

India Monitor

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SIR shadow hangs over Winter Session as Oppn demands debate

Monitor News Service

NEW DELHI, NOV 30

The Winter Session of Parliament opens on Monday under mounting political tension, with the Special Intensive Revision, SIR, of electoral rolls emerging as the dominant flashpoint. Several Opposition parties have warned that they may disrupt proceedings in both Houses if a debate on SIR is not permitted, setting the stage for a contentious 15 day session that could be the shortest in parliamentary history.

At Sunday's all party meeting, convened by the government to seek cooperation for smooth functioning, Opposition leaders pushed strongly for a structured discussion on SIR as well as national security concerns following the Delhi blast. Air pollution in the capital, unemployment, price rise, foreign policy, labour codes and charges of governors withholding bills passed by state legislatures were also raised. The government said it would con-



Union Ministers Rajnath Singh, JP Nadda, Kiren Rijiju, Arjun Ram Meghwal, JD(U) MP Sanjay Jha and others during the all-party meeting ahead of Parliament's winter session. PTI

tinue to engage with all parties and appealed for calm deliberation.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, BJP president J P Nadda and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju

were among those present, alongside 50 leaders from 36 parties. Rijiju urged restraint, saying Parliament must not be stalled and that cooperation would strengthen democracy.

On SIR, he said the Business Advisory Committee would decide the agenda, acknowledging differences but noting that other issues had also been flagged.

Opposition parties, however, described the meeting as merely procedural. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the session was being rushed, with 13 bills listed and little time for scrutiny. He warned that new legislation could be introduced without prior notice. His colleague Pramod Tiwari added that denial of a debate on SIR would indicate the government "does not want Parliament to function".

The Samajwadi Party took one of the strongest stands, with Ramgopal Yadav declaring that the House would not be allowed to function without a discussion. He claimed SIR was flawed and alleged that booth level officers had taken their lives due to pressure to delete specific votes. CPI M leader John Brittas said the government would bear full responsibility if Parliament was disrupted.

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SIR schedule extended by one week; final roll now on Feb 14

NEW DELHI, NOV 30 / PTI

THE Election Commission on Sunday extended by one week the entire schedule of the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in nine states and three Union Territories amid allegations by opposition parties that "tight timelines" were creating problems for people and ground-level poll officials.

In a statement, the poll authority said the enumeration form distribution will now continue till December 11 instead of December 4. The draft electoral rolls will now be published on December 16 in place of December 9, while the final voters' list will be out on February 14, 2026.

Officials said the commission took the decision to extend the timeline for all phases of the SIR based on internal discussions with chief electoral officers of states and UTs where the exercise is underway.

Alleging at least 40 deaths of booth-level officers (BLOs) during the SIR, largely by suicides due to "stress of meeting tight deadlines", the opposition parties have questioned the

timing of the voters' list revision.

The EC has junked these charges, saying the exercise is going on smoothly.

Reacting to the EC's decision to revise the SIR schedule, Congress leader Pramod Tiwari said it was an indication that the poll panel knew the timelines were not "practical".

The decision to tweak the SIR schedule comes on the eve of the Winter Session of Parliament. The EC had announced SIR in these states and UTs on October 27. Nearly 51 crore electors will be covered in the massive voters' list cleanup exercise.

The states and UTs are: the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Puducherry, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Among these, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala, and West Bengal will go to the polls in 2026. In Assam, where also polls are due in 2026, the revision of electoral rolls was announced separately. It is being called 'Special Revision'.

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RBI may cut interest rate by 25 bps on Friday

Revathi Gowda / Agencies

MUMBAI, NOV 30

THE Reserve Bank of India may trim its benchmark lending rate by 25 basis points when the Monetary Policy Committee meets from December 3 to 5, but strong economic growth data has made the decision less certain than earlier expected. While several economists see room for a rate cut due to subdued inflation, others believe the central bank may maintain its pause to gauge sustainability of recent GDP gains.

Retail inflation, based on the consumer price index, has stayed below the 2 per cent lower band of the RBI's mandated target range for two consecutive months. This has fuelled expectations of a mild rate cut when RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra announces the policy decision on December 5.

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The central bank began easing rates in February, trimming the repo rate by a cumulative 100 basis points to 5.5 per cent before pausing in August.

"Inflation has undershot and growth has overshot this year," said a report by HDFC Bank, adding that lingering risks to growth in the second half of the fiscal and inflation projected to stay below 4 per cent until Q3 FY27 could still justify a 25 bps rate cut. However, it described the decision as "a close call".

The optimism stems from the latest GDP figure of 8.2 per cent for the July to September quarter, surprising analysts and easing concerns about a slowdown. Some experts argue that stronger growth, fuelled by public investment, fiscal consolidation and GST benefits, may prompt the RBI to hold rates steady for now.

Continued on page 2...

52nd ton: King Kohli smashes Tendulkar's record



Virat Kohli celebrates his 52nd century during the first ODI cricket match of the series between India and South Africa, at JSCA International Stadium Complex, in Ranchi. India won the cliffhanger by 17 runs. PTI (See also Page 11)

Verdict must not be tossed out with change of judge: Justice Nagarathna

NEW DELHI, NOV 30 / PTI

VERDICTS should not be "tossed out" merely because the judges who authored them have changed or demitted office, Supreme Court judge Justice BV Nagarathna said, as she flagged her concern over recent instances of judgements being overturned by succeeding benches of the apex court.

She was speaking at the International Convention on the Independence of the Judiciary at the OP Jindal Global University in Haryana's Sonipat on Saturday.

Justice Nagarathna said an evolved understanding of judicial independence warrants the "assurance by our system of laws" that a judgement once rendered by a judge will hold its anchor in time for it is written in "ink and not in sand."

"It is a duty of the many participants of the legal fraternity and governance framework to respect a judgement for what it is, raise objections only in accordance with traditions embedded in law and not attempt to toss it out solely because the faces have changed," she said.

Earlier, this month the top court recalled its order passed in May that had barred retrospective environmental clearances for development projects.

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IPO pipeline swells; 2 dozen firms line up 40,000-cr public offers

NEW DELHI, NOV 30 / PTI

THE IPO momentum shows no signs of slowing, with another two dozen companies, including ICICI Prudential AMC, Meesho and Juniper Green Energy, preparing to launch their public issues that could collectively raise nearly Rs 40,000 crore over the next two months, merchant bankers said.

Adding to this robust pipeline are prominent names such as artificial intelligence firm Fractal Analytics, home and sleep solutions brand Wakefit Innovations, technology-led security and surveillance firm Inno-

vativue India, and hospital chain Park Medi World, they added.

This exceptional pipeline not only reflected the confidence of issuers but also highlighted investors' appetite to seize listing-day gains or back companies with strong long-term growth potential.

Moreover, companies across the spectrum -- large, mid- and small-caps -- are gearing up to tap the IPO route in the coming weeks.

Experts attribute this momentum to rising retail participation and resilient domestic inflows, which have been instrumental in sustaining the

fundraising surge.

So far this year, 96 companies have debuted on the stock exchanges, raising Rs 1.6 lakh crore. More than 40 of these listings occurred in the last three months alone, highlighting the heightened activity in the primary market.

In comparison, 91 public issues collectively mobilised Rs 1.6 lakh crore in 2024, supported by resilient retail participation, strong private capex, and a buoyant economy.

With several IPOs scheduled for December, the total fundraising in 2025 could touch Rs 2 lakh crore, setting a new record for India's primary

markets, said Thomas Stephen, Head - Preferred, Anand Rathi Share and Stock Brokers.

"This is remarkable given the global volatility and a muted secondary market. Strong domestic liquidity has supported high valuations, and mutual funds, earlier cautious on pre-IPO deals, are now meaningfully increasing allocations," Stephen added.

According to him, India's robust consumption story, aided by GST and income-tax rationalisation, has encouraged many consumer-facing businesses to consider listing.

Echoing this sentiment, Shantanu

Awasthi, Co-founder & CEO of Manavark, noted that companies previously hesitant about tapping the public markets now recognise that sustained growth will require substantial capital infusion.

The fundraising wave is expected to help firms finance expansion, capital expenditure, debt repayment, and other corporate purposes.

Among the key players in the upcoming IPO slate, ICICI Prudential AMC aims to raise Rs 10,000 crore in the second half of December, merchant bankers said.

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Pak-backed terror module linked to Gurdaspur grenade attack busted, three arrested

Vikram Singh

NEW DELHI, NOV 30

THE Special Cell of the Delhi Police has busted a Pakistan based terror module allegedly led by gangster turned terrorist Shahzad Bhatti, who is currently operating from across the border, officials said on Sunday. Three alleged operatives of the module have been arrested from Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

Additional Commissioner of Police, Special Cell, Pramod Singh Kushwah said a semi automatic pistol, ten live cartridges and mobile phones containing incriminating chats and reconnaissance videos were seized during the operation. The accused have been identified as Vikas Prajapati, also known as Betu, 19, from Datia in Madhya Pradesh, Hargunpreet Singh alias Gurkaranpreet Singh, 19, from Firozpur in Punjab, and Asif alias Arish, 22, from Bijnor in Uttar Pradesh.

Police said the busted module was involved in the November 25 grenade attack outside the City police station in Gurdaspur, Punjab. The attack, they alleged, was carried out on Bhatti's instructions. He has reportedly been using encrypted messaging apps and social media channels to coordinate operations remotely

from Pakistan. The breakthrough came after investigators began monitoring Bhatti's digital footprint and communication networks. Prajapati, wanted in an arms smuggling case, was found to be in frequent contact with Bhatti and was tracked between Gurdaspur and Delhi. Officers said Bhatti repeatedly instructed him to switch off his phone to avoid surveillance. Prajapati was eventually arrested in Madhya Pradesh after a two day manhunt.

During interrogation, he revealed the group's modus operandi. According to police, Bhatti and his associates scanned social media profiles of young Indians, targeting those influenced by gangster culture and luring them with money. The recruits were allegedly given instructions for reconnaissance and movement of weapons and were used as "disposable foot soldiers" for targeted attacks. Prajapati had allegedly received a parcel containing a grenade in Gurdaspur and conducted reconnaissance at two police stations – in Gurdaspur and at Town Hall in Amritsar – before handing over the explosive to another operative.

Police said Hargunpreet, a Class 12 graduate, confessed during questioning that he carried out the grenade attack on November 25.

Low turnout marks MCD bypolls in 12 wards

Anil Joseph

NEW DELHI, NOV 30

CIVIC concerns dominated voter sentiment as residents headed to polling booths on Sunday for the Municipal Corporation of Delhi by-elections in 12 wards across the capital. Issues such as sanitation, water supply, road repairs, safety and public lighting guided voter choices, even as overall turnout remained modest. Several voters said persistent problems in their neighbourhoods pushed them to cast their vote. Kamla Devi, 80, said she voted "hoping for better cleanliness" as garbage was rarely collected on time. "Our lanes remain dirty. Waste management must improve," she said. Savitri Sharma, 65, cited recurring waterlogging and damaged roads. "Every year the roads break, and water collects everywhere during the monsoon. We need long-term repairs, not temporary fixes," she said.

For many elderly residents, safety was also a concern. Kailash Prasad, 68, pointed to poorly lit streets and neglected parks. "There is darkness in many lanes. Parks are unsafe for seniors. We need working street lights and better security," he said. Others highlighted erratic water supply and lack of regular maintenance. Meena Verma, 63, said clean and dependable water remained the "most urgent need."



Delhi CM Rekha Gupta shows her ink-marked finger after casting her vote in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) bypolls, at Shalimar Bagh in New Delhi. PTI

Polling began at 7.30 am under tight security and continued till 5.30 pm. The State Election Commission said turnout stood at 31.3 per cent by 4 pm. Among the 12 wards, Chandni Mahal reported the highest voter turnout at 41.95 per cent, followed by Sangam Vihar-A at 38.62 per cent and Mundka at 37.82 per cent. Greater Kailash recorded the lowest turnout at 20.87 per cent, while Dwarka-B registered 23.72 per cent.

Officials said 580 polling booths were set up across 143 locations. The electoral exercise involved 2,320 election commission personnel, 580 home guards and 2,265 security personnel, along with 13 companies of the Central Armed Police Forces.

The bypolls have put the spotlight on grassroots issues at a time when the civic body faces mounting pressure over sanitation and infrastructure gaps. The elections also carry political significance, as they mark the first major face off between the BJP and AAP since the Assembly polls earlier this year. The BJP won 48 out

of 70 seats in the Assembly election, returning to power after 27 years and ousting AAP from the government. Of the 51 candidates in the fray, 26 are women. The BJP has fielded eight female candidates, followed by AAP with six and Congress with five. Of the 12 wards, nine were earlier held by the BJP and three by AAP.

Votes will be counted on December 3, with the results expected to give an early indication of voter sentiment in the national capital post the Assembly elections.

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SIR shadow hangs over Winter Session

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From the Trinamool Congress, Kalyan Banerjee said the party was willing to cooperate if the government reciprocated. He alleged that at least 40 people had died during the SIR exercise and accused the Election Commission of attempting to delete votes. He said the Opposition was hopeful of a debate rather than intent on stalling proceedings.

Despite the divisions, the government is preparing to push ahead with a substantial reform agenda. Fourteen bills are expected to be tak-

en up, including proposals to open the civil nuclear sector to private participation through the Atomic Energy Bill, 2025, and to establish the Higher Education Commission of India. The Securities Markets Code Bill, 2025, seeks to merge three existing market laws into a single framework, while amendments to central excise, highways, corporate law and labour legislation are also listed.

The session follows the NDA's sweeping victory in the Bihar Assembly elections and marks the first meeting of Parliament since the

results. However, the government stepped back from a contentious bill that would have granted wider powers to the President to legislate directly in Chandigarh, signalling caution amid rising criticism.

As the session begins, the test will be whether consensus can be built around debate rather than confrontation. With SIR at the forefront, the Winter Session may hinge on whether the government offers space for discussion on electoral transparency and national security – or risks a prolonged standoff in Parliament's shortest sitting yet.

