

Stop illegal detentions, says SC amid crackdown in Delhi

Top court directs Centre, Delhi Police to ensure free movement of people 'subject to law and public order'; Saturday's conditions a 'step away from police state', says lawyer who was detained

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

A day after mass detentions and a “curfew-like” clampdown on civil rights in Delhi, which senior lawyers compared to the 1975 Emergency, the Supreme Court convened what it called an “extraordinary, exceptional” Sunday hearing to direct the Union government and the Delhi Police to stop illegal detentions and allow free and smooth movement of people and traffic, as well as the operations of Metro and rail services, but “subject to law and public order”.

A Special Bench of Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana ordered the police to forthwith review the imposition of barricades

Special hearing

SC stresses need to uphold constitutional protections while preserving state's power to enforce reasonable restrictions

Directions to the police:

- Review imposition of barricades on public roads
- Ensure Internet connectivity is not disturbed
- No detentions except by law outside the 4-km prohibitory zone in Delhi
- Allow peaceful assembly outside the restricted zone



on public roads, ensure that Internet connectivity was not disturbed, and lift prohibitory orders issued under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita in and around the Supreme Court and other courts of law in the capital to help litigants access lawyers and justice.

The court did not explicitly comment on the legal-

ity of the prohibitory orders.

State actions

Lawyers described a state crackdown that swept up thousands of people in an operation aimed at preventing them from gathering to demand the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over alleged electo-

Rahul urges citizens to join march to SC

NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday appealed to all citizens to join the INDIA bloc's march to the Supreme Court to submit a memorandum to the CJI on the issue of alleged vote theft. » **PAGE 12**

ral irregularities. “Yesterday, we were one step away from a police state. Protect the right of citizens to peacefully protest in the capital city,” senior advocate Shadan Farasat, who was dragged into a police van and detained for hours on Saturday, told the court.

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29,000 forms seeking SIR deletions in Karnataka not available on portals of ECI

While State CEO's statement says 1,10,654 Form 7 applications were received, portal only shows 81,822; details of who filed the forms and against whom are put on the portal for public scrutiny

Rishita Khanna

Pon Vasanth B.A.

BENGALURU/CHENNAI

Details of nearly 29,000 Form 7 applications, submitted primarily to seek the deletion of names from electoral rolls, received in Karnataka until October 8, amid the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) process, have not been made public on the websites of the State's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) or the Election Commission of India (ECI).

This is despite communications from the CEO and the ECI that details of all Form 7 applications would be made available for public scrutiny.

A statement from the office of CEO V. Anbu Kumar on October 9 said 1,10,654 Form 7 applications had been received between June 16 when the pre-SIR rolls were frozen, and October 8.

The Hindu has found that details of only 81,822 Form 7 applications are available on the ECI website for that period. The remaining 28,832 account for over one-fourth of the number of applications as per the CEO's statement.

Without details of these forms, it is unclear which constituencies they were filed in, by whom and



Besides missing forms, the CEO's own press releases have reported contradictory figures on Form 7 applications. J. ALLEN EGENUSE

against whom.

The Hindu has found that details of only 81,822 Form 7 applications are available on the ECI website for that period. Following a protest by Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar and his Cabinet colleagues, the Karnataka CEO directed District Election Offices (DEOs) to take action following an inquiry into that matter.

The CEO's statement on August 24, 2026, when the draft SIR rolls were released, said, "List of claims & objections in Forms 9, 10, 11, 11A & 11B will also be available on the website of CEO Karnataka so that public are able to see the list and lodge objections with concerned ERO." As per the process, Form 7 appli-

cations received every day in each Assembly constituency should be consolidated into Form 10 – another ECI reporting format – and uploaded on the website.

An analysis of all Form 10 details on the portal revealed the gap.

Contradictory figures

Besides the missing forms, the CEO's own press releases have reported contradictory and starkly different figures on Form 7 applications.

The August 24 release said 67,307 Form 7 applications had been received between June 16 and August 23. But a September 11 statement put the figure for June 16 to September 9 at 34,631 – 32,676 fewer

than the previous figure.

Another release said 41,792 Form 7 applications were received between June 16 and September 17 – 25,515 short of the August 23 figure.

Even as of September 24, a day after the claims-and-objections period ended, the CEO's tally of 61,130 was still 6,177 short. Since then, the figures have climbed rapidly to 1,10,654 as of October 8.

