

Daily Current Affairs





4
The Hindu



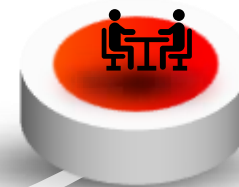
1
**PIB, PRS & Other
newspaper**



3
**The Indian
Express**



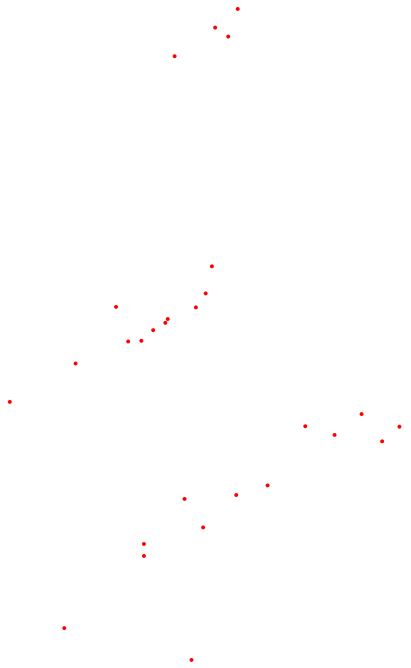
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2
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10 MCQ QUIZ

A black and white photograph featuring a microphone on a stand in the foreground, positioned over a piano keyboard. A hand is visible in the background, blurred, suggesting movement or playing. The background is filled with soft, out-of-focus light spots, creating a bokeh effect. A yellow rectangular box is overlaid on the image, containing a quote in black text.

“The world changes for those who decide they’re done waiting for miracles and start becoming one.”

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KOPER SUMMIT
Talks veer away from execution
MCP LEADER'S MURDER
Anmol Bishnoi held, sent to NIA custody
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EC'S PUSH
'Uniform rules needed for organ transplant'
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WATER CRISIS
Hidden cost of polluted groundwater
India needs a real-time monitoring system
OPINION 3 PAGE 6

INDIAN CHALLENGE ENDS
Wei stuns second seed Arjun in quarterfinals
SPORT 3 PAGE 16

INSIDE



Taliban Minister begins India visit to boost relations

NEW DELHI
Against continued hostilities with Pakistan, Taliban's Minister of Industry and Commerce Ahaj Nooruddin Amol started a five-day tour of India on Wednesday. Sources said the visit will help Afghanistan bypass Pakistan for enhanced connectivity. > PAGE 4



CH lists SFR suits by Kerala govt., RUMI on Friday

NEW DELHI
Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai on Wednesday agreed to urgently list on Friday separate petitions filed by the Kerala government and the Indian Union Muslim League (IUMI) for deferment of the Special Intervention Revision of electoral rolls in the State. > PAGE 5

Robbers posing as taxmen steal ₹7 cr. from van

BENGALURU
Robbers posing as income tax officials allegedly intercepted a van carrying cash for ATMs in Bengaluru, and escaped with cash estimated at over seven crore. The vehicle was moving cash from a private bank in a J rugger when an SUV blocked its way and the robbers claimed they needed to "verify documents". > PAGE 5

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

Krishnamoorti Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

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

"When Parliament designs or alters the constitutional arrangement, it must do so in a manner consistent with the constitutional requirements of independence, impartiality, and effective adjudication," Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai, heading a two-judge Bench comprising Justice K.J. Somaiya and Justice S.K. Kaul, observed.

The Bench directed the Government to establish a Constitutional Tribunal Commission in four months. It held that the commission was struck down by the Supreme Court in a July 2023 judgment to ensure independence, transparency, and

When Parliament designs or alters the constitutional arrangement, it must do so in a manner consistent with the constitutional requirements of independence, impartiality, and effective adjudication.

CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA B.R. GAVAI



uniformity in the functioning, appointment procedure, and administration of the tribunals.

The Chief Justice termed the 2021 law a "repackaged version" of the Tribunal Reforms Bill introduced in Parliament in 2019. The law was enacted just days after the ordinance was struck down by the Supreme Court in a July 2023 judgment to ensure independence, transparency, and

the defects that the court pointed out in the ordinance, and finally transferred its provisions in a slightly altered form to the 2021 Act.

Chief Justice Gavai dismissed the argument of the Union government, represented by Attorney General B. Venkataraman, that Parliament had "discretion to ignore the decisions of the Supreme Court". Noting that judicial review of laws is a basic feature of the Constitution, he said that by bringing the 2021 Act, Parliament and the Centre had brushed aside the supremacy of the Constitution.

All the members of the Bench directed the Government to set up a panel of five members to conduct a batch of petitions filed, among others, by the Madras Bar Association and Congress leader Jayaprakash Narayan. They said that the Act was a "blatant" attempt to "gut" the

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

Rajalagundu Srinivas
VUYAWADA

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

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

Metturi Joga Rao, alias Tech Shankar, the CPI (Maoist) Central Committee Member in charge of the Andhra Pradesh Border, was among those killed. The Additional Director General of Police (Intelligence) Mahesh Chandra Laddha said.

FULL REPORT ON PAGE 4

Relief measures



Air purifiers being used to fight air pollution in New Delhi on Wednesday. The Supreme Court on Wednesday gave the Commission for Air Quality Management a free hand to take any precise measures to curb air pollution, even, where-time permit it (see p. 4)



ty of the issue.

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

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

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

Several Indian Minis-

ters, including External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, have asserted that India will not change its energy import decisions as per its needs and best interests, and not bow down.

Declining share
The reduction of Russian

oil is not just in absolute terms, but also in terms of its share in India's total oil imports.

Russian oil accounted for about 41% of India's total oil imports in September 2024, which came down to 31% by September 2025. However, rather than a one-off, the data confirm that this is part of a longer process.

Russia's share in India's oil imports grew from 1.0% in 2020-21 to 2% in 2021-22, before steadily jumping to 19% in 2022-23, 35.4% in 2023-24, and 38.1% in 2024-25.

The first six months of 2025-26 had, however, snapped this four-year increasing trend, with Russia's share falling to 32.3% in the April-September period.