SIR schedule extended by one week

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Most states had the last SIR of the voter list between 2002 and 2004, and they have nearly completed the mapping of current electors according to the last SIR held in their respective states. The primary aim of the SIR is to weed out foreign illegal migrants by checking their place of birth. The move assumes significance in the wake of a crackdown in various states on illegal migrants, including those from Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Vasant Kunj residents protest high-rise project



Residents of Sector B, Pocket 1, Vasant Kunj, raise slogans during a protest against the proposed construction of multi-storey buildings in the area, at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi. PTI

Monitor News Service

NEW DELHI, NOV 30

RESIDENTS of Vasant Kunj B-1 staged a sit-in at Jantar Mantar on Sunday, opposing the construction of luxury residential towers in the notified morphological ridge area. They alleged the project violates environmental laws, ridge protection guidelines and the approved layout plan of their housing society. Protesters said the proposed towers and four-level underground parking could endanger nearly 5,000 residents and schoolchildren living nearby. They also warned of ecological imbalance, increased pollution and structural risks. Dr Kamal Vichani of the B-1 RWA said large-scale construction was being carried out without any

mandatory environmental impact assessment. "The entire ecosystem is being destroyed without review," he said.

Resident Ajay Kumar Naulakha flagged safety concerns over the metro tunnel located just 50 to 60 metres from the site, warning that excavation and blasting could pose a serious threat. A teacher from Masonic Public School, Aisha, said students would face added stress due to noise, pollution and blocked ventilation. The residents urged the Delhi and Central governments, along with DDA and MCD, to halt construction and order an independent review of environmental and structural impact. They said internal roads and parking infrastructure were already inadequate and may be overwhelmed by the project.

RBI may cut interest rate by 25 bps on Friday

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Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist at Bank of Baroda, said the policy rate "appears to be at a fair level" and that no change may be preferable at this stage. "Given that monetary policy is forward-looking and inflation is likely to be above 4 per cent in Q4 FY26 and FY27, we do not think there should be any change," he observed.

However, others remain in favour of a small cut. Dharmakirti Joshi of Crisil pointed to easing price pressures, particularly in food and fuel, and noted that excluding gold, core in-

flation stood at just 2.6 per cent in October. "We anticipate a 25-basis point cut in December. A significant decline in retail inflation has created additional room for adjustment," he said.

Banks and markets will keenly watch the tone of the policy guidance. Economists expect a neutral to dovish stance, signalling adequate liquidity and possible scope for future reductions depending on growth dynamics. The State Bank of India's economic research team said the RBI now needs to clearly communicate the rate trajectory to markets.

Yet, some believe the pause will con-

inue. Mandar Pitale of SBM Bank said the RBI is likely to hold rates, citing the need to attract interest rate-sensitive flows for balance of payments stability and to avoid pressure on banks' ability to mobilise resources. A rate cut, he warned, could shift retail savings away from deposits.

Aditi Nayar of ICRA agreed that a rate reduction now appears unlikely, despite record-low inflation prints, pointing to the 8 per cent-plus GDP data in Q2 FY2026 as a persuasive factor. The government mandates the RBI to keep retail inflation at 4 per cent, with a margin of two per cent on either

side. For now, inflation is well within that range, and the debate has shifted from price stability to growth management.

Supporters of a cut, including real estate sector representatives like Ashok Kapur of Krishna Group, argue that a small reduction would reinforce ongoing momentum in housing and allied industries after earlier GST rationalisation and 100 bps cuts this year. As the MPC prepares to meet, economists agree on only one point – December's rate decision may be one of the most finely balanced in recent years.

Two dozen firms line up 40,000-crore public offers

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According to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP), the issue will be entirely an offer for sale (OFS) of 1.76 crore equity shares by its UK-based promoter Prudential Corporation Holdings.

Meanwhile, SoftBank-backed Meesho is planning to raise Rs 5,421 crore through an issue opening on December 3. The IPO comprises a fresh issue worth Rs 4,250 crore and an OFS of 10.55 crore shares valued at Rs 1,171 crore at the upper band. At the same time, Precision component maker Aequus' Rs 922 crore and Vidyas' Rs 300 crore public offering would be available for subscription.

Other sizeable offerings planned for December included – Clean Max Enviro Energy Solutions (Rs 5,200 crore), Fractal Analytics (Rs 4,900 crore) and Juniper Green Energy (Rs 3,000 crore).

Also preparing for the market between December and January are – Manipal Payment, Kanodia Cement, Corona Remedies, Milky Mist, Amagi Media Labs, Nephrocure Health Services, Veeda Clinical, LCC Projects, Waterways Leisure, KSH International, Skyways Air Services, Ardee Engineering, PNGS Reva Diamond, and CIEL HR Services.

Together, these companies are expected to raise Rs 40,000 crore, the merchant bankers said.

Among this year's major mainboard listings, Tata Capital led with Rs 15,512 crore, followed by LG Electronics (Rs 11,607 crore), Lenskart Solutions (Rs 7,278 crore), and Billionbrains Garage Ventures, the parent of Groww, which raised Rs 6,632 crore.

Mavenark's Awasthi suggested investors to remain mindful of valuations and the underlying business narratives before investing.

Road dust major pollutant; 35 high-dust spots found

Shailaja Kumari

NEW DELHI, NOV 30

ROAD dust continues to be one of the primary contributors to particulate pollution in the capital, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) said on Sunday after its flying squads inspected 321 road stretches under Operation Clean Air. The inspection, carried out on Saturday, assessed dust accumulation and the effectiveness of cleaning and suppression measures implemented by civic agencies including the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, New Delhi Municipal Council and the Central Public Works Department. The drive revealed that 35 road stretches had high levels of visible dust, 61 re-

corded moderate dust, 94 had low dust and 131 had no visible dust.

The CAQM said the findings reaffirmed that road dust remains a significant source of PM pollution in winter months. It stressed the need for regular mechanical sweeping, proper disposal of collected dust, upkeep of pavements and timely water sprinkling to prevent dust from re-entering the air.

The MCD, which had 182 stretches under inspection, recorded all 35 high-dust spots. It also had 50 stretches with moderate dust and 70 with low dust, while only 27 showed no visible dust. The commission said the civic body needs to intensify efforts, especially on stretches where dust returns quickly after cleaning.

Verdict must not be tossed out with change of judge'

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On November 28, a bench headed by then Chief Justice of India BR Gavai allowed a review petition of a builders association and lifted the ban on ex post facto environmental clearances for different projects.

Similarly, in September the top court upheld steel major JSW Steel Ltd's over Rs 19,000-crore bid to acquire Bhushan Power and Steel Ltd (BPSL) through the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) route, reversing its order of May which directed the liquidation of the company. Justice Nagarathna, the lone woman judge at present in the apex court, said the judiciary is an institution integral to the governance of the country.

"With liberalised rules of standing, wide powers and a range of remedies, the court is frequently called upon to decide a whole spectrum of questions concerning the future of Indians. "Today, the ju-

dicacy is seen as having a duty to ensure the rule of law, whenever infractions may occur," she said.

Justice Nagarathna pointed out that the independence of the judiciary is protected not only through the judgements judges write, but also through their personal conduct. A judge's behaviour must be perceived as beyond suspicion, she said, adding that political insularity is essential for an impartial judicial system. On November 26, the Supreme Court expressed concern over a "growing trend" in the apex court of judgments being overturned by succeeding benches or specially-constituted benches at the behest of parties aggrieved by the previous verdicts.

A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Augustine George Mathew said that by upholding the finality of verdicts, not only is endless litigation prevented but public confidence in the judiciary is also maintained.



A Mercedes SUV (G63) turned over after it allegedly rammed into three near a mall in Vasant Kunj area, New Delhi. A 23-year-old man died and two others sustained injuries in the incident. PTI

Mercedes hits three near mall in Vasant Kunj, leaving one dead

Amit Kumar

NEW DELHI, NOV 30

A late-night accident involving a high-end Mercedes SUV claimed the life of a 23-year-old restaurant worker and left two others critically injured near a mall in Delhi's Vasant Kunj area early Sunday, police said. The victims, all employees of a restaurant in Ambience Mall, were waiting for transport back to their rented accommodation after finishing their shift when the car allegedly veered off the road and hit them.

The incident took place at 2.33 am on Nelson Mandela Marg, prompting a PCR call to the Vasant Kunj North police station. Police reached the spot to find a heavily damaged Mercedes G63 and the trio lying injured near an auto stand. They were rushed to a nearby hospital, where Rohit, 23, a native of Chamoli in Uttarakhand, was declared dead. The other two

victims, Kapil and Lalit, both in their twenties, are under treatment. Kapil remains in the ICU and his condition is reported to be serious.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Amit Goel said preliminary investigation suggests that the SUV first hit a road divider, then crashed into a pole before swinging sharply towards the victims. Investigators believe the impact caused the driver to lose control at the stretch near the mall. The driver, identified as Shivam, 29, a software engineer from Karol Bagh, has been apprehended. He was reportedly returning from a wedding with his wife and elder brother. Neither of them suffered major injuries. The vehicle is registered in the name of Abhishek, a friend of the accused, police said.

A police source said Shivam had recently got married and was returning home after attending a nearby wedding function. A preliminary alcohol test did not indicate intoxication, but

mandatory medical tests have been conducted to rule out any further possibility. "Further investigation is underway," a senior officer said.

An FIR has been registered under sections 281 (rash or negligent driving), 125(A) (act endangering life), and 106(1) (causing death by negligence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita. Forensic experts inspected the site and collected samples, including airbag deployment data and skid mark analysis. CCTV footage from the mall and nearby street cameras is being examined to determine vehicle speed and sequence of events.

As the investigation unfolded, an emotional account emerged from the victim's family. Rohit, who earned around Rs 15,000 a month working as a chef, was the primary earner for his family in Uttarakhand. His uncle, Balwant Singh, alleged overspeeding, saying the SUV came at "very high speed" and "mowed down" the three young men.

CISF constable held for shooting teen who gate-crashed wedding

Alpesh Thakur

NEW DELHI, NOV 30

A 17 year old slum dweller was allegedly shot dead by a Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) head constable after he entered a wedding ceremony in search of food in east Delhi's Shahdara area, police said on Sunday.

The incident occurred on Saturday evening during a wedding procession near the DDA market community centre in Mansarovar Park. Police said they were alerted by a passer-by and found the teenager injured when they reached the spot. He was rushed to Hedgewar Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Shahdara) Prashant Gautam said the victim was a resident of New Modern Shahdara. "Preliminary inquiry indicates that the juvenile sustained a gunshot injury amid the celebration. The accused, a CISF head constable posted in Kanpur, has been apprehended," he said. A pistol suspected to have been used has been seized. An initial probe suggests the shooting followed a sudden altercation and was not pre-meditated. According to investigators, the teenager had jumped a wall to enter the wedding venue after noticing food arrangements. Some locals stopped him, and an argument ensued with the CISF constable who was present at the function. In a "fit of rage," he allegedly drew a gun and fired.

Police are examining whether the weapon was a service firearm or personally owned.

PIL in Delhi HC seeks urgent action to curb air pollution



Shashi Anand

NEW DELHI, NOV 30

A public interest litigation has been filed in the Delhi High Court seeking immediate and long-term measures to tackle hazardous air pollution levels in the national capital. The petition, filed by the Greater Kailash II Welfare Association, has made the Delhi government, Delhi Police and several environmental authorities parties to the case.

The plea states that Delhi's air quality has severely deteriorated over recent years, with the Air Quality Index regularly entering the 'very poor,' 'severe' and 'hazardous' categories, particularly during the winter months. The petition says the rising pollution has led to serious health complications among residents, including children, senior citizens and those with pre-existing conditions.

According to the petition, the authorities remained "virtually inactive" while air quality continued to slide. It alleges that measures under Stage III of the Gradual Response Action Plan were

issued only after pollution levels had already breached the critical threshold. The plea claims the government confined itself to issuing directives rather than ensuring on-ground implementation.

"Such belated and cosmetic action, without any substantial measures till date, has recklessly endangered the lives and health of citizens and shown disregard for the seriousness of the public health emergency," the petition states.

The plea also referred to a 'red alert' issued by experts on November 21, warning that Delhi's air had become "life-threatening." Despite this warning, it alleges that no concrete steps were taken. Multiple representations made by residents to authorities, it said, had gone unanswered.

The petition has named the Delhi government, Delhi Pollution Control Committee, Central Pollution Control Committee, the Commission for Air Quality Management, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and Delhi Police as respondents. The matter is likely to come up for hearing soon.



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3 killed as Cyclone Ditwah brings more rain to TN

CHENNAI, NOV 30 / PTI

SHARP showers triggered by Cyclone Ditwah continue to lash several parts of Tamil Nadu, while three persons have been killed in rain-related deaths, the state government said on Sunday. The cyclone is expected to move parallel to the coastline of northern parts of the state and neighbouring Puducherry in the next 24 hours, the weather office said today.

With heavy rainfall pounding Cauvery delta districts in the state, Ramanathapuram and Nagapattinam districts bore the brunt.

Normal life continued to be affected in the coastal towns of Rameswaram and Nagapattinam as heavy rainfall inundated several low-lying areas.

As per the latest bulletin by the Regional Meteorological Department, the cyclone moved nearly northwards with a speed of 7 kmph and it is located about 100 km east-southeast of Cuddalore, 100 km northeast of Karaikal, 110 km southeast of Puducherry, 140 km northeast of Vedaranyam, 160 km southeast of Puducherry and 180 km south-southeast of Chennai.

The minimum distance of the centre of the cyclone from north Tamil Nadu-Puducherry coasts is about 70 km, the bulletin issued by the Met Office on Sunday afternoon said.

"It is very likely to move nearly northwards parallel to North Tamil Nadu-Puducherry coasts during the next 24 hours. While moving northwards the cyclonic storm will be centered over southwest Bay of Bengal within a minimum distance of 60 km and 30 km from the Tamil-Nadu-Puducherry coastline by

November 30," the bulletin said.