A comparison of the CEO's figures with those in the portal showed that in some periods, the CEO reported more applications than the portal held, and in others, the reverse could be seen. Between June 16 and August 23, the CEO reported 67,307 Form 7 applications, but the portal held details of only 6,951, leaving 60,356 inaccessible to the public.

Asked about the mismatches, Mr. Anbu Kumar said the "claims-and-objections period should be counted only from August 24 to September 23", but did not elaborate. Even within that period, the discrepancy remained, with the portal showing details of 28,097 applications, while the CEO's cumulative figure fell by 6,177.

When Mr. Anbu Kumar was contacted again, he was unavailable for comment.

Mizoram to count refugees separately during Census

Decision follows a meeting to review preparations for the second phase of the exercise; 38,213 refugees from Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Manipur were recorded in the State as of August 20

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Mizoram has decided to enumerate refugees living temporarily in the State as part of the 2027 Census, with their details recorded on a list separate from that of Indian citizens, officials said.

The decision followed a State-level meeting in Aizawl on Saturday to review preparations for the second phase of the Census. Mizoram Chief Secretary Khilli Ram Meena chaired the meeting.

Mizoram Home Minister K. Sapdanga told the 40-member State Assembly a few weeks ago that 38,213 refugees had been registered as of August 20. Of them, 29,575 were from Myanmar, 6,959 from Manipur and 1,679 from Bangladesh, he said. Local organisations, however, put the figure at over 60,000.



Mizoram Home Minister K. Sapdanga had said that people excluded during the SIR will be counted in the Census. FILE PHOTO

Refugees from Myanmar, mostly members of the Chin community, began arriving in Mizoram after the military coup in February 2021. A military offensive in Bangladesh forced members of the Bawm community to flee to Mizoram in November 2022, while the Kuki-Zomi

people of Manipur fled ethnic conflicts in May 2023.

Ethnically related

The Chins, Bawms, and Kuki-Zomi people are ethnically related to Mizoram's dominant Mizo community. Mr. Sapdanga also told the House that biometric enrolment of the Bawms

had been completed, while that of the Chins reached 98.9%. "Individuals who do not wish to share their Aadhaar numbers will not be compelled to disclose them," an official said after the meeting on Saturday.

Mr. Sapdanga also said people excluded from the electoral rolls during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) would be counted in the Census.

Altogether, 78,442 names were deleted from the draft electoral rolls published on July 4.

Mr. Meena said the second phase of the enumeration exercise would require greater effort than the first and urged officials to complete it within the stipulated timeframe.

He said the challenge was to become India's first State to complete the Census 2027 work. "The target was set during the first phase of the exercise," he said.

Manipur groups call shutdown over 1949 merger with India

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Seven banned armed groups in Manipur have called for a 12-hour shutdown on October 15 to observe "National Black Day" in protest against the State's merger with the Indian Union in 1949. These groups, largely comprising the Meitei people of Imphal Valley, said essential services, including medical emergencies, media operations and religious activities, will be exempted from the shutdown.

Six of these groups are constituents of the umbrella Coordination Committee. They are the Kangleipak Communist Party, Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup, People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), PREPAK-Pro, Revolutionary People's Front, and United National Liberation Front. The seventh group, Socialist Revolutionary Party, called for a shutdown against the 1949 merger in a separate state-

ment. Referring to Manipur by its former name, Kangleipak, the groups alleged that the merger violated Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter, the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947, and the Indian Independence Act, 1947.

Indian 'pressure'

The outfits also claimed that King Bodhchandra was pressured into signing the Manipur Merger Agreement in Shillong on September 21, 1949, allegedly under house arrest and at gunpoint.

They criticised India's post-Independence policies, alleging that the country adopted an imperialist approach by bringing smaller nations under its control and fuelling communal tensions. They contrasted this with global decolonisation movements, and called upon the public to continue resisting New Delhi's "colonial occupation".

Musk can't pressure India on Starlink, says House panel chief

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India does not frame its security policy under pressure from social media or any external influences, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Nishikant Dubey, who chairs the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology, said on Sunday, responding to billionaire businessman Elon Musk's criticism of resistance to his satellite Internet service Starlink's entry into the Indian market.

Mr. Dubey said the committee had examined the security concerns associated with the satellite internet service provider. "As the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee, our committee has understood the challenges facing the country's security agencies through Starlink," he said.

He added that the Defence Ministry, the Home Ministry, and investigation agencies had raised concerns about what he described as "dangerous games". He claimed that similar concerns had been



Nishikant Dubey

flagged by the Congress-led government in 2013-14, though he did not elaborate on the nature of the alleged threats. He said India could not be pressured through social media campaigns.

