for a big score after Aiden Markram (31 from 48 balls; 5x4, 1x6) and Ryan Rickelton's (23 off 22b; 4x4) brisk opening stand.

Markram, after 23 dot balls, opened up with a straight drive and a flowing cover drive, later twice punishing Axar Patel and unfurling a deft late cut past backward point.

He also launched Axar for a wristy six over midwicket as the run-rate surged above five an over. At the other end, Rickelton's hit-and-miss 22 off 23 (4x4) added to India's frustration.

But just before the drinks break in the opening session, Bumrah from the Clubhouse end turned the morning on its head with two wickets in five balls across successive overs in his first spell that read 7-4-9-2.

A 140 kmph length ball straightened late to uproot Rickelton's off stump, and minutes later a short-of-length delivery leapt spitefully to take Markram's glove — the contrast in bounce summing up the pitch's variable nature. He returned after lunch to trap Tony de Zorzi (24) in front with one that skidded through, before closing out the second session with reverse swing that split open the tail. Simon Harmer's stumps were sent cartwheeling, and three balls later Keshav Maharaj was pinned plumb in front.

Having leaked 34 runs from six overs in the first session, Mohammed Siraj (2/47) delivered a sharp twin strike in the second session, removing Kyle Verreynne and Marco Jansen in four balls in his 10th over.

Verreynne (16) burned South Africa's last review after being struck pad-then-bat, while Jansen was breached by a reversing length ball that darted in.

Kuldeep Yadav (2/29) chipped in with the key wicket of skipper Temba Bavuma, snared smartly at leg slip by Dhruv Jurel, and later removed a compact-looking Wiaan Mulder (24).

After the early losses of Bavuma and the openers, Mulder and Tony de Zorzi tried to steady the innings with circumspect batting.

Mulder applied himself for more than 50 balls, looked compact against India's four-pronged spin attack, but lost focus 15 minutes into the second session.

Asian Archery Championship: Ankita, Dhiraj win gold in recurve events

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Dhaka

Ankita Bhakat capped a sensational day, stunning Paris Olympics silver-medallist Nam Suhyeon of South Korea 7-3 while Dhiraj Bommadevara also won his final as India clinched gold medals in both men's and women's event at the Asian Archery Championship on Friday.

Dhiraj defeated compatriot Rahul 6-2 in the final to make it a 1-2 for India.

Ankita had earlier knocked out her longtime senior teammate, former world No. 1 Deepika, in the semifinals. Locked at 5-5, both archers shot a nine in the shoot-off, but Ankita's arrow was closer to the centre, sending her into the title clash. Ankita began the final in commanding fashion, firing two 10s to take the opening set 29-27. The second set ended in a scrappy 27-27 draw as both archers faltered. Ankita slipped to an 8 while Nam dropped to a 7.

Nam levelled the match by claiming the third set 28-26, with Ankita unable to find a single 10. But the Indian hit back brilliantly in the fourth, nailing two 10s in a superb 29-28 effort to lead 5-3.

Showing steely composure in the decider, Ankita once again delivered two 10s to clinch the gold, completing a breakthrough triumph against one of Asia's most consistent performers. India also secured the women's recurve bronze after Sangeeta edged out veteran five-time Olympian Deepika Kumari 6-5 in a dramatic shoot-off.

Indian contingent ended its campaign with 10 medals — six gold, three silver and one bronze medal to top the standings.

In the men's final, having lost the first set, Dhiraj was near flawless to knock out 33 year-old veteran Jang Chaehwan 6-2 to enter the final.

The Indian lost the first set by one point, but came back strongly with three 10s and take the second set and bring it 2-2 level. He continued his menacing form with two successive 10s and one 9 to take the third set 29-27 and make it 4-2. He drilled in another hat-trick of 10s to seal the win.

Lakshya Sen cruises into semifinals of Japan Masters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Kumamoto (Japan)

Top Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen registered an upset straight-game win over former world champion Loh Kean Yew of Singapore to storm into the semifinals of the $475,000 Kumamoto Masters Japan on Friday.