Due to the impact of the cyclone, heavy to very heavy rain in a few places and extremely heavy rainfall are likely to occur over Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, Mayiladuthurai, Villupuram, Chengalpattu, Pudukkottai, Thanjavur, Thiruvarur, Ariyalur, Perambalur, Tiruchirappalli, Chennai, Kancheepuram, Tiruvallur and Ranipet districts and Puducherry and Karaikal over the next 24 hours. Strong surface winds with speed reaching 60-70 kmph gusting to 80 kmph is likely to prevail over the North Coastal Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

Sea condition is likely to be high and it is very likely to improve gradually becoming very rough to rough by morning of December 1 and gradually improve thereafter, the bulletin said. Fishermen are advised not to venture into the sea, it said.

The state government has kept 38 disaster response teams, including SDRF and NDRF on standby with 10 more teams from other states joined in the relief and rehabilitation work on Saturday evening, State Revenue and Disaster Management Minister K K S S R Ramachandran said.

Three people have lost their lives in rain-related incidents caused by Cyclone Ditwah, he said. As many as 149 cattle died and 57,000 hectares of farmland have been affected in the delta districts, he added.

"Three people have lost their lives in rain-related incidents since last evening. While two persons died due to wall collapse in Tuticorin and Thanjavur, respectively, a 20-year-old youth died due to electrocution in Mayiladuthurai," he said while briefing reporters at the State Emergency Operations Centre on Sunday.

Monitor News Service

NEW DELHI, NOV 30

THREE days after Delhi Police registered an FIR against Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi and others in the National Herald case, a magistrate directed the police to inform the accused and give them a copy of the FIR. Two days later, a sessions court stayed that direction after the police challenged it.

On October 3, Delhi Police's Economic Offences Wing filed an

FIR naming Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, Sam Pitroda, Suman Dubey, Young Indian and others. The offences cited include cheating, dishonest misappropriation of property, criminal breach of trust and criminal conspiracy. The FIR was registered on the basis of information provided by the Enforcement Directorate under Section 66(2) of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. The ED is already probing the money laundering aspect of the matter, based on cognisance taken

on a criminal complaint filed by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy.

On October 4, the police filed a copy of the FIR before the court of the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate. On October 6, the ACJM directed the police to inform the accused about the FIR and to supply a copy to them.

On October 8, the police filed a revision petition challenging the ACJM's order.

The matter was placed before Special Judge (PC Act) Vishal Gogne

at the Rouse Avenue Courts.

Additional Public Prosecutor Atul Srivastava, appearing for the police, argued that the magistrate's order was passed without reference to any legal provision and amounted to judicial overreach.

Special Public Prosecutor Zoheb Hossain, also appearing for the EOW, submitted that the ACJM's directions were contrary to a Supreme Court judgment and that there was no application from any accused seeking a copy of the FIR.

Sessions court stays magistrate's FIR disclosure order in National Herald case

Perception of police needs to change: Modi

RAIPUR, NOV 30 / PTI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said tackling drug abuse requires a "whole-of-government" approach that integrates enforcement, rehabilitation, and community-level intervention. He also stressed the urgent need to transform public perception of police, particularly among the youth, by enhancing professionalism and sensitivity, and strengthening urban and tourist policing.

Addressing the 60th All India Conference of Director Generals/ Inspector Generals of Police at the Indian Institute of Management Raipur on the concluding day, the prime minister called for regular monitoring of banned organisations, holistic development of areas freed from Left Wing Extremism, and the adoption of innovative models to strengthen coastal security.

He called for strengthening urban policing, revitalising tourist police units, and increasing public



awareness about the newly-enacted Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, Bharatiya Saksha Adhiniyam, and Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, which replaced the colonial-era criminal laws, an official statement said.

The conference, themed "Viksit Bharat: Security Dimensions", was attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, among others.

Calling on police leadership to realign policing practices to match the

aspirations of a developing nation moving towards 'Viksit Bharat', the Prime Minister emphasised the need to transform the public perception of the police, particularly among the youth, through enhanced professionalism, sensitivity, and responsiveness.

Modi distributed the President's Police Medals for distinguished service to officers of the Intelligence Bureau at the conference. He also presented awards to the three best-performing cities in urban policing.

BTC assembly attack intentional: Speaker

KOKRAJHAR, NOV 30 / PTI

BODOLAND Territorial Council (BTC) Speaker Tridip Daimary on Sunday alleged that the vandalism of the assembly hall here the previous day, during a violent protest against Assam Cabinet's nod to a report on ST status for six major communities, was intentional and demanded arrest of those involved.

He supported the issue of the protesters but emphasised that all protests have to be done in a democratic manner with no violence involved.

Students of the Bodoland University here on Saturday stormed the assembly hall of the BTC secretariat, and vandalised property during the protest against the Assam cabinet's approval of the report.

If these communities are granted ST status, they will come under res-

ervation for education and jobs. On the other hand, Bodos are one of the largest ST communities in Assam.

"Damaging government property cannot be allowed. We condemn this incident. We urge the police administration to arrest those involved," Daimary said after inspecting the damage caused. He pointed out that the agitators came armed with sticks and attacked the assembly hall.

"The attack was intentional. Perhaps, it was to murder our BTC employees or elected representatives," he claimed. Condemning use of violence, Daimary said, "We support their issue. But it has to be a non-violent movement. No one can indulge in violence in the name of agitation."

He said that the matter of granting ST status lies with the Centre and the agitators should discuss it with the state and central governments.

Cong unveils 10-point action plan to tackle Mumbai's air quality crisis

Jyoti Kadamb

MUMBAI, NOV 30

THE Mumbai Congress on Sunday unveiled a comprehensive action plan outlining emergency, medium-term and long-term measures to tackle the city's deteriorating air quality and growing environmental stress. The 10-point plan titled "Mumbai Congress Mission - Wipe Out Pollution" focuses on emergency response during severe AQI levels, strengthening citizen health protections, large-scale afforestation, and enhancing accountability in pollution management.

Former Maharashtra minister and Mumbai Congress chief Varsha

Gaikwad unveiled the document at Marine Drive along with other party leaders. Gaikwad, in a post on X, said that the rising pollution in Mumbai is a result of a contractor and builder-friendly, apathetic government's inaction. She accused the Mahayuti government of poisoning Mumbai's air, and alleged that its greed is threatening people's lives and the city's future.

The Mumbai Congress will fight for your fundamental right to clean air. Today, we launched our Clean Air Action Plan – a manifesto to tackle the growing menace of air pollution. Our promise – the Right to Clean Air will be recognised as a fundamental right in Municipal Policy," she said.

Living in a pollution-free environment and breathing clean air is a fundamental right of every Mumbai. Mumbai is choking under the smog and corruption of the BJP's "contractor raj", she wrote.

Relentless concreting, unregulated construction, and the destruction of open spaces – Kurla Dairy, Mahalaxmi Racecourse, Aarey – nothing is spared. The multi-thousand-crore road concretisation scam has turned Mumbai into a dust bowl, she claimed in her post.

The document stated, "The Congress, once in power, will formally recognise in municipal policy that clean air is the fundamental right of every Mumbai."

Mourners fill Kanpur streets for Sriprakash Jaiswal's funeral

LUCKNOW, NOV 30

THOUSANDS of people filled the streets of Kanpur on Sunday to bid a farewell to former Union minister and three-time Congress MP Sriprakash Jaiswal, who died at 81 a day ago following a cardiac arrest. The political leader was cremated with full state honours at the Bhairoon Ghat.

His body had been kept for public viewing until his son Sidharth Jaiswal, who lives in Canada, arrived on Sunday morning.

The funeral procession began around 11.50 am from Jaiswal's residence in Poharpur, Lal Bangla, where an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 people had gathered, Congress city unit president Pawan Gupta said. The cortège moved towards his ancestral home on Canal Road where it reached at 12.25 pm where supporters chanted, "jab tak suraj chaand rahega, Sriprakash tumhara naam rahega" and "Sriprakash amar rahe."

The procession reached the Congress office at Tilak Bhawan at 12.50 pm, where party workers, leaders, and long-time associates paid Jaiswal floral tributes, Gupta said. The final journey then proceeded to Bhairoon Ghat, where Jaiswal was cremated at 2 pm. His sons, Sidharth Jaiswal and Gaurav Jaiswal, along with his three grandchildren, performed the last rites.

Among the early visitors were Bihar Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, Kanpur MP Ramesh Awasthi and Akbarpur MP Devendra Singh 'Bhola'. Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya attended the cremation, and so did UP Minister Rakesh Sachan.



High waves lash the Kasimedu shoreline amid rough sea conditions in the wake of the Cyclone Ditwah, in Chennai, on Sunday. PTI

Parliament must see more debate and openness

THE all-party meeting ahead of the Winter Session revealed a deeply divided yet unmistakably united Parliament. Opposition parties set aside their differences to demand a structured discussion on the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls and national security. The government in response urged cooperation and calm, calling for a cool mind-set as the session opens. The message from the opposition is unmistakable. They view electoral integrity and security as non-negotiable matters central to democratic credibility. From the sharp decline in search data for news to rising concerns over voter roll transparency, the trust between institutions and citizens is increasingly fragile. The SIR exercise has triggered concern across parties with allegations of selective deletions and distress among field officials. Several leaders cited reports of fatalities during the process, warning that silence in Parliament would erode public confidence. The government, while refraining from assurances, signalled willingness to engage through the Business Advisory Committee. Yet opposition leaders described the meeting as procedural rather than consultative and criticised the listing of bills without adequate scrutiny. With only fifteen sittings and ten bills yet to be examined by relevant committees, questions on legislative intent are justified. Parliamentary time must not become a tool of majoritarian efficiency. It must remain a space for scrutiny, especially when issues of voter purity, national security and federal balance are raised.

The demand for discussion on SIR is not simply political positioning. It reflects a wider anxiety that electoral processes are becoming opaque. Any credible democracy requires both accuracy and accountability in its voter rolls. If the government believes in the robustness of the system, debate should be welcomed rather than delayed. A transparent discussion could strengthen confidence and reduce rhetoric. National security too requires a detailed response, particularly after the Delhi blast. The shift from voice assistants to AI chatbots for everyday queries shows that citizens today expect immediacy and clarity. Parliament must reflect that expectation. Long standing traditions of debate must not be replaced by legislative speed. The winter session begins with a clear choice. The government can treat the opposition's concerns as obstruction or as an opportunity to renew parliamentary credibility. Cooperation must not mean silence. Discussion must not be mistaken for disruption. A short session can still deliver long term stability if it prioritises scrutiny over spectacle and dialogue over deadlock.

Honour crimes cannot remain a national blind spot forever

THE tragedy in Nanded is not just a horrific crime. It is a reflection of a social fault line that India has allowed to persist for far too long. When a young woman felt compelled to symbolically marry the body of her slain boyfriend, it was not only an expression of grief but an act of protest. Her message was clear. Love should not be a crime, and justice should not depend on caste. Honour-based violence is not confined to one state or community. It is a national concern that surfaces whenever personal choice challenges deeply rooted social expectations. Despite constitutional protections, the right to choose one's partner is still treated as negotiable in many families. When relationships are judged through the lens of status rather than consent, young people become vulnerable to intimidation, humiliation and, at times, fatal retribution. The Nanded case also exposes how personal rivalry can mix with prejudice to create explosive outcomes. Reports suggest both the victim and the main accused had previous criminal records and were once friends. This points to the need for vigilant local policing and mechanisms to defuse tensions before they turn violent. Community mediation and early intervention must become part of law enforcement strategies, particularly in places where honour claims are used to justify control over individual choices.

The demand for capital punishment from the grieving young woman is rooted in personal anguish, but the real test is institutional. Can the investigation proceed swiftly and transparently? Can the law respond with clarity and conviction when caste becomes a factor in violence? Delays in justice only widen mistrust and weaken belief in due process. This moment calls for more than condemnation. It requires practical and sustained action. Schools and colleges must strengthen civic education that speaks openly about dignity, consent and constitutional rights. Local administrations should monitor patterns of coercion within families and activate protection schemes that are too often ignored due to social stigma or fear of backlash. Honour crimes thrive in silence. They survive in the gaps between law and practice, and in the space where tradition is used to deny autonomy. The symbolic wedding in Nanded was not a spectacle. It was a warning that love cannot be erased by violence and that grief will find ways to speak. India cannot afford to treat such cases as isolated incidents. They demand national attention and coordinated response. Love should never have to prove its legitimacy, and individual rights should not depend on approval. The law must protect choice, and society must accept it.

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India's rooftop solar push needs clarity, not just targets

Dr Suresh Kulkarni

INDIA'S push for clean energy has gained visible momentum, but the promised revolution on rooftops has been slower than expected. Utility scale solar parks have expanded rapidly, while rooftop solar has moved ahead in uneven steps. It remains central to the idea of decentralised, citizen led energy generation, yet progress has varied sharply across states. The experience offers policy lessons that speak to finance, regulation, awareness and implementation.

The target was ambitious. India aimed for forty gigawatts of rooftop solar capacity by 2022 but even by late 2024 only around eighteen to twenty two gigawatts had been achieved. However, the sector is not stagnant. In 2024 more than three gigawatts of rooftop solar were added, an eight eight per cent increase

over the previous year. Industry estimates suggest a compound annual growth rate above thirty per cent. Capacity is now moving towards the twenty gigawatt mark. This shows that the real issue is not lack of momentum but lack of consistent policy and coordination.

The PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana has become the flagship programme for residential adoption. Backed by over Rs 75,000 crore, it aims to cover one crore households. More than 10 lakh have already benefited with just over three gigawatts of capacity. Gujarat leads the country, accounting for half of all rooftop installations under the scheme, while other states are progressing slowly. This highlights the central lesson so far. Adoption rises when states align subsidy delivery, net metering rules and utility cooperation.

Financing remains a structural barrier. Although subsidies have

India's rooftop solar sector is growing faster than before, yet most households remain outside the clean energy shift. The gap is not technological but structural. Inconsistent state policies, complex financing and limited information continue to slow adoption. Real progress now depends on turning national ambition into local clarity, making solar a practical choice rather than a distant promise.

helped, upfront cost still deters many families. Banks often treat solar systems as regular consumer purchases rather than productive assets that generate power. Loan eligibility and documentation differ across states, while awareness of existing financial products is limited. The national scheme aims to close this gap but household level experience suggests that application and disbursement processes still depend

heavily on local capacity and utility responsiveness. Approvals are being granted more quickly, but installation timelines often vary widely.