He rejected suggestions that financial considerations had influenced government policy. "If our policy were driven by money, we would have rolled out the red carpet for you despite opposition from the security agencies," he said. Questioning Mr. Musk's criticism of India's approach, Mr. Dubey said, "First, provide connections to the poor in your own country, America, at affordable rates, and then level accusations."

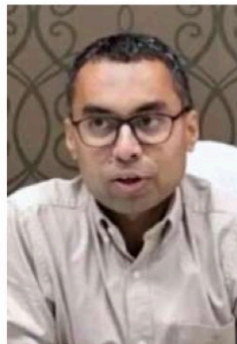
Appointment of new Deputy Election Commissioner puts ECI work hierarchy in focus

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

Prakash Rajpurohit, an IAS officer of the 2010 batch, has been appointed as Deputy Election Commissioner (DEC) in the Election Commission of India (ECI), filling the vacancy caused by the premature repatriation of Sanjay Kumar, who was in charge of the Electoral Rolls and Information Technology division.

What will be the work allocation in the ECI after this new appointment is crucial, as Sanjay Kumar, who had been DEC from August 2024 to August this year, had been responsible for the Electoral Rolls and IT division of the ECI, and had signed the ECI's June 24, 2025, order initiating the SIR in the country.

It is also important because Election Commissioners S.S. Sandhu and Vivek Joshi had written to the Cabinet Secretary on how files of the IT Department head Seema Khanna not being routed through Mr. Kumar, who was a seasoned officer, was a viola-



Prakash Rajpurohit

tion. Dr. Khanna joined the ECI in 2025 on deputation from the National Informatics Centre. She heads the commission's IT Department, and oversees its digital infrastructure, including systems for electoral-roll management.

Officer's repatriation

According to ECI sources, before the repatriation of Mr. Kumar to his parent cadre, Dr. Khanna's files had been routed through him till she was given a promotion to Level 15, which is equivalent to the rank of an Additional Se-

cretary. Since Mr. Kumar was of the rank of Joint Secretary (Level 14), Senior Deputy Election Commissioner Manish Garg issued an internal order that Dr. Khanna's files should go straight to the Election Commissioners from then.

This order was, however, never implemented. Dr. Khanna's files were being routed through Mr. Garg himself following the repatriation of Mr. Kumar, as he was his link officer, which made him responsible for his departments in his absence.

Mr. Rajpurohit's appointment was cleared by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet late on Saturday as per the order by the Department of Personnel and Training. The Rajasthan-cadre officer has been appointed to the post for a tenure up to April 8, 2030.

It remains to be seen how work allocation is done now and whether it addresses the concerns of the two ECs, specially ahead of the crucial Assembly elections.

CJP PROTEST IN CAPITAL

'Unacceptable': India again rejects UN rights office concerns on mass detentions

Express News Service
New Delhi, October 11

A DAY after the UN Human Rights Office expressed concern over the mass detention of students, activists, civil society members, lawyers and journalists in Delhi during protests organised by the Cockroach Janta Party, India on Sunday said the "concerns are unwarranted and constitute an unacceptable interference in the internal affairs of the country".

This is the second time in the last 12 hours that India has responded to the remarks made by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on Saturday. Earlier, India's permanent mission in Geneva had called the concerns "misplaced, causing an unwarranted interference in the internal affairs".

This time, Ministry of External Affairs' official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said: "We have seen certain remarks by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) about yesterday's events in New Delhi. India is the world's largest democracy, where the right to peaceful assembly is guaranteed by our Constitution and safeguarded by robust institutions, an independent judiciary and a free media."

"As in every democracy, Indian citizens exercise this right subject to the maintenance of public order and safety. Our law enforcement authorities act strictly in accordance with the law, and our courts remain available to all for the redressal of any grievances," he said, defending the action by the police in Delhi and NCR.

The MEA spokesperson said, "The OHCHR's concerns are therefore unwarranted and constitute an unacceptable interference in the internal affairs of India."

"We also note that the OHCHR has an approach of extreme selectivity when it comes to public positions. Violent responses to protests in our neighbourhood have gone uncommented, as indeed have law enforcement actions in its own vicinity. Such double standards only erode the credibility of its standing and contribute to the loss of faith in multilateralism," the MEA spokesperson said, referring to police and law enforcement agency actions in Pakistan and France.