Diversified imports
Russia's war in Ukraine, the resultant sanctions on it by

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

Since that is now reversing itself as India has started shifting away from Russian oil.

In 2021-22, the U.S. accounted for 9.2% of India's oil imports and the UAE accounted for 12.4%. This was when Russia accounted for only 2% of India's oil imports.

By 2024-25, Russia accounted for 38.1% of India's oil, while the shares of the U.S. and the UAE had fallen to 4.6% and 9.7%, respectively.

In the first six months of 2025-26, the U.S. share has once again increased to 6%, and that of the UAE to 11.7%, even as Russia's share has fallen to 32.3%.

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

Anil Bhardwaj
PATNA

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



Senior leaders of the NDA Legislature Party, including Nitish Kumar, were seen after the NDA meeting in Patna on Wednesday. (AP)

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

Santosh Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha were elected leader and deputy leader of the BJP Legislature Party, respectively, during the meeting held at the party's State headquarters in Patna.

Following the election, Mr. Kumar will continue as Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister until the new government is sworn in.

The oath-taking ceremony will be held at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday at Gandhi Maidan in Patna, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Union Ministers Anil Shah and Rajnath Singh, BJP president Ram Vilas Paswan, and several other dignitaries, including Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Birla, are expected to attend.

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

The 25% additional tariff by the U.S. came into effect on August 27 while government figures show a reduction in energy imports from Russia in the previous months compared with 2024; a Commerce Ministry official said Trump tariffs were imposed at the same time and they were a factor to consider, but they are not driving Indian policies

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

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

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

However, the data show that this is part of a larger strategy rather than a reaction to the tariffs, half of

which were imposed as a "penalty" for importing Russian oil.

Bigger strategy

The Russian oil-related 25% additional tariff by the U.S. on Indian imports came into effect on August 27. However, data show that India had cut the value of Russian oil imports in eight of the previous 10 months up to September 2025, compared with the corresponding period of 2024. In five of these months – February, May, June, July, and September – the cuts exceeded 20% each. "India has known for a while now that its dependence on Russian oil imports had grown too high and so it was already working on a plan to reduce this," an official in the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry told *The Hindu* on the condition of anonymity, given the sensitivity of the issue.

ty of the issue.

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

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

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

Several Indian Minis-

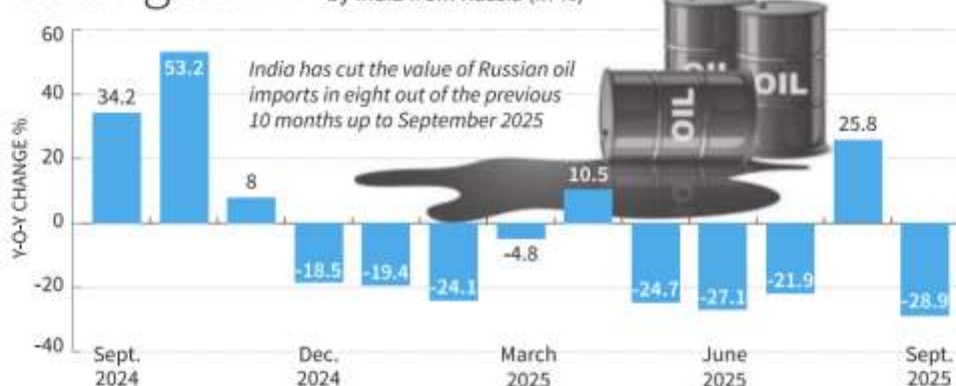
ters, including External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, have asserted that India will make its energy import decisions as per its needs and best interests, and not under duress.

Declining share

The reduction of Russian

Cutting down

The chart shows year-on-year change in the value of oil imported by India from Russia (in %)



SOURCE: MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

oil is not just in absolute terms, but also in terms of its share in India's total oil imports.

Russian oil accounted for about 41% of India's total oil imports in September 2024, which came down to 31% by September 2025. However, rather than a one-off, the data confirm that this is part of a longer process.

Russia's share in India's oil imports grew from 1.6% in 2020-21 to 2% in 2021-22, before steadily jumping to 19% in 2022-23, 33.4% in 2023-24, and 35.1% in 2024-25.

The first six months of 2025-26 had, however, snapped this four-year increasing trend, with Russia's share falling to 32.3% in the April-September period.

Diversified imports

Russia's war in Ukraine, the resultant sanctions on it by

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

Some of that is now reversing itself as India has started shifting away from Russian oil.

In 2021-22, the U.S. accounted for 9.2% of India's oil imports and the UAE accounted for 12.4%. This was when Russia accounted for only 2% of India's oil imports.

By 2024-25, Russia accounted for 35.1% of India's oil, while the shares of the U.S. and the UAE had fallen to 4.6% and 9.7%, respectively.

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

- U.S. imposed a **25% additional tariff** on Russian-origin oil imported by India from **27 August 2025**.
 - Government data shows **India had already begun cutting Russian oil imports months before** the U.S. tariff.
 - Indicates an **independent Indian strategy** to reduce heavy dependence on Russia.
-

2. Key Points From the Article

A. India's strategy is independent of U.S. tariffs

- Analysis shows India cut Russian oil imports in **8 of the 10 months** before Sept 2025.
- Reductions were **29% in value** and **17% in volume** in Sept 2025 vs Sept 2024.
- Cuts >20% in February, May, June, July, September 2025.

B. Why India cut Russian oil BEFORE U.S. tariff?

- India realized its dependence on Russian crude had grown too high.
- Govt official: "India was already working on a plan to reduce this dependence."

C. U.S. tariffs were NOT the main driver

- Commerce Ministry: "Trump tariffs = a factor to consider but **not driving Indian policies**."
- Tariffs imposed at same time but were *not* the trigger.

3. Russia's Changing Share in India's Oil Imports

Rise (2020–2024)

- Russia's share grew:
 - 1.6% (2020–21)
 - 2% (2021–22)
 - 33.4% (2023–24)
 - **35.1% in 2024–25**

Fall (2025–26)

- First six months of 2025–26:
 - Russia's share fell from 35.1% → **32.3%**.
 - Meanwhile:
 - U.S.: 8% → **11.7%**
 - UAE: 9.7% → **12%**

4. Reasons for the Shift

A. Declining share

- Absolute value + percentage share of Russian oil declining.
- Indicates a **longer trend**, not a one-off reaction to tariffs.