Information is the second major hurdle. For energy professionals the benefits of rooftop solar are well established, yet most households remain unsure about return on investment, product quality or maintenance. Housing societies often find it difficult to take collec-

tive decisions and trust in private installers is not universal. A lack of verified local information makes solar appear risky and unfamiliar. Many beneficiaries accept subsidies but feel uncertain about long term value. Without certified service providers and trusted advisory channels even generous schemes fail to achieve full potential. A national information portal, combined with local facilitation, could build the confidence that currently depends on word of mouth.

The third set of lessons comes from regulation and infrastructure. Net metering rules differ from state to state. Some have caps on export of surplus power while others have advanced quickly in approving connections and compensating consumers. Contrary to earlier concerns, grid limitations are not yet a nationwide obstacle, but coordination between utilities and consumers remains in-

consistent. Rooftop solar depends less on breakthrough technology and more on predictable rules that allow users to estimate benefits over time. Households are more likely to invest when they know what they will earn from the energy they generate.

The way forward is clear. Financing must be made simpler with products tailored to residential solar and backed by government guarantees. Subsidy disbursement should be time-bound. Net metering and export tariffs need a standardised framework that reduces uncertainty across states. Local governments can play a larger role in mapping rooftop potential and guiding housing societies through the process of installation.

The author is an energy policy analyst. He writes on critical minerals, clean energy, and industrial strategy.

ChatGPT is changing how we search

Artificial intelligence has quietly reshaped everyday digital habits. In just three years since its launch, ChatGPT has moved from novelty to necessity, emerging as the first stop for millions seeking answers online and altering the way people search for information.

Deborah Lee

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

THREE years ago, if someone needed to fix a leaky faucet or understand inflation, they usually did one of three things: typed the question into Google, searched YouTube for a how-to video or shouted desperately at Alexa for help. Today, millions of people start with a different approach: They open ChatGPT and just ask. I'm a professor and director of research impact and AI strategy at Mississippi State University Libraries. As a scholar who studies information retrieval, I see that this shift of the tool people reach for first for finding information is at the heart of how ChatGPT has changed everyday technology use.

The biggest change isn't that other tools have vanished. It's that ChatGPT has become the new front door to information. Within months of its introduction on November 30, 2022, ChatGPT had 100 million weekly users. By late 2025, that figure had grown to 800 million. That makes it one of the most widely used consumer technologies on the planet.

Surveys show that this use isn't just curiosity – it reflects a real change in behaviour. A 2025 Pew Research Centre study found that 34 per cent of US adults have used ChatGPT, roughly double the share found in 2023. Among adults under 30, a clear majority (58 per cent) have tried it. An AP-NORC poll reports that about 60 per cent of US adults who use AI say they use it to search for information, making this the most common AI use case. The number rises to 74 per cent for the under-30 crowd.

Traditional search engines are still the backbone of the online information ecosystem, but the kind of searching people do has shifted in measurable ways since ChatGPT entered the scene. People are changing which tool they reach for first. For years, Google was the default for everything from "how to reset my router" to "explain the debt ceiling." These basic informational queries made up a huge portion of search traffic. But these quick, clarifying, everyday "what does this mean" questions are the ones ChatGPT now answers faster and more cleanly than a page of links. And people have noticed. A 2025 US consumer survey found 55 per cent respondents use OpenAI's ChatGPT or Google's Gemini AI chatbots about tasks they previously would have asked Google search to help them.

Another analysis of more than 1 billion search sessions found that traffic from generative AI platforms is growing 165 times faster than traditional searches, and about 13 million US adults have already made generative AI their



A new analysis shows that ChatGPT has become the new front door to information. With over 800 million weekly users by late 2025, the AI chatbot is increasingly replacing traditional searches for quick explanations and everyday queries. While Google and YouTube remain dominant, the default starting point for information has shifted towards conversational AI, signalling a fundamental change in how people look things up.

go-to tool for online discovery.

This doesn't mean people have stopped "Googling," but it means ChatGPT has peeled off the kinds of questions for which users want a direct explanation instead of a list of links. Curious about a policy update? Need a definition? Want a polite way to respond to an uncomfortable email? ChatGPT is faster, feels more conversational and feels more definitive.

At the same time, Google isn't standing still. Its search results look different than they did three years ago because Google started weaving its AI system Gemini directly into the top of the page. The "AI Overview" summaries that appear above traditional search links now instantly answer many simple questions – sometimes accurately, sometimes less so.

But either way, many people never scroll past that AI-generated snapshot. This fact combined with the impact of ChatGPT are the reasons the number of "zero-click" searches has surged. One report using Similarweb data found that traffic from Google to news sites fell from over 2.3 billion visits in mid-2024 to under 1.7 billion in May 2025, while the share of news-related searches ending in zero clicks jumped from 56 per cent to 69 per cent in one year.

Google search excels at pointing

to a wide range of sources and perspectives, but the results can feel cluttered and designed more for clicks than clarity. ChatGPT, by contrast, delivers a more focused and conversational response that prioritises explanation over ranking. The ChatGPT response can lack the source transparency and multiple viewpoints often found in a Google search. In terms of accuracy, both tools can occasionally get it wrong. Google's strength lies in letting users cross-check multiple sources, while ChatGPT's accuracy depends heavily on the quality of the prompt and the user's ability to recognise when a response should be verified elsewhere.

The impact of ChatGPT has reverberated beyond search engines. Voice assistants, such as Alexa speakers and Google Home, continue to report high ownership.

One 2025 summary of voice-search statistics estimates that about 34 per cent of people ages 12 and up own a smart speaker, down from 35 per cent in 2023.

This is not a dramatic decline, but the lack of growth may indicate a shift of more complex queries to ChatGPT or similar tools. When people want a detailed explanation, a step-by-step plan or help drafting something, a voice assistant that answers in a short sentence suddenly feels limited.

Three years in, ChatGPT hasn't replaced the rest of the tech stack; it's reordered it. The default search has shifted. Search engines are still for deep dives and complex comparisons. YouTube is still for seeing real people do real things. Smart speakers are still for hands-free convenience. But when people need to figure something out, many now start with a chat conversation, not a search box. That's the real ChatGPT effect: It didn't just add another app to our phones – it quietly changed how we look things up in the first place.

(The Conversation)



A damaged structure at a cyclone-hit area. National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel in coordination with local authorities undertake relief operations as part of Operation Sagar Bandhu in Sri Lanka. PTI



India aids Lanka rescue efforts as cyclone toll crosses 200

COLOMBO, NOV 30 / PTI

SRI Lanka continued relief and rescue efforts on Sunday with India's assistance in the aftermath of catastrophic floods, landslides and devastation caused by Cyclone Ditwah that killed over 200 people. According to the latest figures released by Sri Lanka's Disaster Management Centre(DMC) at 4 pm on Sunday, 212 people have been killed, with 218 missing since Thursday. A whopping 9,98,918 people from 2,73,606 families were affected by the extreme weather, DMC said.

Meanwhile, India's National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel, along with the Indian Air

Force(IAF), continue to assist Sri Lankan authorities to save precious lives on a war footing.

"@NDRFHQ personnel, in close coordination with local authorities, continue to undertake relief operations in Sri Lanka," External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar posted on social media. India sent two urban search and rescue teams comprising 80 National Disaster Response Force personnel to the Island nation under Operation Sagar Bandhu, reaffirming the spirit of 'Neighbourhood First.'

In a daring operation, IAF helicopters undertook a hybrid rescue mission to extricate stranded passengers, including Indians, from a restricted zone.

"A Garud commando was winched down to guide the group through a cross-country route to a pre-briefed helipad at Kotmale, from where 24 passengers — including Indians, foreign nationals and Sri Lankans — were evacuated to Colombo," the Indian Air Force posted on social media on Sunday.

In a parallel effort, three critical casualties were airlifted to Colombo for immediate medical attention, it said. The IAF team also airlifted "five teams of Sri Lankan Army personnel (40 troops)" from Diyathalawa Army Camp to the landslide-affected Kotmale region to support relief operations. Two Chetak helicopters on board the aircraft carrier

INS Vikrant also joined the rescue efforts. In an extraordinary display of courage and grit, a family of four stranded on a rooftop was rescued by a Chetak team on Saturday.

"A family of four stranded on a rooftop was rescued by a Chetak helicopter from @IN_R11Vikrant on 29 November 2025. They were safely airlifted to support affected communities, it added. Two transport aircraft of the IAF — C-130J and IL-76 — delivered nearly 21 tonnes of relief material in Colombo on Saturday as part of India's humanitarian assistance extended to Sri Lanka under Operation Sagar Bandhu," the Indian High Commission in Colombo posted on social media.

The IAF has also positioned Mi-17 V5 helicopters in Colombo for swift Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations.

"IAF transport aircraft are earmarked for large-scale evacuation of Indian nationals, with multiple missions planned from Trivandrum and Hindan," the IAF said. Alongside evacuation, essential relief material, including Bhishm cubes and medical supplies, is also being airlifted to support affected communities, it added. Two transport aircraft of the IAF — C-130J and IL-76 — delivered nearly 21 tonnes of relief material in Colombo on Saturday as part of India's humanitarian assistance extended to Sri Lanka under Operation Sagar Bandhu. Also, INS Sukanya, carrying more humanitarian aid, has left Visakhapatnam and is expected to reach Sri Lanka soon,

officials said on Saturday. According to an official gazette released by the Sri Lankan government dated Friday and released on Saturday, the state of emergency has been declared throughout the island.

With the state of emergency, the government has moved to provide the district secretaries with discretion of expenditure up to 50 million Sri Lankan rupees. Flood alerts have been issued for most of the eastern suburbs in Sri Lanka's capital, with people warned to evacuate the region and move to safer locations. Colombo District Secretary Prasanna Ginige said the alerts were issued due to the River Kelani rising to dangerous levels.

4 dead, 10 wounded in shooting at banquet hall in Stockton, California

STOCKTON, NOV 30 (AP)

FOUR people were killed and 10 wounded in a shooting during a family gathering at a banquet hall in Stockton, sheriff's officials said Saturday.

The victims included both children and adults, said Heather Brent, a spokesperson for the San Joaquin County sheriff's office. Early indications "suggest this may have been a targeted incident," Brent said during a news conference at the scene.

Local officials said the suspected shooter has not been caught and pleaded with the public for help. Detectives were still working to identify a possible motive.

"If you have any information as to this individual, reach out immediately. If you are this individual, turn yourself in immediately," San Joaquin County District Attorney Ron Freitas said during a news conference.

The shooting occurred just before 6 pm inside the banquet hall, which shares a parking lot with other businesses. Stockton is a city of 320,000



First responders close off a parking lot near the scene of a mass shooting in Stockton, Calif. AP/PTI

about 64 kilometres south of Sacramento.

"Families should be together instead of at the hospital, standing next to their loved one, praying that they survive," Mayor Christina Fugazzi said.

Authorities did not immediately provide additional information about the conditions of the victims. Officials said earlier that several were taken to hospitals.

Hong Kong mourns as deadly fire sparks safety crackdown

HONG KONG, NOV 30 / AP

A steady stream of people placed bouquets of white roses, carnations, lilies and other flowers on Sunday at a makeshift memorial outside the blackened buildings of a Hong Kong apartment complex that went up in flames, killing at least 146 people in one of the city's deadliest blazes. Many bowed toward the scene of the fire and said short prayers, or left handwritten notes among the flowers.

"This really serves as a wake-up call for everyone, especially with these super high-rise buildings," said Hong Kong resident Lian Shuzheng, who waited in a line of hundreds of people for an hour to add her flowers to the growing cluster.

There has been an outpouring of support and sympathy, with thousands of city residents visiting the site of the fire to pay tribute to the dead and donate supplies to those who lost everything in the blaze, which started on Wednesday and took until Friday to fully extinguish.

Lian said it was "truly heartbreaking" for her to see the scene up close for the first time.

"It is so pitiful, this is truly a disaster," she said. "I hope it will draw



everyone's attention to safety."

With dozens of people still unaccounted for, teams from the Hong Kong police's Disaster Victim Identification Unit continued to search the ruins of the buildings and carried out what appeared to be several body bags on Sunday afternoon.

The eight buildings of the Wang Fuk Court complex in the suburb of Tai Po had all been clad in bamboo scaffolding draped with nylon netting for renovations, with windows covered by polystyrene panels, and authorities are now investigating whether fire codes were violated.

Hong Kong officials announced late Saturday they had ordered the

immediate suspension of work on 28 building projects undertaken by the same contractor, the Prestige Construction & Engineering Company, for safety audits. "The Building Department's decision to temporarily suspend the works on the 28 projects managed by PC&E was due to a lack of confidence in its ability to ensure site safety," the government said in a statement.

"The five-alarm fire at Wang Fuk Court, Tai Po, exposed serious deficiencies of PC&E in site safety management, including the extensive use of foam boards to block up windows during building repairs," it added. PTI

Inferno toll rises to 146, 150 people still missing

K J M Varma

BEIJING/HONG KONG, NOV 30

THE death toll in the fire at seven high-rise residential buildings in Hong Kong has risen to 146 on Sunday, while the fate of 150 people is still unclear as the search operations continued on the fifth day. Eight people, including a woman connected with the renovation work of the buildings that caught fire on Wednesday, were arrested by Hong Kong's anti-corruption body for allegedly using inflammable and substandard materials. State-run Xinhua quoted local officials as saying that the death toll in the fire rose to 146, with a firefighter among the dead. Investigations into the fire accident are underway with many unanswered questions, especially how seven high-rise buildings with 1,984 apartments, housing around 4,600 residents, caught fire. The status of 150 people is unclear, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

Thousands of Filipinos protest corruption, seek return of funds 'stolen' from flood projects

MANILA, NOV 30 / AP

THOUSANDS of demonstrators, including members of the Roman Catholic church clergy, protested in the Philippines on Sunday, calling for the swift prosecution of top legislators and officials implicated in a corruption scandal that has buffeted the Asian democracy.

Left-wing groups led a separate protest in Manila's main park with a blunt demand for all implicated government officials to immediately resign and face prosecution.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has been scrambling to quell public outrage over corruption blamed for sub-standard, defective or non-existent flood control projects across an archipelago long prone to deadly flooding



and extreme weather in tropical Asia.