The UN Human Rights spokesperson Thameen Al-Kheetan called on Indian authorities to respect and fulfil the right to peaceful assembly, noting that restrictions must meet strict tests of necessity and proportionality.

"We are concerned by reports of mass detentions in India of demonstrators, protest leaders, members of civil society organisations, lawyers and journalists, before and during today's large-scale demonstrations in Delhi," he said in a statement on Saturday evening.

"We call on the authorities to ensure that the right to peaceful assembly is fully respected and fulfilled. Restrictions on peaceful protests must meet strict tests of necessity and proportionality," the UN office said.

"The Indian authorities should also ensure law enforcement forces exercise utmost restraint in response to peaceful protesters, consistent with the country's democratic traditions and human rights obligations. All those arbitrarily detained must be immediately and unconditionally released."

"We also urge the authorities to engage in meaningful dialogue to address the broadly held concerns expressed," it said.

EXPERTS THINK THE RBI'S LATEST MEASURES WILL ONLY PROVIDE 'BREATHING ROOM' TO THE RUPEE

RBI hopes to shore up weakening rupee by using Chinese playbook

Siddharth Upasani
New Delhi, October 11

EARLY SATURDAY, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a raft of measures to defend the rupee, which has in recent days veered perilously close to its all-time low despite an interest rate hike of 25 basis points (bps) on October 7. Only one of the steps was novel to Indian markets, having been borrowed from China.

Called the Foreign Exchange Risk Reserve (FERR), banks must now set aside 20% (the RBI can change the exact percentage) of the forex derivative contract they enter into of over \$2 million involving the rupee. This is to be kept in cash with the RBI and makes it more expensive to protect yourself from a fall in the rupee.

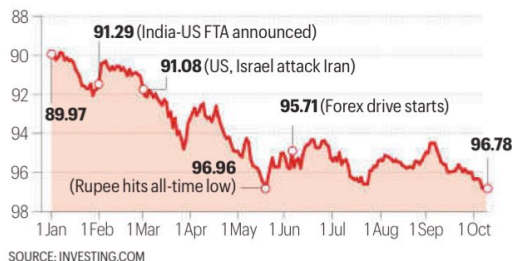
This may seem counterintuitive. People at risk from exchange rate volatility, such as importers, should be able to and are encouraged by authorities to protect themselves by 'hedging' their foreign currency exposure.

Importers usually have to pay for purchases from abroad either in US dollars or the seller's currency. If the rupee weakens, then the importer must pay more rupees for each dollar. This is why India and many other countries are trying to settle more of their international trade in their own currencies. This would reduce the need to store foreign currencies like the dollar, not require foreign inflows just to pay for imports, and reduce vulnerabilities due to sharp exchange rate movements.

While hedging is good practice, times are such that anything exerting downward pressure on the rupee — such as protecting yourself against future weakness in the rupee — is problematic.

"The RBI has sometimes been accused of changing the rules of the game with its regulatory measures. But it has to change the rules when it is losing. It is the house!" said a banker, noting that it was local banks and traders, not foreign ones, that were the target of Sat-

• RUPEE DOWN ALMOST 7% AGAINST \$ IN 2026



urday's measures.

The China playbook

Back in March, China cut its Foreign Exchange Risk Reserve Ratio to zero from 20%. Why? Because the Chinese yuan was continuously strengthening against the dollar.

By removing the reserve ratio, China was removing the cost of betting against its own currency. India faces the opposite situation.

Currencies are key to the global economic order. For

countries such as India that buy more from abroad than sell, there is always pressure on the rupee to weaken — more foreign currency exits India for trade than enters it. This is simple demand and supply: as supply of foreign currency falls due to a trade deficit, it becomes more expensive in rupees, and the rupee weakens.

The rupee can also weaken if domestic demand for foreign currency rises — as would happen when people try to 'hedge' their exposure and pro-

test themselves from a falling rupee, which is down almost 7% so far in 2026 and fell to a record low of 96.96-per-dollar in May.

Only 'breathing room'

For the RBI, signs of fresh discontent in the forex market were visible on October 7, when despite the policy repo rate being increased by 25 bps to 5.5%, the rupee fell.

Higher interest rates should theoretically strengthen the rupee as supply of the currency is expected to fall.

However, Saturday's measures — reminiscent of the 2013 'taper tantrums' crisis caused by the US Federal Reserve — may only provide some 'breathing room', according to Dhiraj Nim, FX strategist and economist at ANZ Bank. Gaura Sen Gupta, IDFC FIRST Bank's Chief Economist, agreed, saying that in the medium term, the rupee's path will depend on global factors and Balance of Payment dynamics.