B. Diversification

- India started shifting away after deep dependence developed during Ukraine war.
- Greater imports from **U.S., UAE, and others**.

C. Discount advantage reducing

- Discounts on Russian crude declining as global market stabilizes.
-

5. India–U.S. Trade Talks

- Formal trade talks resumed.
- Bilateral Trade Agreement expected to move ahead soon.
- U.S. officials keep claiming India will cut imports of Russian oil (not confirmed by India).

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. India began reducing its Russian oil imports only after the U.S. imposed a 25% additional tariff on Russian-origin oil.
2. Russia accounted for more than one-third of India's oil imports during 2024–25.
3. In early 2025–26, the share of the U.S. and UAE in India's oil imports increased while Russia's share declined.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
 - (b) 2 and 3 only
 - (c) 1 and 3 only
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3
- 

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

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

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

“When Parliament designs or alters the tribunal system, it must do so in a manner consistent with the constitutional requirements of independence, impartiality, and effective adjudication. A law that undermines these foundational values, such as by enabling executive control over appointments, curtailing tenure arbitrarily, or weakening institutional autonomy, does not merely offend an ‘abstract princi-



When Parliament designs or alters the tribunal system, it must do so in a manner consistent with the constitutional requirements of independence, impartiality, and effective adjudication

CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA **B.R. GAVAI**



ple’, it strikes at the core of the constitutional arrangement,” Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai, heading a two-judge Bench comprising Justice K. Vinod Chandran, observed.

The Bench directed the Centre to establish the National Tribunal Commission in four months. It held that the commission was sorely needed as an “essential structural safeguard” to ensure independence, transparency, and

uniformity in the functioning, appointment procedure, and administration of tribunals.

The Chief Justice termed the 2021 law a “repackaged version” of the Tribunal Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance. The law was enacted just days after the ordinance was struck down by the Supreme Court in a July 2021 judgment. The Bench said that Parliament had “ignored”

the defects that the court pointed out in the ordinance, and blithely transferred its provisions in a slightly altered form to the 2021 Act.

Chief Justice Gavai dismissed the argument of the Union government, represented by Attorney-General R. Venkataramani, that Parliament had “discretion to ignore the decisions of the Supreme Court”. Noting that judicial review of laws is a basic feature of the Constitution, he said that by bringing the 2021 Act, Parliament and the Centre had brushed aside the supremacy of the Constitution.

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

Topic

News

Reason for Striking Down

Key SC Observation (CJ B.R. Gavai)

Problematic Aspects of 2021 Act

Court's Reasoning

National Tribunal Commission (NTC)

Details (Exam-Ready Points)

Supreme Court struck down key provisions of the *Tribunal Reforms Act, 2021*; directed Govt. to set up a **National Tribunal Commission** within 4 months.

Provisions violated **constitutional requirements** of: • Independence • Impartiality • Effective adjudication • Institutional autonomy

“When Parliament designs or alters the tribunal system, it must do so in a manner consistent with independence, impartiality, and effective adjudication.”

• Executive dominance in appointments • Control over tenure and salaries • Curtailment of tribunal independence • Undermining institutional structure • Re-enactment of previously struck-down Ordinance

• Law undermines autonomy → *violates constitutional scheme* • Reintroduced provisions from 2021 Ordinance that SC earlier struck down • Parliament cannot *ignore* Supreme Court judgements

• Directed to be set up within **4 months** • Purpose: structural safeguard for independence, transparency & uniformity in tribunal functioning

Background	• SC had struck down the <i>Tribunal Reforms Ordinance 2021</i> in July 2021 • 2021 Act was passed only days later → “repackaged version”
Petitions Filed By	• Madras Bar Association • Congress leader Jairam Ramesh • Various Bar associations, tribunal experts
Govt’s Argument	• Parliament has “discretion to ignore SC decisions” while legislating (SC rejected this)
SC’s Counter	• Judicial review is a basic feature of Constitution • Parliament & Centre attempted to override SC judgement
Impact on Tribunal System	• Restores judicial independence in tribunal appointments • Prevents excessive executive control • Boosts institutional credibility
Related Constitutional Articles (UPSC High-Yield)	• Art. 50 – separation of judiciary & executive • Art. 323A/323B – tribunals • Basic structure doctrine – Independence of judiciary

- **Consider the following statements regarding the Supreme Court judgement on the Tribunal Reforms Act, 2021:**

- The Supreme Court held that Parliament can re-enact provisions that were previously struck down by the Court as long as they are passed through the normal legislative process.
- The Court directed the Union Government to set up a National Tribunal Commission to ensure independence and transparency in the tribunal system.
- Judicial review was reaffirmed as a part of the basic structure of the Constitution in this judgement.

- **Which of the statements is/are correct?**

- **A. 2 and 3 only**

B. 1 and 2 only

C. 1 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

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

Amit Bhehari
PATNA

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

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

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

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

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

All the top leaders of the NDA constituents, including Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan, Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM) chief Upendra Kushwaha and Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secu-



Another innings: Janata Dal (United) president Nitish Kumar departs after the NDA meeting in Patna on Wednesday. ANI

lar) founder Jitan Ram Manjhi and his party president Santosh Kumar Suman, were present.

Mr. Choudhary proposed Mr. Kumar's name, and senior BJP leader Dharmendra Pradhan called for a show of hands, leading to Mr. Kumar's unanimous election. Following this, Mr. Kumar and other leaders visited Raj Bhavan, where he submitted his resignation as head of the outgoing government to Governor Arif Mohammad Khan and staked claim to form the new government by presenting the list of MLAs. The Governor accepted his resignation and requested him to continue as acting Chief Minister until the new government is sworn in.