Commonwealth Games champion Sen, seeded seventh, produced a superlative performance to outclass world number 9 Loh 21-13 21-17 in 40 minutes, extending his dominance over the Singaporean with a seventh win in 10 career meetings.

Sen, who endured a lean patch before rediscovering his touch with a runner-up finish at the Hong Kong Open followed by quarterfinal appearances at the Denmark and Hylo Open, will now face Japan's sixth seed and world number 13 Kenta Nishimoto in the last four stage.

Coming in with a 6-3 head-to-head lead, Sen, the 2021 World Championship bronze winner, displayed impressive all-round control to dismantle Loh, who has been struggling for some time.

The two were tied 4-4 early in the opening game before Sen broke away to take an 11-8 lead at the interval. He reeled off six straight points after the break to move 18-9 ahead and comfortably closed out the game.

Loh showed better resistance in the second game, staying level with Sen at 9-9, but the Indian once again pulled ahead to 15-9. The Singaporean narrowed the gap to 17-18, but Sen held firm to seal the match.

Bangladesh beats Ireland in the first cricket Test

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Sylhet (Bangladesh)

Opener Mahmudul Hasan Joy and captain Najmul Hossain Shanto scored centuries as Bangladesh defeated Ireland by an innings and 47 runs in the first cricket Test on Friday.

Joy's career-best 171 and Shanto's 100 guided Bangladesh to 587-8 (declared) before Ireland was bowled out for 286 in its first innings. Needing 301 runs to force Bangladesh to bat a second time, Ireland was dismissed for 254 in the second session on Day 4.

Electing to bat first in the opener of a two-test series, Ireland got half-centuries from Paul Stirling and Cade Carmichael, who added 96 runs after the departure of captain Andy Balbirnie for a duck.

Stirling survived twice before being dismissed by 60 runs and Carmichael added 59. Offspinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz, who claimed 3-50, ripped through the Irish middle order before Curtis Campher and Lorcan Tucker shared 53 runs to steady the innings.

Debutant Hasan Murad removed both of them to finished with 2-47 and effectively ruined Ireland's prospect to get past 300.

PCB gives option of six cities to pick two new PSL teams

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Lahore

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has given the option of six cities to parties interested in bidding for the right to own the two new teams in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) for the next 10-years.

The PCB said after a meeting between the PSL CEO Salman Naseer and the existing franchise owners/representatives that bidders for the two new teams can choose from Hyderabad, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Muzaffarabad, Gilgit and Rawalpindi.

Tenders will be issued for the two new teams in the next few days according to the PCB and the process to sell ownership rights would be completed by next month.

The PCB also said that the process for independent valuation of the existing franchises and the two new teams and other commercial assets had been completed by the international auditors. "The audit firm has sent renewal letters to the six franchises reflecting the new annual franchise fees for the next 10 years and the teams have been requested to revert with their decisions in the given time frame," one official said.

A reliable source said that the auditors had recommended an increase of 75 to 150 percent for the existing franchises Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, Peshawar, Quetta and Multan.

Printed and published by Kushan Mitra for and on behalf of CMYK Printech Ltd., Regd Office:- 201-205, 208-210, 2nd Floor, Pratap Bhawan 5, B.S.Z. Marg, New Delhi-110002 Phone: 011-46035729, 011-69342500 and printed at The Indian Express Ltd., A-8, Sector 7, Dist. Gautam Budh Nagar (U.P.) Noida-201 301, Ph: 01202470700. Executive Editor Deepak Kumar Jha. AIR SURCHARGE of ₹2.00 East: Calcutta, North: Leh West: Mumbai & Ahmedabad South: Bangalore & Chennai. Central : Khajuraho. Lucknow Office: 4th Floor, Sahara Shopping Centre, Faizabad Road, Lucknow-226 016. Telephones: 0522-2346443, 2346444, 2346445.