Over 17,000 police officers were deployed in metropolitan Manila to secure the separate protests. The Malacanang presidential palace complex in Manila was in a security lockdown with key access roads and bridges

blocked by anti-riot police forces, trucks and barbed wire railings.

In a deeply divided democracy where two presidents have been separately overthrown in the last 39 years, partly over allegations of plunder, there have been isolated calls for

Pak calls UN rights chief's concerns on constitutional amendment 'misplaced'

Sajjad Hussain

ISLAMABAD, NOV 30 / PTI

PAKISTAN on Sunday rejected UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk's concern about the 27th constitutional amendment as "ungrounded and misplaced apprehensions". In a statement issued in Geneva on Friday, the human rights chief said the latest constitutional amendment, like the 26th amendment last year, had been adopted without broad consultation and debate with the legal community and wider civil society.

He added that the "hastily adopted" amendments undermined judicial independence and raised concerns about military accountability.

The Foreign Office in a press re-

lease said that "like all parliamentary democracies, all legislation as well as any amendment to the constitution remain the exclusive domain of the elected representatives of the people of Pakistan". "While Pakistan gives due importance to the work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, it is regrettable that Pakistan's views and ground realities were not reflected in the statement issued," it said. It said Pakistan remains "fully committed to protecting, promoting and upholding human rights, human dignity, basic freedoms and the rule of law as enshrined in the constitution".

"We urge the High Commissioner to respect the sovereign decisions of Pakistan's parliament and avoid commentary that reflects political bias and misinformation," it said.

Kyiv negotiators in Florida as Rubio, Witkoff push Ukraine truce deal

WEST PALM BEACH (US), NOV 30 / AP

THE Trump administration officials are meeting Ukrainian negotiators in Florida this weekend, pushing to broker an end to Russia's war in Ukraine and setting the stage for key talks planned this week in Moscow with Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, the son-in-law of President Donald Trump, were expected to sit down with a Ukrainian delegation to further hash out the details of a proposed peace framework — talks that come at a sensitive moment for Ukraine as it continues to push back against Russian forces that invaded the country in 2022.

On Friday, just before the Florida sit-down, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced the resignation of his powerful chief of staff, Andrii Yermak, who up until that point had been the country's lead negotiator in talks with the US.

The announcement came after Yermak's home was searched by anti-corruption investigators. Zelenskyy's government has been roiled



by fallout from a scandal over USD 100 million embezzled from the energy sector through kickbacks paid by contractors, causing newfound domestic pressures for Zelenskyy.

It was only a week ago that Rubio had met with Yermak in Geneva, with each side saying the talks had been positive in putting together a revised peace plan.

Now, the Ukrainian delegation includes Andrii Hnatov, the head of Ukraine's armed forces; Andrii Sybiha, Ukraine's foreign minister; and Rustem Umerov, head of Ukraine's security council, Zelenskyy has said.

Diplomats have been focused

on revisions to Trump's proposed 28-point plan developed in negotiations between Washington and Moscow. That plan was criticised as being too weighted toward Russian demands. It had initially been envisioned that Ukraine would cede the entire eastern region of the Donbas to Russia — a sticking point for Kyiv. The plan — which Trump has since downplayed as a "concept" or a "map" to be "fine-tuned" — would also impose limits on the size of Ukraine's military, block the country from joining NATO, and require Ukraine to hold elections in 100 days. Negotiators have indicated the

framework has changed, but it's not clear how its provisions have been altered. Trump said on Tuesday that he would send Witkoff and perhaps Kushner to Moscow this week to meet with Putin about the plan. Both Witkoff and Kushner, like Trump, hail from the world of real estate that values dealmaking over the conventions of diplomacy. The pair was also behind a 20-point proposal that led to a ceasefire in Gaza.

Zelenskyy wrote on X that the Ukrainian delegation would "swiftly and substantively work out the steps needed to end the war."

In his nightly address on Saturday, Zelenskyy said the American side was "demonstrating a constructive approach."

"In the coming days, it is feasible to flesh out the steps to determine how to bring the war to a dignified end," he said. On Saturday, Russian drone and missile attacks in and around Ukraine's capital of Kyiv killed at least three people and wounded dozens more, officials said. Fresh attacks overnight into Sunday killed one person and wounded 11 others, local officials said, when a drone hit a nine-story apartment block in the city of Vyshhorod in the Kyiv region.

Trump says Venezuelan airspace should be viewed as closed

WEST PALM BEACH (US), NOV 30 / AP

PRESIDENT Donald Trump on Saturday said that the airspace "above and surrounding" Venezuela should be considered as "closed in its entirety," an assertion that raised more questions about the US pressure on Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro. His government accused Trump of making a "colonial threat" and seeking to undermine the South American country's sovereignty.

The White House did not respond to questions about what Trump posted on his Truth Social platform, and it was unclear whether he was announcing a new policy or simply reinforcing the messaging around his campaign against Maduro, which has involved multiple strikes in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean on small boats accused of ferrying drugs as well as a buildup of naval forces in the region.

More than 80 people have been killed in such strikes since early September. The Republican president addressed his call for an aerial blockade to "Airlines, Pilots, Drug Dealers, and Human Traffickers," rather than to Maduro.

Venezuela's government said it "forcefully rejects" Trump's claim about closing the airspace and that



it was a "colonial threat" intended to undermine the country's "territorial integrity, aeronautical security and full sovereignty." The Foreign Ministry said "such declarations constitute a hostile, unilateral and arbitrary act."

The statement also said US immigration authorities unilaterally suspended biweekly deportation flights of Venezuelan migrants. Following negotiations between the two governments, over 13,000 Venezuelans have been deported to Venezuela on chartered flights, the latest of which arrived on Friday in Caracas. International airlines last week began to cancel flights to Venezuela after the US told pilots to be cautious flying around the country because of heightened military activity.

Pope holds prayers amid Turkiye, Armenia reconciliation efforts

ISTANBUL, NOV 30 / AP

POPE Leo XIV held prayers at the Armenian Apostolic Cathedral in Istanbul on Sunday in a gesture of support for Christian unity and Christian minorities in Turkiye.

Beyond its ecumenical symbolism, the visit signals quiet support of ongoing efforts to heal century-old wounds between Turkiye and Armenia, long scarred by mass killings and decades of mistrust, observers note. An estimated 1.5 million Armenians died in massacres, deportations and forced marches that began in 1915 in Ottoman Turkiye. Historians widely view the event as genocide.

Turkiye denies the deaths constituted genocide, saying the toll has been inflated and those killed were victims of civil war and unrest. It has lobbied to prevent countries from officially recognising the massacres as genocide. Pope Francis did not visit any Armenian sites during his visit to Turkiye in 2014, but on his way to the airport before departing, he made an unscripted stop at a hospital where the ailing Armenian Patriarch Mesrob II was being treated. A

year later, Francis drew Ankara's ire by referring to the slaughter of Armenians during the Ottoman era as "the first genocide of the 20th century." He later visited Armenia, where he again used the term genocide.

Leo has steered clear of controversy during his first six months as pope and on Sunday only made a subtle reference to the sufferings.

"This visit provides me with the opportunity to thank God for the courageous Christian witness of the Armenian people throughout history, often amid tragic circumstances," he said. Leo's visit comes as Turkiye and Armenia appear to be moving closer toward a normalisation of their ties, and the pontiff's visit is likely to lend support to those efforts, said Richard Giragosian, the founding director of the Regional Studies Centre based in Yerevan, Armenia.

"More than just the symbolic importance of bringing the Vatican closer to the Armenian Church in terms of the eastern religion outreach, (the visit) is also, in some ways, promoting Armenia-Turkish normalisation," Giragosian said.

Kyrgyzstan holds snap parliamentary vote as opposition faces crackdown

BISHKEK, NOV 30 / AP

POLLS opened in the Central Asian republic of Kyrgyzstan on Sunday in a snap parliamentary election amid the arrests of opposition figures and the closure of independent media outlets.

It is expected to cement the grip of President Sadyr Zhaparov, who has sought to suppress dissent in what was once Central Asia's most democratic country. The vote is being held a year earlier than scheduled, a move that officials have justified by arguing that the parliamentary elections would otherwise fall too close to the 2027 presidential elections.

There have also been sweeping changes to Kyrgyzstan's electoral system, with 30 constituencies electing three lawmakers each. According to the Central Election Commission, 467 candidates are vying for the 90 seats in Kyrgyzstan's one-chamber parliament, the Jogorku Kenesh. There's also a gender quota system that requires at least one female lawmaker from each district.

Trump's pardon of ex-prez Hernández injects wild card into Honduran poll

TEGUCIGALPA (HONDURAS), NOV 30 / AP

THE day before Honduras elects a new president, suddenly the main topics of conversation here shifted from domestic matters to US President Donald Trump and the former Honduran president he had pardoned. Trump cannonballed into the deep end of Honduran politics this week, first endorsing presidential candidate Nasry "Tito" Asfura from the conservative National Party and then announcing the pardon of ex-President Juan Orlando Hernández — of the same party — sentenced to 45 years in a U.S. prison for helping move tons of cocaine.

Until the U.S. president's splashy entrance, the main concern around the election was that the three candidates with an apparent chance to win were all undermining the process' credibility, warning of manipulation and saying they wouldn't recognize a preliminary result that didn't go their way.

On Saturday, Hondurans were trying to sort out who would benefit from Trump's actions and what ex-



actly he was trying to do.

The endorsement of Asfura seemed straightforward enough: one conservative backing another. But throwing in Hernández, someone whose lengthy U.S. federal trial in a New York City courtroom was covered daily in the Honduran media, was a wild card.

It could hurt Asfura by reminding voters of the depths of the corruption of his party. Or it could help him by firing up the National Party's base. Trump also dismissed the other two leading candidates Rixi Moncada of the governing social democrat Libre Party and Salvador Nasralla of the Liberal Party, who he called a "borderline Communist."

Moncada, the former finance and

defense secretary in the outgoing administration of President Xioma Castro, pounced on the U.S. president's intervention.

Before she stepped to the podium before cheering supporters, a giant screen played video loops of Hernández's arrest.

Moncada framed it as Honduras' organized crime interests and the country's handful of economically dominant families deciding in the days before the election that their candidates wouldn't be able to beat her, so they went to Washington for help. It was Castro who had Hernández arrested months after he left office, something Moncada said that Honduras' powerful economic interests allowed, because he was no longer of use to them. But now, desperate, Trump was sending who she called "the biggest capo in the history of Honduras" back to try to energize conservative voters.

"What has happened yesterday (the pardon) is a new crime and that new crime we will judge tomorrow (Sunday) at the ballot box," Moncada said to cheers. "They won't come back."

Switzerland's voters consider whether women must do military service for the country like all male citizens

GENEVA, NOV 30 / AP

SWISS voters are casting ballots to decide whether women, like men, must do national service in the military, civil protection teams or in other forms.

Supporters of the "citizen service initiative" in the referendum ending Sunday hope it will boost social cohesion by adding jobs in areas like environmental prevention, food security and elderly care.

Parliament overwhelmingly opposes the idea, mainly for cost reasons and out of concern that it could crimp the economy by taking tens of thousands of young people out of the workforce. While initial polls suggested a tight contest, a more recent survey showed the initiative was on track to fail. The vote gives an indication of how a European populace views mandatory national duty, at a time when there are worries about the possible spillover of Russia's war in Ukraine and other potential disruptions.

"Clouds are gathering in the skies of a fragmenting Switzerland. On one hand, there are landslides in the mountains, floods in the plains, cy-



berattacks, risks of energy shortages or war in Europe. On the other hand, individualism is growing, and solitude and tensions are growing," the campaigners argued.

"By proposing a national service for all young people, the initiative responds to exactly what we need: that everybody takes responsibility to work for a stronger Switzerland that's able to stand up to crises,"

they added. The government countered that the army and civil defence have enough staff to begin with, and no more people should be recruited than are needed.

While compulsory military service for women might be seen as "a step toward gender equality," the government added, the idea would "place an extra burden on many women, who already shoulder a

large part of the unpaid work of raising and caring for children and relatives, as well as household tasks."

"Because equality in the workplace and in society is still not a reality, requiring women to perform civic service would not constitute progress in terms of equality," it said.

Young men in Switzerland are already required to carry out military service or join civil protection teams. Conscientious objectors can do other types of service, and those who opt out entirely must pay an exemption fee. The initiative would require all Swiss citizens to do national service — women can currently do so on a voluntary basis — and apply the concept of national security to areas beyond military service or civil protection. Each year, about 35,000 men take part in mandatory service, at a cost of nearly 1 billion Swiss francs (about USD 1.25 billion) in terms of government allocations and insurance. Approval of the measure would roughly double both headcount and cost.

The measure would also give parliament the option to require foreigners living in Switzerland to do public service, too.

Lebanon boosts army presence on border as it removes Hezbollah posts

ZIBQIN VALLEY (LEBANON), NOV 29 / AP

THE Lebanese army has intensified its efforts in areas along the border with Israel, in the volatile area that witnessed the 14-month war between Israel and the Hezbollah militant group.

Parts of the zone south of the Litani River and north of the border with Israel were formerly a Hezbollah stronghold, off limits to the Lebanese national army and UN peacekeepers deployed in the area.

But since a ceasefire ended the Israel-Hezbollah war a year ago, Lebanon's army has boosted its presence along the border to nearly 10,000 troops, closed 11 crossing points used for smuggling along the Litani River, and is dealing with huge amounts of unexploded ordnance, according to several senior army officers.

The army took dozens of journalists from local and international media outlets Friday on a tour of the rugged area along the border. Its troops could be seen in places where Hezbollah once had a heavy military presence.

Israel has carried out almost daily airstrikes since the November 2024

ceasefire, mainly targeting Hezbollah members but 127 civilians have also been killed, according to the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Hezbollah has only claimed responsibility for an attack on an Israeli military post since last November. The group maintains it no longer has an armed presence south of the Litani River, close to the border.

Hezbollah refuses to discuss full disarmament across Lebanon until Israel stops its attacks and withdraws from five hilltop points that it captured during the war and still holds.