The oath-taking ceremony will be held at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday at Gandhi Maidan in Patna, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh, BJP president J.P. Nadda, and several other dignitaries. Bhojpuri actor-singer and BJP MP Manoj Tiwari, along with folk singer and BJP MLA Malathi

li Thakur, are expected to perform at the event. Two stages have been set up for the grand ceremony, which will also be attended by Chief Ministers of 11 NDA- and BJP-ruled States. Invitations have been sent to over 150 guests.

Apart from Mr. Kumar, the other leaders who are likely to take the oath are Mr. Choudhary and Mr. Sinha for the post of Deputy Chief Ministers.

BJP MLAs Mangal Pandey, Neeraj Kumar Singh alias Bablu, Nitin Nabin, Renu Devi, Nitish Mishra, Sanjay Sarangi and Hari Sahani may get Ministerial berths. JD(U) MLAs likely to get Ministerial berths include Bijendra Prasad Yadav, Ashok Choudhary, Shrawan Kumar, Leshi Singh, Zama Khan, Ramesh Sada, Sunil Kumar, and Madan Sahani.

Potential Ministerial candidates from the LJP (RV) are Raju Tiwari, Murari Prasad Gautam, and Sanjay Paswan. From the RLM, Mr. Kushwaha's wife, Snehlata, may get a Ministerial berth and Mr. Manjhi's party is likely to repeat Mr. Suman for a Ministerial post.

- Nitish Kumar, President of Janata Dal (United), will be sworn in as **Bihar's Chief Minister for the 10th time.**
 - He was **unanimously elected leader of the NDA Legislature Party** on Wednesday ahead of government formation.
 - Oath ceremony scheduled at **11:30 a.m. at Gandhi Maidan, Patna**, in presence of:
 - PM Narendra Modi
 - Union Ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh
 - BJP President J.P. Nadda
 - Other dignitaries.
-

2. Political Developments

2.1 NDA Leadership Meeting

- JD(U) Legislature Party elected him as leader at a meeting with new MLAs.
- Samrat Choudhary (BJP) → elected Leader of BJP Legislature Party.
- Vijay Kumar Sinha → elected Deputy Leader.

2.2 Procedural Steps

- Nitish Kumar submitted his resignation to Governor Arif Mohammed Khan.
- Governor asked him to continue as **Acting CM** until new government sworn in.
- NDA staked claim to form the government by submitting list of MLAs.

3.1 Deputy Chief Ministers

Likely to continue as earlier:

- **Samrat Choudhary**
- **Vijay Kumar Sinha**

3.2 Expected Ministers (BJP side)

- Mangal Pandey
- Neeraj Kumar Singh alias Bablu
- Nitin Nabin
- Renu Devi
- Nitish Mishra
- Sanjay Sarogi
- Hari Sahani

3.3 Expected Ministers (JD-U side)

- Bijendra Prasad Yadav
- Ashok Choudhary
- Shravan Kumar
- Leshi Singh
- Zama Khan
- Ratnesh Sada
- Sunil Kumar
- Madan Sahani



1. Nitish Kumar — Political Timeline

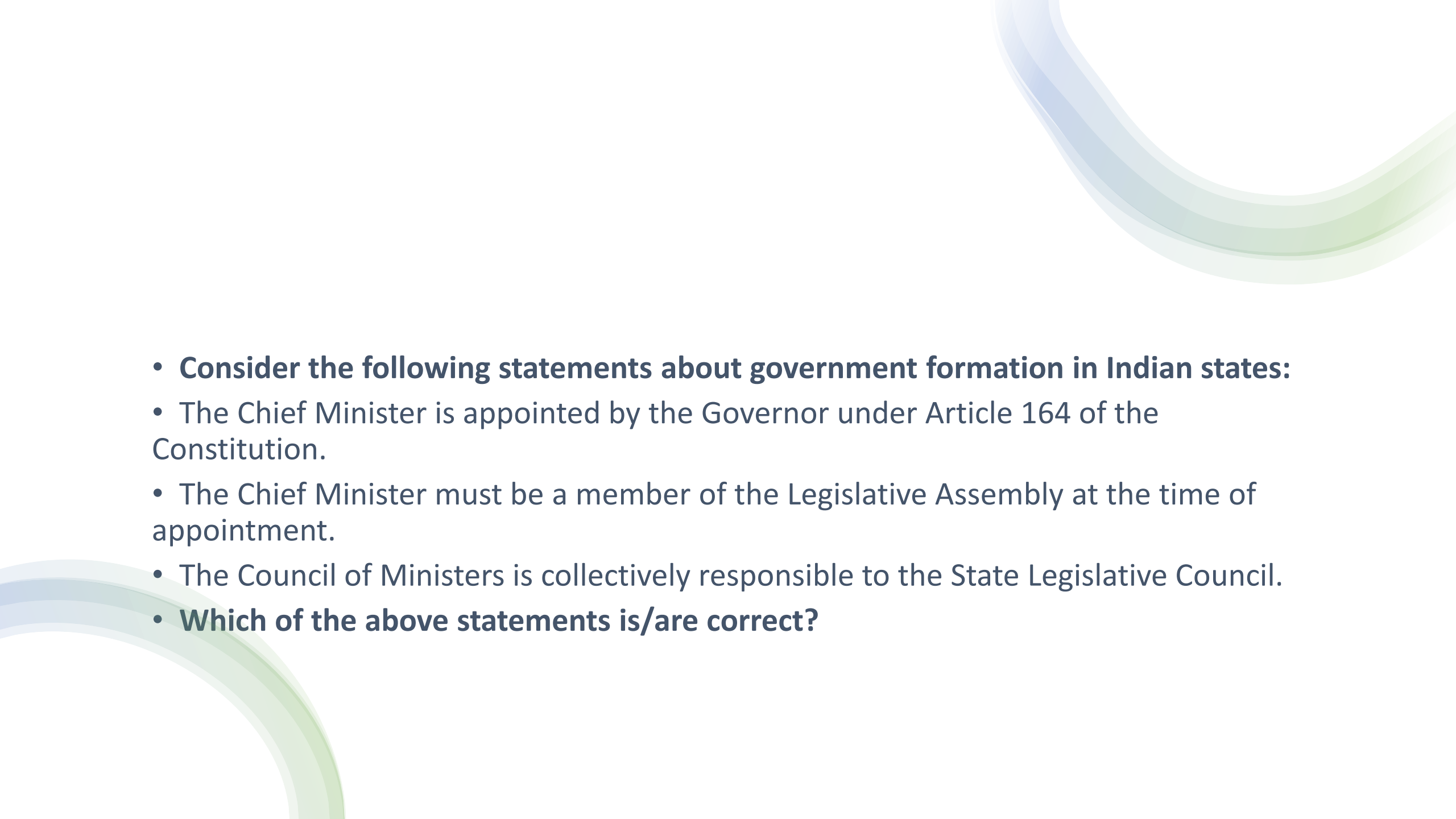
- First became CM in **2000** (brief 7-day term).
- Returned in **2005, 2010, 2015 (resigned), 2017, 2020**, and again in 2022.
- Known for switching alliances between **NDA ↔ Mahagathbandhan** multiple times.

2. Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 164** → CM appointed by Governor.
- **Collective responsibility** of Council of Ministers to Legislative Assembly.
- Governor calls the leader who commands majority support.

3. Bihar Legislative Assembly

- Total strength: **243 seats**
- Majority mark: **122**
- NDA comprises JD(U), BJP, and smaller allies.

- 
- **Consider the following statements about government formation in Indian states:**
 - The Chief Minister is appointed by the Governor under Article 164 of the Constitution.
 - The Chief Minister must be a member of the Legislative Assembly at the time of appointment.
 - The Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the State Legislative Council.
 - **Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

TAIPEI

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



The United States approved a \$700-million sale of RTH-made NASAMS air defence system to Taiwan, the second weapons deal in a week. Used in Ukraine, the system boosts Taiwan's defence amid rising China tensions. Work is estimated to be completed by February 2024 under a fixed-price Pentagon contract. REUTERS

WASHINGTON

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



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

DHAKA

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



The National Citizen Party (NCP), linked to the movement that ousted Sheikh Hasina, was officially registered by Bangladesh's Election Commission ahead of the 2024 general election. It received the symbol Shapla Koli (water lily bud) and plans candidates in all 300 constituencies. PTI

WASHINGTON

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



The U.S. administration is secretly drafting a 18-point peace plan to end the Ukraine war, insisted by President Trump's Gaza ceasefire proposal, Asia reported on Tuesday, citing U.S., Russian officials, and future U.S. relations with Russia and Ukraine. REUTERS

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

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

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump fiercely defended Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Tuesday over the 2023 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, insisting the kingdom's de facto ruler "knew nothing about the murder as he was with him at the White House."

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



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

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

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

"Whether you like him or didn't like him, things

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

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

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

In a surprise move at the gala dinner in the evening,

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

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

Mr. Trump also approved a "major defence sale package" which includes "future deliveries" of F-35s. They also agreed to share AI technology for "cyber" cooperation.

U.S. technology from foreign influence.

Mosira Irinivasan
COLOMBO

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

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

Mr. Dissanayake told the ITAK that longstanding issues faced by the people of the Northern and Eastern Provinces can no longer be addressed through "one-sided political solutions". Mr. Dissanayake told *The Hindu* that fixing Sri Lanka's battered economy and wiping out racism were "top priority" for his National People's Power (NPP) coalition. He promised to take forward previous efforts to draft a new Constitution.

In Wednesday's meeting, ITAK representatives



President Anura Kumara Dissanayake with ITAK members during a meeting in Colombo on Wednesday. PHOTOGRAPH BY ANURA KUMARA

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

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

The ITAK's talks with Mr. Dissanayake come days after tensions in the eastern Trincomalee district over the placement of an allegedly unauthorised Buddha statue, an issue that was also debated in Parliament. The incident, which was sparked by concerns about the People's Power (NPP) coalition, he promised to take forward previous efforts to draft a new Constitution.

In Wednesday's meeting, ITAK representatives

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

U.K. warns Russia as spy ship threatens British pilots

Reuters
LONDON

British Defence Minister John Healey said on Wednesday that "military operations" are ready should the Russian spy ship threaten to become a threat, after the vessel directed lasers at British pilots sent to monitor it.

Britain's Royal Navy and Royal Air Force (RAF) routinely shadow potential threats to national security, and such missions to monitor Russian vessels and submarines have become more frequent since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. Mr. Healey said directing lasers at RAF pilots was "deeply dangerous". "This is the first time we've had this action from the Russian side against the British RAF," he said.

EU to sanction Sudan RSF deputy chief

Reuters
BRUSSELS/PAIRS

The European Union is expected to impose sanctions on Abdelrahman Dagalo, deputy commander of the Rapid Support Forces paramilitary group in Sudan that has been accused of human rights abuses, three European diplomats said on Wednesday.

EU ministers are expected to approve the sanctions in Brussels on Thursday. EU sanctions consist of a ban on travel to the bloc and the seizure of any assets held there.

Divided land



Working site: Machinery and workers during the construction of a new section of the border wall in Santa Teresa, New Mexico, on the U.S.-Mexico border, as seen from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, on Tuesday. AP/USPS

Russia kills 25 in Ukraine as Zelenskyy lands in Türkiye

Associated Press
KYIV

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

The nighttime attack hit two nine-storey apartment blocks in Kyiv's city centre, around 200 km from the Polish border, according to Interior Minister Denys Shmyhal. Emergency crews were sifting through the rubble in daylight to find any survivors, he said. At least six people, including 16 children, were injured, emergency services said.

Russia fired 476 strikes and decoy drones, as well

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

as 48 missiles of various types, at Ukrainian targets overnight. Ukraine's air force said. The bombardment included 47 cruise missiles, with air defences intercepting all but six of them, the air force said. Western-supplied F-16 and Mirage-2000 jets intercepted at least 10 cruise missiles, it said.

"Every Russian attack against ordinary life indicates that the pressure on Russia (to stop the war) is insufficient," Mr. Zelenskyy wrote on the messaging app Telegram.

The Ukrainian leader said he would meet with Turkey's President Recep

Tayyip Erdogan later on Wednesday as part of his efforts to diplomatically isolate Russian President Vladimir Putin and bring more international pressure to bear on him. Mr. Putin has so far resisted making compromises, despite U.S. pressure.