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Pakistan declares emergency in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, suspends provincial govt.

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan on Sunday declared an emergency in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province over “deteriorating law and order situation”, bringing the provincial government led by jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan’s party to an end.

An emergency allows the federal government to assume key executive and legislative powers in a province during a security crisis or breakdown of constitutional governance.

Based on the federal cabinet’s recommendation,



Police guard a road leading to the ‘Red Zone’ in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, in Pakistan on Sunday. REUTERS

President Asif Ali Zardari issued a proclamation under Articles 232(1) and 234(1) of the Constitution, citing rising terrorist attacks

and a breakdown of constitutional machinery in the province, according to the presidential declaration. Under the proclamation,

the chief minister, provincial ministers, advisers, special assistants and advocate general will immediately vacate their offices.

The move comes amid an ongoing protest march led by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, who is pressing for Mr. Khan’s release and his medical treatment.

The presidential declaration said a report by the provincial governor had highlighted a breakdown of constitutional machinery and the provincial government’s inability to function in accordance with the Constitution.

Riyadh airport struck again a day after 12 killed in Houthi escalation

300 people wounded in Saturday's strikes and airport was still closed on Sunday; Indian embassy says one citizen killed and at least 10 others injured; Trump says he is planning to speak to Saudi crown prince as he weighs joining the fight

Associated Press

CAIRO

A projectile struck a passenger terminal at the international airport in Riyadh on Sunday, a day after a missile hit the same terminal and killed 12 people, the Saudi-led coalition fighting Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen said. The Houthis claimed responsibility for those attacks and others.

Saudi authorities said there were injuries in the latest attack on the King Khalid International Airport complex for terminals 3 and 4 for domestic flights. Saturday's missile attack was the deadliest in a Gulf Arab nation since the Iran war began, with



A file photo shows King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh. Terminals for domestic flights were attacked on Sunday. AFP

another 300 people wounded, some critically. The airport was still closed on Sunday.

The sharp escalation in the new front threatens to draw in greater U.S. military involvement, as Presi-

dent Donald Trump has said he is weighing joining the fight against the Houthis. There was no immediate White House comment on Sunday.

The latest strike in Riyadh came shortly after

the Houthis said the airport in the rebel-held Yemeni capital of Sanaa had been struck again, and blamed the Saudis.

India's embassy in Saudi Arabia said one of its citizens died on Sunday of injuries sustained in Saturday's attack, which would bring the toll to 13. The embassy said at least 10 other Indians were among those injured in the attack.

U.S. intervention

Mr. Trump on Saturday also said he planned to speak with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who has been seeking assistance.

A U.S. intervention could prompt the Houthis to halt shipping through

the Bab el-Mandeb Strait at the southern end of the Red Sea off Yemen and further restrict the flow of oil out of the Persian Gulf.

Earlier on Sunday, the Houthi-run health ministry said a child was killed and six people wounded in a suspected Saudi airstrike on a house in Sanaa. The ministry also said 91 Yemenis have been killed by the Saudi-led coalition in five weeks, 60% of them women and children.

There was no immediate comment from Saudi authorities on the claims.

On Sunday, the Houthis also claimed attacks on King Fahd Airport in the city of Damma, as well as oil and gas facilities in the kingdom's east.

ANY CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT WOULD NEED TO COME WITH 'REAL GUARANTEES, SAYS ZELENSKY

Trump declares Ukraine-Russia 'energy ceasefire'; Moscow silent

Ukraine President says awaiting details but welcome truce

Reuters

Washington, Kyiv, October 11

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump made a surprise announcement of an energy ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine on Sunday that he said was "effective immediately", but Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he was still waiting to see details of the deal.

There was no word from Moscow on the announcement, which followed days of intense pressure from Trump for Ukraine to halt its attacks on Russian oil refineries. He blames those strikes for a rise in diesel prices that is hurting his Republican Party ahead of US midterm elections next month.

In a dramatic deterioration in relations, Trump on Saturday warned Zelenskyy that he had "better damn well stop" attacking Russian refineries, and urged Ukrainians to replace their leader at new elections. Trump said Zelenskyy



President Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally in Clarksville, Tennessee, on Saturday. AP

had missed several opportunities to strike a deal with Moscow.

In a post on his Truth Social platform on Sunday, Trump unexpectedly announced that Ukraine and Russia had agreed to an energy ceasefire, but did not elaborate further.