The latest Israel-Hezbollah war began Oct. 8, 2023, a day after Hamas attacked southern Israel, after Hezbollah fired rockets into Israel in solidarity with Hamas. Israel launched a widespread bombardment of Lebanon for two months last year that severely weakened Hezbollah, followed by a ground invasion.

In August, the Lebanese government voted in favor of a US-backed plan to disarm Hezbollah. Hezbollah rejected the plan.

In recent weeks, Israel has said that Hezbollah is working on rebuilding its capabilities in south Lebanon.

RBI's interest rate decision key driver for markets: Analysts

NEW DELHI, NOV 30 / PTI

In an event-heavy week ahead, stock markets' movement would highly depend on macroeconomic data announcements, global trends, RBI's interest rate decision and trading activity of foreign investors, analysts said.

India's industrial production data for October 2025 will be released on December 1, an official statement said on Friday.

Moreover, the November automobile sales data on Monday would also drive sentiments in the markets.

"This week features a heavy data calendar that could influence volatility. Domestic focus will be on monthly auto sales, followed by the release of HSBC manufacturing, services, and composite PMI readings. The most crucial event will be the RBI's monetary policy on December 5, where commentary on inflation, growth, and the rate-cut outlook will be closely tracked," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.



India's economy grew at a higher-than-expected 8.2 per cent - the fastest pace in six quarters - in July-September, as front-loading of production ahead of GST rates cut boosted consumption that helped offset the impact of steep US tariffs.

Pravesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst at Swastika Investmart Ltd, said, "The RBI's monetary policy decision on Friday, December

5, 2025, will be a crucial trigger for markets. Another important domestic indicator will be the release of November automobile sales data on December 1, 2025. These figures will offer valuable insight into festive-season demand and shifting rural and urban consumption trends."

Last week, the BSE benchmark climbed 474.75 points or 0.55 per cent, and the Nifty went up by 134.8

points or 0.51 per cent. On Thursday, the Sensex hit a record high of 86,055.86, and the Nifty reached its lifetime peak of 26,310.45.

With markets trading at elevated levels, the week ahead is poised to be a pivotal one, as several key domestic and global triggers will determine whether equities can extend their winning streak and push into uncharted territory, Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

"On the domestic front, the RBI's upcoming policy meeting will be the primary focus for market participants. November auto sales data from leading automobile manufacturers will also be closely watched, offering a real-time gauge of whether the post-GST demand recovery is sustaining. A strong set of numbers could further validate the improving macro backdrop and bolster investor sentiment," he said.

Globally, attention will turn to the S&P manufacturing and services PMI readings for major economies, Ponnudi R added.

cent, over the past week to close at Rs 1,29,504 per 10 grams on Friday.

In the domestic markets, "rupee's weakness and local demand have been a significant contributor to gold price volatility in the Indian markets. Demand from festivals, weddings and continued jewellery purchases continues to support precious metal prices in the Indian markets," Prathamesh Mallya, DVP - Research, Non - Agri Commodities and Currencies, Angel One, said. Mallya added that global central banks' sustained gold accumulation would keep the long-term outlook constructive.

Karthick Jonagadla, smallcase Manager and Founder of Quantace Research, said: "For investors, gold is a clean way to express a view on the US real-rate path while staying within a familiar asset." He added that as long as December cut odds remain elevated, the bias stays moderately positive for bullion, but any data surprise that pushes back against near-term easing can unwind recent gains quickly.

NTT DATA aims to reskill all employees in India to make AI-native developers

Shweta

TOKYO, NOV 30

NTT DATA aims to reskill all its employees in India to become AI-native developers, leveraging the country's vast engineering talent pool to scale Gen AI capabilities globally, a company spokesperson has said. It also intends to tailor its services to meet the country's unique requirements for cost sensitivity and data sovereignty/confidentiality, according to another company spokesperson.

The global IT services company, which offshores engineering resources from India, currently employs over 40,000 individuals in the country.

"India is one of the most important countries for the future... we have more than 40,000 employees in India, and our plan is to reskill all of them in order to be... AI-native developers," Carlos Galve, Head of the Global Generative AI Office, NTT DATA Corporation, told PTI.

The reskilling programme will focus on boosting productivity to support global projects.

"...the same number of people who can support, for example, 10 projects... can support 20 or 100 projects (in the future)," Kenji Motohashi, Head of the Global Generative AI Office, NTT DATA Group Corporation, said.

NTT DATA hosts a lot of Indian talent at its research and development centres located at its headquarters in Japan and in Silicon Valley, California, US.

When asked if the company plans to set up an R&D centre in India in the future, Sean Lawrence, NTT vice president and head of telco's IOWN Development Office, replied in the negative.

"We haven't expanded to many countries in terms of core fundamental R&D for NTT... We have no plans..." Lawrence said.

"But in the future, it might be possible... similar to the software development centres in India," Yosuke Aragane, VP of the IOWN Development Office at NTT, said.

Apart from transforming Indian talent into a high-capacity global delivery engine, the company highlighted that the Indian AI market demands a specialised approach, revolving around cost sensitivity and data confidentiality.

On cost sensitivity, Motohashi mentioned that its partner OpenAI is offering their services, including ChatGPT Enterprise, at a significantly lower cost, specifically for customers in India to remain competitive.

"...the demand (in India) is a little bit different from other countries... we should consider the cost and the price.

"So, for example, OpenAI had a specific price for the Indian market, like almost 70 per cent less than the other countries for the ChatGPT enterprise price. We can consider to support such a kind of reasonable price and the cost of reduction in India, rather than outside of India, for

AI as well," he said.

India also has an appetite for private, proprietary infrastructure to maintain data confidentiality, according to the Tokyo-based company's spokesperson.

"Some clients in India want to have their own infrastructure rather than using the crowded environment in order to store the data confidentially," Motohashi said.

Further, the spokespersons noted a positive regulatory environment in India compared to Europe, where over-regulation is "stopping the evolution of Europe in terms of the AI race". The company is actively focused on supporting the Global Capability Centres (GCCs) in India.

"One of our biggest projects is to support the GCC for the customer," Motohashi said.

The Indian resources and the capability will become so important for us. Like, we can debug such Indian AI engineering resources to support the GCC in the client location." Looking ahead, NTT DATA sees the Generative AI (GenAI) era as merely the beginning.

Galve pointed to the next technological evolution that will primarily impact the global data centres and talent infrastructure.

"The next wave of disruption will be quantum computing with photonics... (it) will push the AI to another level... In the next 5-10 years, we will be mainly speaking about artificial general intelligence and about incredible robotics, capacities," he said.

FPIs resumed selling in Nov; withdrew ₹3,765 cr from equities

NEW DELHI, NOV 30 / PTI

AFTER a brief pause in October, foreign investors resumed selling, pulling out a net Rs 3,765 crore from Indian equities in November, driven by global risk-off sentiment, volatility in global tech stocks and selective preference for primary markets over secondary markets.

This dip in November came right after a net inflow of Rs 14,610 crore in October, an uptick that had broken a three-month streak of withdrawals -- Rs 23,885 crore in September, Rs 34,990 crore in August, and Rs 17,700 crore in July, according to depository data.

The flow trend through November was shaped by a combination of global and domestic factors.

On the global front, uncertainty around the US Federal Reserve's rate-cut trajectory, a firm US dollar, and weak risk appetite across emerging markets kept foreign investors cautious. Persistent geopolitical tensions and volatile crude prices further reinforced the risk-off tone, said Himanshu Srivastava, Principal, Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India.

Domestically, this cautiousness was compounded by pockets of stretched valuations and subdued industrial indicators, which tempered investor conviction despite India's relatively stable macroeconomic backdrop, he added.

Reflecting this sentiment, Vaq-

ajaved Khan, Senior Fundamental Analyst at Angel One, noted that the outflows in November were primarily driven by global risk aversion and volatility in tech stocks. IT services, consumer services, and healthcare were among the sectors that faced the sharpest impact.

However, not all indicators point toward a sustained bearish trend.

V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments, believes there is still no clear evidence of a trend reversal in FPI flows. He noted that FPIs were buyers on some days and sellers on others, an indication that flows may shift as conditions evolve.

The recent rally, with both Nifty and Sensex hitting new records

on November 27 after a fourteen-month wait, along with improved Q2 corporate earnings and expectations of further growth in Q3 and Q4, has lifted market sentiment, he added.

Looking ahead, Angel One's Khan said that FPI activity in December will likely depend on the US Federal Reserve's rate-cut signals and progress on the trade pact between India and the US.

So far in 2025, FPIs have withdrawn over Rs 1.43 lakh crore from Indian equities. Meanwhile, in the debt market, FPIs invested Rs 8,114 crore under the general limit while withdrawing Rs 5,053 crore through the voluntary retention route during the same period.

Private equity, venture capital investments hit \$5.3 bn in Oct

NEW DELHI, NOV 30 / PTI

PRIVATE equity and venture capital (PE/VC) investments in India touched USD 5.3 billion across

102 deals in October 2025, marking a 9 per cent rise year-on-year, according to the EY-IVCA monthly roundup. "The number of deals decreased to 102 in October 2025, a 9 per cent year-on-year (112 deals in October 2024) and 30 per cent decline month-on-month (145 deals in September 2025)," said Vivek Soni, Partner and National Leader, Private Equity Service, EY.

Pure-play PE/VC investments hit a 13-month high of USD 5 billion - an 81 per cent increase over

October 2024 - while real estate and infrastructure investments fell sharply by 86 per cent. Private investments in public equity (PIPE) emerged as the dominant deal category, surging nearly ten-fold to USD 2.1 billion. Startup invest-

Wakefit to float IPO on Dec 8; eyes ₹1,400 cr

NEW DELHI, NOV 30 / PTI

HOME and furnishings company Wakefit Innovations Ltd is gearing up to launch its initial public offering (IPO) on December 8 to raise around Rs 1,400 crore. The company's maiden public offering is a combination of a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 377.1 crore and an offer-for-sale (OFS) of 4.67 crore shares by the selling shareholders, according to the red herring prospectus (RHP).

As part of the OFS, the promoters -- Ankit Garg and Chaitanya Ramalingam and other selling shareholders -- Nitika Goel, Peak XV Partners Investments VI, Redwood Trust, Verlinvest S.A., SAI Global India Fund I LLP and Paramark KB Fund I -- will be offloading shares. Market sources said that the total issue size would be around Rs 1,400 crore. The IPO of the Bengaluru-based company will conclude on December 10, and anchor investors will be allocated shares on December 5, the RHP noted.

Wakefit proposes to utilize the proceeds from the fresh issue, worth Rs 31 crore, for setting up 117 new COCO-Regular Stores; Rs 15.4 crore towards purchase of new equipment and machinery; Rs 16.4 crore for expenditure on lease and sub-lease rent and license fee payments for existing stores. Additionally, Rs 108.4 crores will be used towards marketing and advertisement expenses, and the remaining



amount will be used for general corporate purposes. Earlier this month, Wakefit raised Rs 56 crores from DSP India Fund and 360 ONE Equity Opportunities Fund as part of a pre-IPO funding round. Wakefit, which was incorporated in 2016, is one of the fastest homegrown players in the home and furnishings market in India among organized peers to achieve a total income of more than Rs 1,000 crore, as of March 31, 2024.

It has a wide range of mattresses, furniture, and furnishings, which it sells through both its own channels (comprising the website and COCO-Stores) and external channels (including various marketplaces, such as major e-commerce platforms and multi-branded outlets). Wakefit operates five manufacturing facilities, of which two are situated at Bengaluru, Karnataka, two at Hosur, Tamil Nadu and one at Sonipat, Haryana. Its facilities are equipped with imported machinery and automation technologies, such as robotic arms and roller belts, which streamline the production process and reduce waste.

On the financial front, Wakefit reported revenue from operations of Rs 724 crore and profit of Rs 35.5 crore for the six months ended September 30, 2025. Axis Capital, IIFL Capital Services and Nomura Financial Advisory and Securities (India) Private Ltd are the book-running lead managers to the issue. The equity shares of the company are proposed to be listed on the BSE and NSE.

Indian airlines complete software upgrades for 323 operational A320 family planes

NEW DELHI, NOV 30 / PTI

Kregulator DGCA on Sunday said Indian carriers have completed the software upgrades on 323 operational A320 family planes to address a potential issue related to flight controls.

On Friday, Airbus said intense solar radiation might corrupt data critical to flight controls in a significant number of A320 family aircraft and that the software changes required to fix the issue would lead to operational disruptions.

A total of 338 A320 family aircraft with the three Indian airlines -- IndiGo, Air India and Air India Express -- were initially identified for the software upgrades to address the issue. Among them, 323 were operational, 6 were under base maintenance and later it was found that the upgrades were not needed for 9 such planes in the fleet of Air India, according to a senior DGCA official.

IndiGo has completed the upgrades on all the 200 of its operational A320 family planes. Air



India had 113 affected aircraft and out of them, the upgrades have been done for the operational 100 planes while 4 are under base maintenance and 9 aircraft did not require the modifications, as per the official.

In the case of Air India Express, upgrades have been carried out for 23 A320 family planes and 2 such aircraft

are under maintenance for redelivery. On Saturday, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) issued an Airworthiness Directive to airlines asking Indian operators to carry out the requisite software upgrades immediately.

This followed Airbus issuing an alert to operators globally and

the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) coming out with an Emergency Airworthiness Directive regarding the potential issue.

On Friday, EASA said Airbus asked airline operators to install a serviceable Elevator Aileron Computer (ELAC) in the impacted aircraft. ELAC is for flight controls.

China's factory activity contracts in Nov despite trade war truce with US

HONG KONG, NOV 30 (AP)

CHINA'S factory activity contracted for the eighth straight month in November, according to an official survey on Sunday, underscoring challenges for the country's economy despite the US-China trade truce.

The official manufacturing purchasing managers index rose slightly to 49.2 in November from 49 in October, China's National Bureau of Statistics said.

The PMI is measured on a scale between 0 and 100, with a reading below 50 indicating contraction. The contraction was in line with analyst expectations.

A US tariff cut earlier this month likely would mean that Chinese exports could gain competitiveness in the US market, but it may be too early to say whether exports have regained momentum following the trade truce.