Russia's Defense Ministry said it attacked Ukrainian energy facilities and military-industrial targets, including long-range drone depots. In retaliation against strikes by Kyiv on Russian territory.

Two Eurofighter Typhoon jets and two F-16s were scrambled in Romania when a drone entered the NATO member's airspace during the Russian attacks, Romania's Ministry of National Defence said.

The Polish military said that Polish and allied aircraft were also deployed.

Israeli air strikes kill 25 Palestinians in Gaza, rattling ceasefire, medics say

Reuters
CAIRO

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

Medics said 10 people were killed in the Gaza City suburb of Zeitoun, two in Shejia suburb to the east and the rest in two separate attacks in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip.

The Israeli military said its forces struck Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip. In response, the IDF began striking Hamas terrorist targets across the Gaza Strip, the military said in a statement.

Repeated shooting incidents have pointed to the fragility of the ceasefire. Israeli and Hamas have traded blame for what both call



Ten Hamas Palestinians walk past the rubble of destroyed buildings, after Israel struck Gaza again, on Wednesday. REUTERS

"This action constitutes a violation of the ceasefire agreement. No IDF (Israeli) military injuries were reported. In response, the IDF began striking Hamas terrorist targets across the Gaza Strip, the military said in a statement.

Repeated shooting incidents have pointed to the fragility of the ceasefire. Israeli and Hamas have traded blame for what both call

on a building belonging to Muslim religious authorities and the Khan Younis attack was on a U.N.-run club, both of which house displaced families.

The October 10 ceasefire in the two-year Gaza war has eased the conflict, enabling hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to return to Gaza's ruins. Israel has pulled its troops from city positions, and aid flows have increased. But violence has not completely halted. Palestinian health authorities say Israeli forces have killed 305 people in strikes on Gaza since the truce, nearly half of them in one day last week when Israel retaliated for an attack on its troops.

Israel says three of its soldiers have been killed since the ceasefire began and it has targeted actions of fighters.

violations of the U.S.-brokered truce, the first statement of President Donald Trump's 20-point plan for a post-war Gaza.

All three attacks were targeted at groups of Palestinian militants, including an imaginary "yellow line" separating the areas under Israeli and Palestinian control, according to medics, Ukrainian and Palestinian medics said. The Zeitoun attack was

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

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

Agence France-Presse

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



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- Former U.S. President **Donald Trump** hosted **Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS)** at the White House.
 - Announced **Saudi Arabia's designation as a major non-NATO ally (MNNA)**.
-

2. Trump's Defence of MBS

- Trump defended MBS regarding the **2018 murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi**.
 - Claimed:
 - MBS **"knew nothing"** about the killing.
 - It was unnecessary to **"embarrass"** the Saudi Prince.
-

3. Reactions to the Khashoggi Question

- A journalist questioned MBS about the killing.
 - Trump aggressively labelled it an **"extremely controversial"** and inappropriate question.
 - Criticised the U.S. broadcaster for asking.

4. Major Outcomes of the Visit

a) Defence & Security Deals

- Trump approved a **“major defence sale package”** to Saudi Arabia.
 - Includes **future deliveries of F-35 fighter jets**.
 - Aim: deepen strategic defence ties.

b) Civil Nuclear Cooperation

- U.S. and Saudi Arabia signed a **civil nuclear cooperation agreement**.
 - Focus on nuclear energy while preventing U.S. tech from being “misused”.

c) Investment Announcement

- MBS pledged **\$1 trillion investment** in the U.S.
 - One of the largest investment commitments by Saudi Arabia.
-

5. "Major non-NATO ally" (MNNA) Status

- Trump formally announced Saudi Arabia as a **major non-NATO ally**.
 - Benefits of MNNA status:
 - Access to advanced U.S. military technologies.
 - Priority delivery of defence equipment.
 - Deeper intelligence & security collaboration.
-

6. Broader Geopolitical Significance

a) U.S.–Saudi Relations Strengthened

- Reinforces Riyadh as a central partner in:
 - Middle Eastern security
 - Energy markets
 - Counter-Iran strategy

b) Image Management for MBS

- Visit aimed to rebuild MBS's global image post-Khashoggi killing.

1. What is MNNA (Major Non-NATO Ally)?

- A designation by the U.S. (Foreign Assistance Act, 1961).
 - Examples: Japan, Israel, Australia, South Korea, Egypt.
 - Provides military & financial privileges **short of NATO membership**.
-

2. Khashoggi Killing

- Occurred in **Istanbul (Turkey)** inside the Saudi consulate in **2018**.
 - U.S. intelligence reports indicated involvement of Saudi officials linked to MBS.
-

3. Saudi Arabia–U.S. Security Relations

- Began with the **1945 Quincy Pact** (oil for security).
 - Largest buyer of U.S. arms globally.
-

4. Why F-35s matter

- America's most advanced stealth fighter jet.
- Sensitive tech → U.S. usually restricts export.



India imports ~18–25% crude from Saudi Arabia.



Balances ties between:

Saudi Arabia

UAE

Israel

Iran

United States

- **Consider the following statements regarding “Major Non-NATO Ally” (MNNA) status:**
- Countries designated as MNNA are automatically covered under NATO’s collective defence clause (Article 5).
- MNNA countries receive priority access to U.S. military equipment and enhanced defence cooperation.
- Saudi Arabia was recently designated as a major non-NATO ally by the U.S.
- **Which of the statements is/are correct?**
- **A. 1 and 2 only**
- **B. 2 and 3 only**
- **C. 1 and 3 only**
- **D. 1, 2 and 3**



Curacao smallest nation (1.6L) to qualify for WC

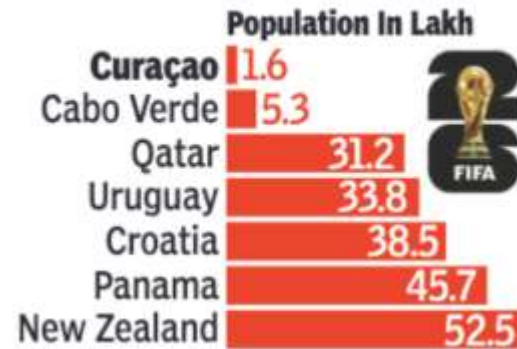
Kingston (Jamaica): The tiny Caribbean island country Curaçao will go to the 2026 World Cup as the smallest nation by population ever to qualify for the marquee event in men's soccer.