"Effective immediately, there is an ENERGY CEASEFIRE in the War between Russia and Ukraine. Both parties have agreed. Do not break it!" Trump wrote.

Trump, whose war in Iran has been widely blamed for hiking global fuel prices, had previously announced an energy ceasefire in Ukraine in mid-September, although neither side ever confirmed such an agreement was reached.

Zelenskyy said in a post on the Telegram app that he had discussed Trump's announcement with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and Finn-



“Ukraine supports the ceasefire, and it is important that Russia support it as well. We are awaiting details from the American side”

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY,
PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE

ish President Alexander Stubb.

"Ukraine supports the ceasefire, and it is important that Russia support it as well. We are awaiting details from the American side," he said.

Hours earlier, Zelenskyy had pushed back against US pressure for a unilateral end to Ukrainian attacks on Russian refineries, repeating his long-standing posi-

tion that he was willing to do so only if President Vladimir Putin suspended Russian strikes on Ukrainian power infrastructure.

Any such ceasefire agreement would need to come with "real guarantees", Zelenskyy said. "The real cause of the war in Europe is Russia and Russia alone," Zelenskyy said. "It's possible to stop strikes on energy infrastructure as early as today, but Putin does not want to do so."

Trump also called for elections in Ukraine, suspended since the 2022 Russian invasion, to which Zelenskyy responded that he would call a vote if Putin agreed to a 60-day ceasefire.

Zelenskyy said it was "up to Ukrainians" to choose their leader, but added that there needed to be an end to the fighting first. Ukrainian law prohibits elections under martial law for security reasons. "Please tell Putin, give us two months, 60 days of total ceasefire, 60 days, and we will organise elections," Zelenskyy said.

The Ukrainian leader rejected that he was to blame for energy price rises, adding that "everybody in the world" knew that the war in West Asia was a bigger factor.

Nepal urges evacuation after flash flood sweeps away houses, bridges, 5 missing

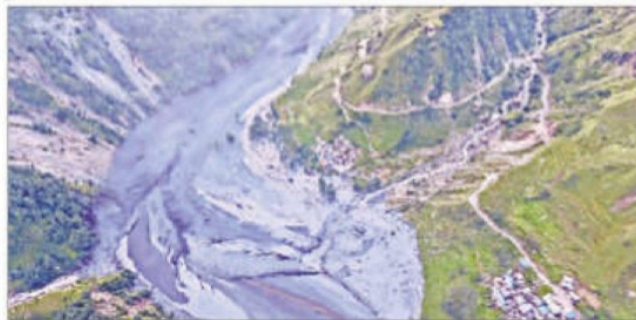
Yubaraj Ghimire

Kathmandu, October 11

AT LEAST five people are missing and 95, including nine foreigners, have been rescued after flash floods hit Nepal's Gorkha and Dhading districts early Sunday, as security personnel launched search and rescue operations in the affected areas.

The Syar Khola stream, which had been blocked by a landslide earlier, surged around 4.30 am after the Budhi Gandaki River joined it, inundating nearly 130 villages across the two districts. The floodwaters swept away 130 houses, four bridges and camp offices of the Budhi Gandaki hydropower projects in Gorkha, according to reports.

A joint operation team led



An aerial view of a flash flood in the Kali Gandaki River, in Nepal's Gorkha district on Sunday. PTI

by the Nepal Army rescued the 95 people stranded by the floods. Official sources said 35 of them were airlifted to Kathmandu, while the remaining 60 were moved to nearby safer places. Ground forces and aerial rescue teams have been deployed, with four helicopters

mobilised for the operation.

Nepali authorities have urged residents living along the river to move to safer places and remain alert. Netra Prasad Sharma, assistant chief district officer of Gorkha, said the district administration had issued the advisory following the floods.

The flood also damaged two hydropower projects in Gorkha district, while the four bridges swept away by the waters cut off affected areas from the rest of the country, according to National Authority for Risk Reduction.

The cause of the sudden surge in the Budhi Gandaki River remained unclear. Residents suspect that the Syar Khola, a tributary of the river between Lokpa and Chumling in Chumnuhari-6, may have been blocked, triggering the flooding.

The floodwaters swept away houses in Salleri and Paiyuka, as well as areas along the riverbed. A suspension bridge connecting a ward was swept away, Ram Kumar Gurung, ward chair of Chumnuhari Rural Municipality-3, was quoted as saying by *The Kathmandu Post*.

—WITH PTI INPUTS