US President Donald Trump said the US would cut its tariffs on Chinese goods after meeting Chinese leader Xi Jinping in South Korea on October 30, raising some optimism over Chinese exports and manufacturing.

A prolonged slump in China's property market and falling home prices are still hurting consumer confidence, and real estate investments have been down.

PNGRB expert panel for sweeping reform to unlock free gas market

Aniruddh Sen

NEW DELHI, NOV 30

A high-level expert committee set up by the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) has called for sweeping structural reforms to create a free, competitive natural gas market in India, arguing that market-driven pricing and open access are essential for the country's clean energy transition.

In its report, Vision 2040 - Natural Gas Infrastructure in India, the panel led by former PNGRB chairman D K Sarraf said a liberalised gas market would enhance transparency, spur investment, improve resource allocation and deepen liquidity. A competitive system, it said, would remove current market distortions and attract new players across exploration, pipelines, LNG terminals and city gas distribution.

Natural gas, extracted from underground and offshore reservoirs, is used to generate power, produce fertiliser, turned into CNG to power vehicles, piped to household kitchens for cooking and serve as feedstock across several industries. Seen as a key transition fuel as India shifts from fossil fuels to renewables, its role in the energy mix is set to expand.

The government aims to raise the share of natural gas in the country's energy basket to 15 per cent by 2030, up from the current 6.2 per cent.

India's present pricing framework - an assortment of government-regu-



ulated gas, market-linked domestic production and LNG imports - creates inefficiencies, the committee noted. It flagged resale restrictions in regasified LNG (RLNG) contracts, lack of an Independent System Operator (ISO), limited open access to infrastructure, and the absence of contract-path transmission tariffs and location-based taxation as major hurdles. Although India is among the world's fastest-growing gas markets, it still lacks a liquid trading hub for price discovery. A robust market would bring the country closer to global hubs such as Henry Hub, NBP and TTF, enable flexible contracting and support better hedging mechanisms, the panel said.

The panel suggested the creation of a neutral, not-for-profit ISO to manage pipeline capacity, system balancing, scheduling and settlements. The proposed ISO would

ensure transparent, non-discriminatory access to the transmission network and curb monopolistic practices. It also proposed a unified online platform for real-time pipeline capacity booking under PNGRB oversight, along with a real-time bulletin board integrating SCADA data to publish capacity, flows, maintenance schedules and outages. To boost liquidity, the committee urged a ban on resale restrictions and destination clauses in RLNG contracts, allowing buyers to freely resell gas in response to market conditions - bringing India in line with mature markets in Europe and the US. For liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminals, it recommended a transparent third-party access framework, including clear tariffs, rule-based operating procedures, 'use-it-or-lose-it' provisions and secondary capacity trading on authorised exchanges.

Gender boundaries blurring as women enter high-skill professions: Report

MUMBAI, NOV 30 / PTI

THE participation of women in creative and design roles have increased significantly, driven by the rapid adoption of digital-first careers like graphic design, content creation, and visual communication, says a report.

According to a report by blue and grey-collar recruitment platform WorkIndia, Indian women are now entering high-skill, male-dominated professions at a pace never seen before.

WorkIndia's data showed that women's participation in Creative and Design roles nearly doubled (98 per cent) in 2025 as compared to the previous year.

The momentum continued in technical design, where women's applications jumped by 87 per cent, and employers increased openings by 34 per cent in 2025, compared to the previous year, signalling widespread industry acceptance.

Even in Creative and Design, one of the most balanced categories, men also recorded 81 per cent growth, re-



Nilesh Dungarwal said.

The report is based on an analysis of data on WorkIndia platform in 2024 and 2025.

According to the report, the most dramatic shift emerged in the legal sector, where women applicants rose by 137 per cent from 2024 to 2025, marking the strongest growth across all industries tracked.

Employers echoed this shift with a 55 per cent rise in legal openings for women, pointing to a structural change in India's legal talent pipeline, said the report.

According to data, male applicants in Human Resources have climbed by 73 per cent in 2025, as compared to the previous year, supported by a 58 per cent rise in job postings targeting men, clear evidence that companies are actively diversifying talent in recruitment, training, and people operations.

These trends signal a broader redefinition of masculinity in the workplace and a growing acceptance of men in roles traditionally dominated by women, the report added.

British Airways sees 'incredible potential' in India; will look to expand services: COO

NEW DELHI, NOV 30 / PTI

WITH the "incredible potential" in the Indian aviation market, British Airways will look to expand its services to cater to the growing travel demand as well as continue to create employment opportunities in the country, according to a senior airline executive.

Operating in India for more than 100 years, the airline, currently has 56 weekly flights from the country to London.

There are three flights a day from Mumbai, two daily flights from Delhi and one flight daily from Hyderabad, Bangalore and Chennai.

The airline plans to have a third daily flight from the national capital to London from next year, subject to regulatory approvals.

"We are always looking to continue to expand our services as demand grows stronger. We continue to keep our network schedule under constant review to ensure we provide connectivity and choice for our customers.

"As demand strengthens, we re-

Corporate loan growth to hit double digit in FY26, says SBI chairman

Kumar Dipankar

NEW DELHI, NOV 30

are getting drawn, and the third category, where the projects are under discussion, will create that replacement pipeline.

The SBI Chairman also said that the bank may not need equity capital to drive credit growth and maintain a capital adequacy ratio of 15 per cent over 5-6 years.

"Even before this QIP was raised, our ability to fund credit growth has never been a problem. We wanted to strengthen the capital ratios so we have done that. Our long-term strategy is to maintain CRAR at 15 per cent and Common Equity Tier 1 at 12 per cent," he said.

This kind of Capital to Risk Asset Ratio (CRAR) gives the bank the ability to fund advances over Rs 12 trillion, he said.

"With a profit rate what we have today, if the same profitability is maintained for another 5-6 years,

we may not require any capital raising, at least on the CET 1 part," he said. SBI in July this year raised Rs 25,000 crore through a qualified institutional placement (QIP) of its equity shares, making it the largest QIP executed in Indian capital markets. Before this, the bank had raised Rs 15,000 crore equity capital again from QIP in June 2017.

As far as fundraising from Tier II bonds is concerned, Setty said, the bank does it periodically to replace maturing papers, and this year the bank would be raising another Rs 12,500 crore through such bonds.

NCLAT rejects insolvency plea against Voltas

NEW DELHI, NOV 30 / PTI

the Appeal. We find no reasons to interfere with the impugned order. The Appeal is dismissed," said NCLAT. NCLAT order came over a petition filed by Air Wave Technocrafts, which was engaged by Voltas for providing services to their clients for operation and maintenance of HVAC (heating, ventilation and air-conditioning) systems located at various work sites. A running account was maintained with Voltas for this purpose.

Elucidating on the payment mechanism, the Operational Creditor raised invoices for the payment for services rendered, supported by necessary documents like ESI/PF challans and Wages Register etc. to Voltas, which, after necessary verification, would forward these invoices/documents to their clients. Once the clients released payments to Voltas, after making TDS deduction, the Tata group firm would in turn, release payments to the appellant after holding back some amount as retention money.

"We see no reason to take a different view in the matter from that of the Adjudicating Authority (NCLT) in rejecting the Section 9 application on valid grounds of pre-existing disputes. In result, we find no merit in



Europe and Asia Pacific.

"From a people perspective, we have invested heavily in India and steadily expanded our colleague presence here, with CallBA and our five Indian cabin crew bases growing in size," Groot said.

CallBA is located in Gurugram, Haryana.

Also, British Airways has a code-share agreement with IndiGo, and through a joint business partnership with Qatar Airways, the airline operates to 13 Indian stations, totalling 148 weekly flights to India.

These are one-way, direct options from London with British Airways and from Doha with Qatar Airways.

As part of its continuing focus on India, British Airways, in March, also introduced the Meet and Assist service for passengers who require additional support while travelling from India to the UK.

"We view the dynamic growth of Indian carriers like IndiGo and Air India as a positive development for the aviation industry and for India's emergence as a global aviation hub.

India seal nail-biting win after Virat Kohli's sublime ton lights up Ranchi

Monitor News Service

LUCKNOW, NOV 30

INDIA secured a tense, high-scoring victory over South Africa in the first ODI at the Ranchi Cricket Stadium, holding their nerve in the closing overs after senior batter Virat Kohli produced an outstanding 135 to propel the hosts to a formidable 349 for eight. The match, which swung back and forth under lights, kept the packed crowd on its feet until the final moments of play.

Kohli's 52nd hundred in the 50-over format was a masterclass in temperament and shot selection. His 120-ball knock included eleven boundaries and seven sixes, and his 136-run partnership with Rohit Sharma shaped the innings during a crucial middle phase. Rohit played his part with a brisk 57 off 51 balls, helping India dominate an inexperienced South African attack during the early afternoon session.

South Africa won the toss and opted to bowl first, expecting dew to aid their chase. That decision appeared to backfire as India crossed the 100-run mark inside 15 overs, with Kohli and Rohit taking charge after the early departure of Yashasvi Jaiswal. Ruturaj Gaikwad provided brief support before falling, and the Proteas tightened their lines in the middle overs, forcing a slowdown in the scoring rate.

But Kohli remained composed and brought up his century with a punch through the off side to a



India's Virat Kohli, left, celebrates his half century with Rohit Sharma during the first ODI cricket match of a series between India and South Africa, at JSCA International Stadium Complex, in Ranchi, Jharkhand. PTI

rousing reception from the Ranchi crowd. Soon after, he raised the tempo, first targeting Corbin Bosch and then Nandre Burger. Burger even-

tually dismissed him with a deceptive slower delivery, ending a vital innings that set up India's assault in the final stretch.

KL Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja then added valuable runs, with Rahul hitting a rapid 60 to push India beyond 340. Although wickets fell towards the end, the lower order's aggression ensured India finished just shy of 350, a total that looked more than competitive on a surface showing early signs of turn.

South Africa began their chase poorly. Harshit Rana struck twice in one over to remove Ryan Rickleton and Quinton de Kock, and Arshdeep Singh dismissed Aiden Markram as the visitors stumbled to 15 for three.

Runs became hard to come by as Indian seamers maintained tight lines. However Matthew Breetzke led a spirited fightback, crafting a half century that lifted South African hopes.

Tony de Zorzi and later Dewald Brevis offered resistance, but Kuldeep Yadav broke through at a crucial moment, dismissing Brevis with a review that showed three reds. Breetzke continued to play fluently, reaching a deserved fifty before falling to Kuldeep, who began to find rhythm after a costly start.

India now lead the three-match series 1-0 and will carry momentum into the next encounter.

Much will depend on whether South Africa can repeat their middle overs fightback, while India will want a tighter performance with the ball despite the win.

Kohli's innings will, however, remain the defining chapter of this high scoring thriller in Ranchi.

Treesa-Gayatri retain women's doubles title in Syed Modi Final

Monitor News Service

LUCKNOW, NOV 30

INDIA had contrasting fortunes at the Syed Modi International Super 300 on Sunday, with Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand successfully defending their women's doubles crown while Kidambi Srikanth endured another agonising defeat in his quest to break an eight year title drought.

Former champion Srikanth, a 2021 world championships silver medallist, went down 16-21, 21-8, 20-22 to Hong Kong's world No 59 Jason Gunawan in a gripping 67 minute contest. The 32 year old last won a title in 2017 at the French Open and has since finished runner-up several times, including at the Malaysia Masters this year. His performance on Sunday showed flashes of vintage form but ended in heartbreak at the decisive moment.

In sharp contrast, Treesa and Gayatri rose to the occasion with an attacking display to beat Japan's world No 35 pair Kaho Osawa and Mai Tanabe 17-21, 21-13, 21-15 in one hour and 16 minutes. It was only their second tournament since Gayatri's return from a five month shoulder injury layoff, but the pair played with authority and composure to retain their title.

Gunawan started strongly, racing to a 4-1 lead before entering the interval with a three point cushion. Errors began creeping into Srikanth's game as loose lifts



allowed the Hong Kong shuttler to move ahead 14-10. Srikanth struck back with crisp smashes but Gunawan maintained control with a series of attacking winners, sealing the opening game despite late resistance from the Indian.

The turnaround came in the second game with Srikanth injecting pace and aggression. He raced to a 6-1 lead and forced errors with sharp placement, going into the break 11-4 ahead. He continued the momentum and secured the game comfortably, levelling the contest.

The decider began promisingly as Srikanth surged to a 5-1 lead. But Gunawan produced a stunning retrieval that turned the tide, narrowing the gap before moving ahead 6-5. Srikanth managed to lead 11-10 at the interval and later 14-11 with a mix of deceptive net shots and precise smashes.

Ishan Kishan's blazing hundred scripts win for Jharkhand

Monitor News Service

AHMEDABAD, NOV 30

INDIA wicketkeeper batter Ishan Kishan produced a timely reminder of his T20 credentials with a blistering unbeaten century that guided Jharkhand to an eight wicket victory over Tripura in their Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy Group D clash on Sunday. Kishan's 50 ball 113 showcased clean striking and aggressive intent at a moment when the national selection panel is soon to meet for the South Africa T20I series. Chasing Tripura's competitive 182 for seven, Jharkhand reached 185 for two with 15 balls remaining. Kishan's knock featured 10 fours and eight sixes, and his control of the chase left little room for pressure. The left hander was supported ably by Virat Singh, who remained unbeaten on 53 off 40 balls, as the pair saw Jharkhand home in commanding style.

In the day's other major Group D fixture, Rajasthan edged out Karnataka by a single run in a tense finish. Rajasthan posted 201 for five, powered by quickfire 40s from Deepak Hooda, Kartik Sharma and Mahipal Lomror. In reply, Karnataka fell just short at 200 for eight, despite spirited late hitting.

Karnataka's chase started shakily as skipper Mayank Agarwal and KL Shrijith departed early, leaving the side at 19 for two.

Junior World Cup: Spain beat Belgium 2-0 to register 2nd win

MADURAI, NOV 30 / PTI

WORLD No. 4 Spain placed themselves on course for a quarterfinal spot, beating Belgium 2-0 to register their second consecutive win in a Pool D match of the FIH Junior Men's Hockey World Cup here on Sunday. Spain scored through Juan Prado's (20th minute) field strike and a penalty corner conversion by Bruno Avila in the 32nd minute to emerge winners. Spain had earlier thrashed Egypt 8-0 in their tournament opener here on Friday. With this win, Spain top Pool D with six points from two wins ahead of world No. 7 Belgium, who have three points from two matches.