Curaçao, an autonomous territory of about 1.6 lakh people within the Netherlands kingdom, takes the record of Iceland, with a population of just over 3.5 lakh, which was the previous smallest country to reach the World Cup when it qualified for Russia 2018.

A team relying heavily on players born and raised in the Netherlands rode its luck Tuesday to take a 0-0 draw in Jamaica and finish top of a 4-team group. Its other opponents were Trinidad & Tobago and

BIG HOPES

The 7 smallest countries that have qualified for WC have a combined population lower than **Delhi's estimated 2.2cr** in '25



Individually, **20 of the 42** that have qualified so far **have a population less than Delhi's**

last-place Bermuda. Defender Joshua Brenet even played a World Cup qualifying game for the Netherlands in 2016. AP

► **Related report, P 16**





A. Historic Qualification

- Curaçao becomes the **smallest nation ever (population: 1.6 lakh)** to qualify for the **2026 FIFA World Cup**.
- Breaks the previous record held by **Iceland (3.5 lakh)** which qualified for **Russia 2018**.

B. Political Status

- Curaçao is an **autonomous territory** within the **Kingdom of the Netherlands**.
- Population: **1.6 lakh** – smallest among all WC qualifiers.

C. Road to Qualification

- Team relies heavily on players **born and raised in the Netherlands**.
- Secured qualification after a **0–0 draw in Jamaica** to top a 4-team group.
- Group opponents included **Trinidad & Tobago** and **Bermuda**.

D. Small Nations in FIFA WC

- The report highlights that the **7 smallest countries ever to qualify** have a combined population **lower than Delhi's 2.2 cr (2025 est.)**.
- 20 out of 42 countries that have qualified so far have a population **less than Delhi**.

Country	Population (in Lakh)	Remark
Curaçao	1.6	<i>Smallest ever to qualify (2026 WC)</i>
Cabo Verde	5.3	Small island nation
Qatar	31.2	Hosted 2022 World Cup
Uruguay	33.8	Two-time world champions
Croatia	38.5	2018 WC runners-up
Panama	45.7	Qualified in 2018
New Zealand	52.5	Regular OFC qualifier

- **Consider the following statements regarding Curaçao's qualification for the 2026 FIFA World Cup:**

- Curaçao has become the smallest nation by population to ever qualify for the FIFA World Cup.
- It broke the previous record held by Iceland which qualified for Russia 2018.
- Curaçao is an independent republic located in the Caribbean Sea.
- Players representing Curaçao primarily come from the Netherlands.
- Which of the statements are correct?
 - **(a) 1 and 2 only**
 - (b) 1, 2 and 4 only**
 - (c) 2, 3 and 4 only**
 - (d) 1, 3 and 4 only**

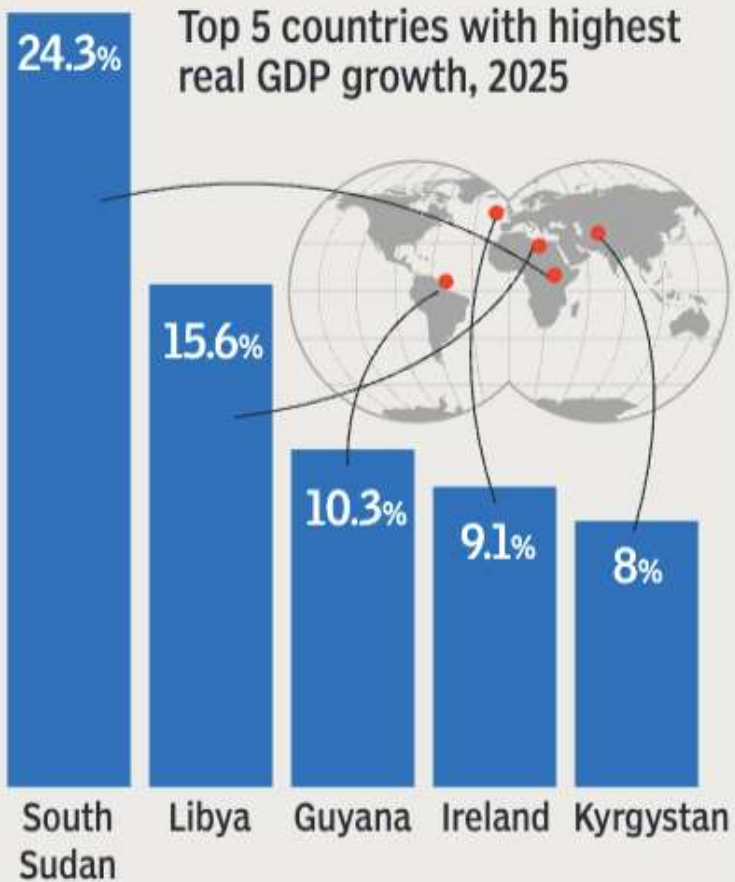
prevent such incidents in the future, Dr. Gindoffa added. INN

STATISTICS A slice of life in numbers

Fastest growing economy is...

South Sudan is set to post the world's fastest growth in gross domestic product (GDP) as its main oil pipeline restarts operation.

Among major economies, India is projected to grow the fastest at 6.6%. India's GDP (\$4.1 T) is **840 times** bigger than South Sudan's (\$4.9 B)



Source: Visual capitalist

Hanoi Convention

- **72 nations** have signed a **landmark United Nations Convention against Cybercrime treaty** in **Hanoi** aimed at tackling **cybercrime**.

- **About**

- **Aim:** It proposes a legislative framework to boost international cooperation among law enforcement agencies and offer technical assistance to countries that lack adequate infrastructure for combating cybercrime.

- **First Universal Convention:** The Convention establishes the first universal framework for investigating and prosecuting offences against Cybercrime.

-
- **Legally Binding:** The UN Cybercrime Convention is a powerful, legally binding instrument.
 - **Adoption:** It was adopted by the General Assembly in 2024 after five years of negotiation.
 - The signing process is expected to remain open till next year.
 - **Key Provisions:** It criminalises the following types of crimes:
 - **Cyber-dependent crimes:** Unauthorized access (hacking), data interference.
 - **Cyber-enabled crimes:** Online fraud, non-consensual dissemination of intimate images.
 - **Child exploitation:** Online sexual abuse, distribution of abuse material, solicitation/grooming.
 - It facilitates the sharing of electronic evidence across borders and establishes a 24/7 cooperation network among States.
 - It also makes history as the first international treaty to recognise the non-consensual dissemination of intimate images as an offence – a significant victory for victims of online abuse.

-
- **Enforcement:** It will enter into force 90 days after the 40th State deposits its ratification.
 - **Conference of the States Parties:** After entry into force, a Conference of the States Parties will convene periodically to improve the capacity of and cooperation between States Parties.
 - **Secretariat:** The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime serves as the secretariat to the Ad Hoc Committee and to the future Conference of the States Parties.
 -

India's First Commercial
PSLV to Launch Oceansat
Next Year

- India will launch its **first commercially built PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle)** next year.
 - This PSLV is **manufactured by Indian industry**, not by ISRO directly.
 - Its maiden mission will launch the **Oceansat** satellite into orbit.
-

✓ 2. Why This Is Important?

- Marks a **major milestone** in India's **space privatization** and **industry-led rocket production**.
 - Shows India's shift towards a **commercial space ecosystem**.
 - Supports the vision of **Atmanirbhar Bharat** in space technology.
-

✓ 3. Key Players

- The commercial PSLV is being built by **HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Limited)** and **L&T** collaboration.
- ISRO provides **technology transfer, design framework, and quality checks**.



✓ 4. About Oceansat Mission

- Oceansat is designed for:
 - Ocean colour monitoring
 - Sea surface temperature measurements
 - Coastal zone studies
 - Data for fishermen, climate scientists, and disaster managers
-

✓ 5. Significance for India

- Strengthens India's **commercial launch market**.
 - Boosts India's competitive standing vs **SpaceX, China, Japan**.
 - Creates opportunities for **private manufacturing**, MSMEs, and global clients.
 - Reduces burden on ISRO so it can focus on **R&D, Gaganyaan & deep space missions**.
- 

The background features two large, overlapping, curved lines. One line is a light blue color and the other is a light green color. They are positioned in the top right and bottom left corners, framing the central text.

HDFC Bank Tops India's Brand Value Rankings 2025

Category	Important Points (UPSC-ready)
Report Name	Kantar BrandZ India – Top 100 Most Valuable Brands 2025
Top Brand (2025)	HDFC Bank – India’s most valuable brand
HDFC Bank Brand Value (2025)	\$45.5 billion (approx.)
Second Rank	Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) – ~\$44.2 billion
Next Major Brands	Airtel, Infosys, ICICI Bank
Combined Brand Value (Top 100)	\$523 billion
Reason for Rise	Strong banking + technology performance, global expansion, innovation, digital services
Sector Trend	Banking & Technology dominate Indian brand value rankings
Why HDFC Bank Leads	Digital banking strength, strong customer base, rural penetration, stable financials, trust factor
Historical Fact	HDFC Bank has topped BrandZ India rankings multiple times over the last decade in financial sector leadership

About BrandZ	Global brand valuation platform by Kantar ; used by corporates & investors
Economic Significance	Demonstrates India's growing global corporate presence & branding capacity
Global Comparison	India's brand value growth > global average; consistent with India's rise as world's 5th largest economy
UPSC Angle	Shows India's services-led growth , fintech leadership, and strong BFSI sector fundamentals
Additional Fact	Post HDFC–HDFC Bank merger (2023), the bank became world's 4th largest bank by market cap
Tech Adoption Link	HDFC: early adopter of AI-enabled banking, UPI partnership, digital credit, strong retail portfolio
Broader CA Link	India's digital economy projected to reach \$1 trillion by 2030

An aerial photograph showing a vast parking lot filled with hundreds of Tesla cars. The cars are arranged in neat, parallel rows, creating a strong sense of order and scale. The perspective is from directly above, looking down at the vehicles. The text "Tesla's First Major India Hub in Gurugram" is overlaid in the center of the image in a white, sans-serif font.

Tesla's First Major India Hub in Gurugram

Category	Important Points
News	Tesla is launching its first full-fledged India hub in Gurugram (Haryana) .
Launch Timeline	Expected this month (2025) .
Purpose of the Hub	To boost sales, visibility, after-sales service , and premium EV market presence.
Significance	Marks Tesla's major strategic entry into the Indian market.
India as Global Market	India recently became Tesla's 50th global market .
Models Introduced	Two fully imported Model Y variants launched initially.
Import Duty Issue	India levies ~70% import duty on fully imported EVs → makes Tesla expensive.
Early Consumer Response	Over 100 units sold in just two months → strong premium EV demand.
EV Market Context	India's EV market growing at 40–45% CAGR ; govt targets 30% EV penetration by 2030 .

Why Gurugram?	High premium car demand, proximity to Delhi-NCR, strong infrastructure.
Tesla India Strategy	Start with imports → build ecosystem → possible local assembly → long-term manufacturing.
Policy Link	India exploring EV policy offering reduced duties if Tesla sets up local manufacturing.
Economic Impact	Boost to EV supply chains, possible job creation, tech transfer opportunities.
Global Background	Elon Musk earlier confirmed interest in India, plans for Gigafactory if conditions favourable.
Competition in India	Strong rivals: Tata EVs, MG, Hyundai, BYD , and upcoming Mahindra Born Electric .
State Govt Angle	Haryana aims to become an EV hub; offers incentives under Haryana EV Policy .

Word of the day

Prolix:

tediously prolonged or tending to speak or write at great length

Synonym: verbal

Usage: *She is editing a prolix manuscript.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/prolixpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈprɒlɪks/



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