Spain will next play Namibia here on Tuesday, while Belgium will be up against Egypt the same day. In another match of Pool D, Namibia beat Egypt 4-2.

Puligilla-Sherif becomes first Indian pair to finish on WRC3 podium

JEDDAH (SAUDI ARABIA), NOV 30 / PTI

INDIAN rally racing touched a historic milestone as Hyderabad's Naveen Puligilla and co-driver Musa Sherif became the first pair from the country to finish on the podium in a World Rally Championship event here.

Competing in the WRC3 category at the Saudi Arabia Rally 2025, Puligilla and Sherif finished second in their class.

According to provisional results, the duo completed the gruelling rally in a time of 4 hours, 28 minutes and 58.7 seconds, finishing 26th overall among 41 cars.

Their Ford Fiesta Rally3, prepared by Africa Eco Sports of Nairobi, Kenya, was just 1 minute 14.2 seconds behind the next WRC3 competitor, giving them a comfortable margin ahead of the rest of their class.

This achievement stood out amid a strong field dominated by cut-



ting-edge Rally 1 and Rally 2 cars from factory teams like Hyundai, Toyota, and M-Sport Ford.

This marks the first time an Indian driver and co-driver pair claimed a podium finish in any WRC category. Puligilla and Sherif demonstrated seamless teamwork on some of the rally's most-challenging terrains, which included fast gravel roads, shifting sand dunes, and broken desert tracks over 17 demanding special stages.

For Puligilla, this podium caps off an impressive season. The Hyderabad driver showed consistent growth throughout the year, with a podium finish at the Tanzania Rally and a category win at India's National Rally Championship's Robusta Rally in Kodagu. "This podium means far more than just a trophy. It proves that Indian crews can compete at the highest level on the world stage," said Puligilla.

Ahmedabad targets cost of ₹3,000–5,000 cr for 2030 Commonwealth Games

NEW DELHI, NOV 30 / PTI

THE organising team for the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad is targeting an operational expenditure of Rs 3,000 to Rs 5,000 crore, with infrastructure estimates still being finalised as preparations begin for the multi discipline event.

A source closely involved in the planning said the calculation for operational costs does not include capital expenditure on public infrastructure, which is being handled separately under urban development. That portion, the source stated, will serve broader civic utility beyond the Games and will not be accounted as part of the event budget.

The operational cost for the Ahmedabad CWG would come to Rs 3,000 to Rs 5,000 crore. This excludes capital infrastructure spending, some of which is being managed by other departments. Arriving at a final figure will take time, as multiple

assessments are still under way," the source said.

Operational cost refers to expenditure incurred during the conduct of the Games and could be supplemented through revenue streams such as ticket sales and commercial partnerships. Gujarat officials say they intend to learn from the 2010 Delhi Games, which were marred by delays, corruption allegations and cost overruns. The operational bill of that edition was over Rs 2,600 crore, considerably higher than the initial Rs 635 crore estimate, while the total cost to the exchequer crossed Rs 70,000 crore.

The Ahmedabad Organising Committee is expected to be formed by late December or early January 2026. It will likely comprise 12 to 15 members, including a chairman, vice chairman, CEO, representatives from Commonwealth Sport, the Indian Olympic Association, the Paralympic Committee of India, athletes and domain experts.

serious evaluation.

He said the proposal involves establishing an Organising Committee as a not for profit company, to be dissolved after the Games. This structure, he noted, would increase financial scrutiny and ensure professional management. A similar model was used successfully during the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games, which received praise for efficiency and public engagement. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) had also recommended this framework following its review of the Delhi Games.

The Ahmedabad Organising Committee is expected to be formed by late December or early January 2026. It will likely comprise 12 to 15 members, including a chairman, vice chairman, CEO, representatives from Commonwealth Sport, the Indian Olympic Association, the Paralympic Committee of India, athletes and domain experts.

"We want the committee to start functioning professionally by early January. Lessons have been learnt from the past, and the structure will reflect that," Kumar said.

Unlike Delhi 2010, whose OC was constituted as a society and faced heavy criticism under then IOA chief Suresh Kalmadi, officials say Ahmedabad will aim for transparency, accountability and financial discipline. The Games are slated for October 2030 and are expected to feature between 15 and 17 sporting disciplines.

Final cost projections will depend on infrastructure upgrades both within and beyond sporting venues. Planning teams are currently working on requirements for accommodation, transport, training facilities and public mobility. The state is also evaluating legacy benefits, aiming for long term use of facilities in sports development and urban planning.

Baisoya's finishes 3rd in Bharath Classic

AHMEDABAD, NOV 30 / PTI

SACHIN Baisoya blazed his way to a sizzling 10-under 62 in the final round to sign off as the best Indian at tied third at the inaugural USD 500,000 Bharath Classic Gujarat here Sunday.

Baisoya is one of the four Indians who finished in the Top-10 in the Asian Tour event which is co-sanctioned by the Indian Golf Premier League (IGPL).

Thailand's Poosit Supupramai emerged winner by one shot from hard-charging Korean Wooyoung Cho at the Kensielle Golf Resort.

Poosit (69) birdied the 18th and final hole on the day to hold off Wooyoung Cho (65).

Poosit's closing 69 gave him his maiden Asian Tour win with a tournament total of 18-under par 270 while Cho (65) finished a shot behind on 17 under 271. The win also secured the Asian Tour card

for Poosit.

Baisoya's final round included two amazing birdie runs -- one with six in a row and another with four in a row.

Baisoya, an IGPL Tour regular but still looking for his maiden win on the Tour, was tied on 15-under along with overnight leader Jazz Janewattananond, Panuphol Pittayarat and Ekpharit Wu of Thailand.

Though a home win eluded the Indians, it was a great week for them as four of them finished in the Top-10 and a total of eight ended in Top-20. Yuvraj Sandhu (67), a multiple winner at home, did his Asian Tour chances a lot of good with a sole seventh place finish. He was 14-under 274.

Ahmedabad amateur Ishaan Chawhan, who had a brilliant week, could not get going the way he did on the first three days and shot 71, but he was under par all four days.

POLLUTION COULD BE ERASING YOUR FITNESS BENEFITS

When your jog meets smog, health gains simply vanish

Monitor News Service

If you are living in Delhi, Mumbai or any other major Indian city, your daily walk or jog may not be of much use.

Long-term inhalation of toxic air appears to dull the protective power of regular workouts, according to a massive global study spanning more than a decade and over a million adults. While exercise still helps people live longer, its benefits shrink dramatically in regions with heavy fine particle pollution—especially above key PM2.5 thresholds common in many parts of the world.

According to new research from an international team that included experts from UCL (University College London), outdoor activity shouldn't stop, but better air quality could unlock far greater health gains.

The study, published in BMC Medicine, examined information from over 1.5 million adults monitored for over ten years across countries, including the UK, Taiwan, China, Denmark and the United States.

Researchers found people living in areas with substantial air pollution experienced a noticeably smaller reduction in their risk of death. This applied to deaths from any cause, as well as from cancer and heart disease specifically, although some benefit from exercise still remained.



A separate study by Climate Trends revealed no major Indian city has achieved a safe Air Quality Index (AQI) level in the past decade (2015-Nov 20, 2025), with New Delhi remaining one of the worst performers. It highlighted that meteorology and geography are contributing to the persistent winter smog, especially in the Indo-Gangetic region.

Cities such as Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, Chandigarh, and Visakhapatnam experienced moderate but still unsafe AQI levels in the past decade. While Bengaluru had the cleanest air among metros, its average AQI remained above the 'good' category. AQI in some cities improved after 2020, but none came

close to achieving healthy air quality. In North and West India, cities such as Lucknow, Varanasi, and Ahmedabad consistently recorded high, unhealthy AQI levels.

Climate Trends said the decade-long dataset underscores how India's air pollution issue is a national, persistent, and structural, driven by urbanisation, traffic, industry, and seasonal factors—demanding systemic and science-based policy efforts. It added even improving cities remain outside the safe AQI range of 100. The UCL team focused on levels of fine particulate matter, or PM2.5s, which are extremely small particles less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter. Because of their size, they can

travel deep into the lungs and even enter the bloodstream.

The analysis showed exercise benefits declined sharply when yearly average PM2.5 levels reached 25 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) or higher. Nearly half (46%) of the global population lives in regions where pollution is at or above this level.

Lead researcher Professor Po-Wen Ku of National Chung Hsing University, Taiwan, said: "Our findings emphasize that exercise remains beneficial even in polluted environments. However, improving air quality can greatly enhance these health gains."

Co-author Professor Andrew Steptoe from UCL's Department of Behavioural Science & Health added: "Our study shows that toxic air can to some extent block the benefits of exercise, although not eliminate them. The findings are further evidence of the damage that fine particle pollution can do to our health."

Since most of the data came from high-income countries, the conclusions may not fully apply to low-income regions where pollution levels are often much higher, sometimes surpassing 50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. Additional missing information included indoor air quality and details about participants' diets. Despite these gaps, the research accounted for many other variables, such as income, education, smoking habits, and whether participants had existing chronic conditions.



NASA Rover detects 'mini lightning' charges in Martian atmosphere

Perseverance records first evidence of electrical activity on Red planet

Hariharan Suresh

NASA's Perseverance rover has uncovered a surprising feature of the Martian atmosphere: it crackles with tiny electrical discharges, a form of "mini lightning" that may influence the planet's climate and could pose challenges for future missions. The discovery marks the first documented evidence of electrical activity in the thin air of Mars.

The rover, which has been exploring Jezero Crater since 2021, detected the signals using its SuperCam remote sensing instrument. Scientists analysed audio and electromagnetic data gathered over two Martian years and found 55 electrical discharges, many linked to fast moving whirlwinds known as dust devils.

"These discharges represent a major discovery, with direct implications for Martian atmospheric chemistry, climate, habitability and the future of robotic and human exploration," said planetary scientist Baptiste Chide of the Institute for Research in Astrophysics and Planetology in France, lead author of the study published this week in Nature. "The electrical charges required for these discharges are likely to influence dust transport on Mars, a process fundamental to the planet's climate and one that remains poorly understood."

Dust circulation is central to

Mars's weather system. The planet experiences frequent dust devils and occasional planet wide storms that can lift particles high into the atmosphere. Until now, researchers suspected the movement of dust might generate electrical charges but had never captured direct evidence of this process. Perseverance's instruments, including a sensitive microphone, listened long enough to catch it happening.

What the rover recorded was not lightning in the usual sense. "It was a small spark, perhaps a few millimetres long, not really lightning. It sounded like a spark or whip crack," said co-author Ralph Lorenz from Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory. The team observed that 16 of the discharges occurred when dust devils passed close to the rover.

The researchers believe the electrical activity is triggered by triboelectricity, a process created when dust grains rub against each other in dry, turbulent air. "I would call it mini lightning," said Chide.

Malaika Arora debuts as author with wellness book

NEW DELHI, NOV 30 / PTI9

ACTOR-model Malaika Arora is set to make her debut as an author with new book, "It's Easy to be Healthy: Malaika's Guide to Living a Good Life", scheduled to hit the stands on December 9.

Published by Bloomsbury India, the book reflects her trademark clarity, elegance, and practicality. It will be available in both English and Hindi.

"I have been part of the entertainment business for close to three decades, and there have been many twists and turns on the road to success. But I still feel unstoppable, like I am just getting started. That is because fitness has always been a cornerstone of my life."

"After years of trial and error, I have found a way of living that works for me... And that's exactly why I decided to write this book -- to share my learnings. No filters, no pretenses, just everything that has shaped my wellness journey," said



the 52-year-old, known for popular dance numbers "Chaiyya Chaiyya", "Kaal Dhamaal" and "Munn Badnam Hui", in a statement.

The book spans everything: her everyday rituals like affirmations, sunbathing, fasting, indulging, moving, and being mindful, as well as frank discussions about women's health. That said, Arora makes it clear right in the introduction that this isn't a "manual on perfection", nor is she prescribing strict rules or asking anyone to forgo the

occasional slice of cake.

In fact, her core message is simple: "being healthy means learning how to balance -- listening to your body, knowing when to rest, and giving yourself grace".

And that's exactly the message the publishers hope to spread through the book, which is to make the readers "feel empowered to take small, realistic steps toward a healthier life instead of turning to unsustainable wellness trends that often do more harm than good".

Polish 'magicians of glass' who create Christmas baubles for clients worldwide

CZESTOCHOWA (POLAND), NOV 30 / AP

IF you could design a bauble for your own Christmas tree, what would it be — a teddy bear dressed as a ballerina, a hummingbird, or a crimson phoenix? The workers at GlitterLab, a company producing Christmas decorations in southern Poland, vow to turn those fantasies into reality. Calling themselves "the magicians of glass," their clients have included Swarovski, the French chain Galeries Lafayette, and Harrods, the iconic London department store.

"We have the ability to create shapes and designs that glass will not normally take," the company

promises on its website.

And the whole production process, "our closely guarded trade secret," is manual, making each product unique, it says. "In an age when you can buy anything anywhere for next to nothing, something made from scratch here in a European country, with honest work and thoughtfulness, is truly valued by customers," company owner Barbara Mostowska told AP.

Despite its modest appearance, GlitterLab's workshop has been operating for more than 80 years in Czestochowa, a town of 200,000 in southern Poland. It was founded by Mostowska's grandparents in the aftermath of World War II.

"They produced glass cigarette

holders, then eprouvettes' — I think that's the word — tiny bottles for cake flavours," Barbara Mostowska said, fondly reminiscing about how the workshop operated when she was a child. "And then tiny baubles, then slow-blown baubles, the ones we all know from childhood, some swans, mushrooms, pine cones, that sort of thing," she recalled.

When the company accessed the US market, it started producing more moulded ornaments, such as angels or Santa Claus.

On its website, the firm also draws from the history of the town, where a local monastery holds the icon of the Black Madonna, an important object of Catholic devotion since the 14th century.

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