Arrest occurs at the moment of detention, says SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday ruled that an arrest occurs the moment an official "touches" an individual to restrain their liberty, immediately triggering the 24-hour countdown to produce them before a Judicial Magistrate.

A Bench headed by Justice Ujjal Bhuyan said the word 'arrest' is not defined in penal statutes, from the colonial Indian Penal Code to the Code of Criminal Procedure to the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita.

It said the ambiguity has allowed law enforcement agencies to detain a person for days on end before the formal arrest is recorded.

The Bench pointed out that such detentions allowed the agencies to employ third-degree measures, including torture, to squeeze out confessions.

Ambiguity in definition of arrest has let agencies detain a person for days before recording formal arrest, said the SC

Once formal arrest is recorded, Article 22(2) requires the arrested person to be produced before a Judicial Magistrate, giving the person an opportunity of a hearing. So far, law enforcement officers and police have calculated the 24-hour rule from the time of formal arrest after search and seizure.

The hours and days of prior detention were not taken into account. Changing the script, Justice Bhuyan said the perceived dichotomy between detention and arrest has led to grave human rights violations.

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SHAURYA SSB TRG (9368104521)

Arrest starts at moment of detention, says SC

"The tendency to detain suspects for questioning and manipulating the record to show a later time of arrest is a reprehensible practice... What the investigating officers do, in such cases, is to procure statements by assault, illegal detention and fear of continued detention... The worst violations of human rights take place during the course of investigation," the court observed. The 24-hour period was a constitutional safeguard intended to act as a safety barrier to check such Executive excess.

"The 24-hour timeline as mandated under clause (2) of Article 22 of the Constitution would commence from the date and time of detention of the person and when his liberty stands curtailed, and not from the time of his formal arrest," Justice Bhuyan held. Justice Bhuyan reasoned that the Constitution did not recognise detention dehors (outside) arrest.

"Even if a person is touched with a view to detaining, it would amount to an arrest... Thus, the prescription of 24-hour time period would commence the moment a person is detained by the arresting authority suspecting him to have committed an offence, when his liberty is effectively curtailed," Justice Bhuyan said. The court held that the fundamental rights to life and liberty as enshrined in Article 21 were at the core of Constitutional jurisprudence, and "cannot be tinkered with so lightly, not even under the special statutes".

"Article 22(2) does not sanction the creation of any buffer zone where the liberty of an individual is curtailed for investigating purposes, but not formally shown as arrested. Creation or contemplation of such a buffer zone is unconstitutional," the court held.

In a series of directions, the court ordered that any person found to have been detained beyond 24 hours by a Magistrate on his or her production, must be released immediately. The Bench directed that no other time period, except the time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to the court of the Magistrate, must be excluded from the 24-hour timeline. The Magistrate concerned was duty-bound to record the actual date and time of detention of the person produced before the court.

Summary revision to begin in 6 States, U.T.s

ECI conducts SSR annually to enrol eligible voters, especially first-timers; it says furnishing Aadhaar details in Forms 6 and 8 will remain voluntary

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Making it count: Youth throng a special voter enrolment camp at a college in New Delhi in September. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Thursday announced the annual special summary revision (SSR) of electoral rolls for six States and Union Territories – Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Odisha, Sikkim, Chandigarh and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu – where the special intensive revision (SIR) has been completed and the final rolls published.

Earlier on October 15, the SSR was announced for 17 States and Union Territories, including poll-bound Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Manipur, and Goa. The SSR, an annual exercise, has not been carried out amid the launch of the now controversial SIR of electoral rolls last year. Election Commissioners S.S. Sandhu and Vivek Joshi are understood to have raised this as an anomaly as well among other issues.

The annual SSR seeks to enrol eligible voters, particularly young and first-time electors, and facilitate advance applications from those who will become eligible on April 1, July 1, and October 1, 2027.

The draft electoral rolls will be published on November 30 this year and the final ones on January 21, 2027.

Furnishing Aadhaar details in Forms 6 and 8 will remain voluntary.

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ORDER FOR IT OVERSIGHT
» **PAGE 14**

SHAURYA SSB (C-1045291)

Summary revision to begin in 6 States, U.T.s

No application for enrolment can be rejected, nor can an existing entry be deleted, for failure to provide Aadhaar, according to the SSR order issued by the ECI.

Unlike the contentious SIR process, when enrolling through the SSR, voters do no need to give any documentation proving citizenship or be mapped with earlier electoral rolls.

Among the firsts, in this year's SSR, the ECI has directed that, at the time of polls, "readable PDF" of the alphabetically arranged electoral rolls in pen drive or any other electronic storage device can be provided to the contesting candidates.

This is crucial as Opposition parties have been demanding machine-readable electoral rolls rather than image-based PDFs, so that they are digitally searchable, indexable, and verifiable.

Political parties would also be provided with supplementary voter lists, which were earlier kept only for record and future use.

The SSR process this time would also not include house-to-house visits by booth-level officers (BLOs). Instead, both draft as well as final lists would be put up at polling booths.

SAURYA ASSB TPG (8766104529)

SIR petitioners in top court seek FIRs over Form 7 'forgery'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Activists Anjali Bhardwaj and Amrita Johri, petitioners in the Supreme Court case pertaining to the special intensive revision (SIR) drive in Delhi, on Thursday wrote to the Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi, and Delhi Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Ashok Kumar, seeking an immediate investigation and legal action over alleged forgery and identity fraud in the filing of Form 7 applications in Mustafabad.

In their letter, Ms. Bhardwaj and Ms. Johri cited a report published in *The Hindu* on Thursday about 16 of the 20 booth-level agents (BLAs) of the Bharatiya Janata Party denying any association with the filing of Form 7s, used to seek deletion of existing names from the electoral roll or to object to the inclusion of names.



A re-verification drive for the nearly 47.56 lakh voters whose names were dropped from Delhi's draft roll is under way. FILE PHOTO

The names of the 20 BLAs were listed as 'objectors' in 787, or 77%, of the total 1,021 deletion applications filed so far in north-east Delhi's Mustafabad Assembly constituency.

All the Form 7 applications were filed against Muslim electors.

'Serious concerns'

The findings, the petitioners stated, raise "serious concerns about possible systematic and fraudulent attempt to disenfranchise legitimate electors through the deliberate misuse of statutory procedures".

They urged the Election Commission of India (ECI) to direct the registration of First Information Reports (FIRs) under the relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita for forgery, criminal impersonation, identity fraud and submission of false declarations.

They also sought a comprehensive audit of all Form 7 applications filed across the national capital during the ongoing SIR exercise to establish whether the named objectors had authorised and signed the froms. The petitioners also called for deletion proceedings arising from third-party applications to be stayed until independent verification with the affected electors and the listed objectors is completed. They also sought action under Section 31 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, against those found to have knowingly submitted false declarations, besides publication of verification reports and all Form 7 applications on the Delhi CEO website.

'Grave threat'

"Given the grave threat to voter rights, an immediate and transparent response is imperative," said the petitioners.

Around 47.56 lakh names were dropped from Delhi's draft roll published on August 31.

A re-verification drive for these voters is currently under way. Last week, the ECI pushed the deadline for publishing Delhi's final electoral roll to December 22, marking the fourth such revision.

SHARYAS SB IRG (8860104529)

Naga groups urge Modi to secure political solution to Manipur crisis

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Nagas took out rallies in conflict-scarred Manipur's Kamjong and Ukhrul districts on Thursday, urging Prime Minister Narendra Modi to help secure a permanent political solution that will end the violence wracking the State.

The protesters demanded that the Centre recognise the Manipur crisis as a historical problem rooted in "illegal" Kuki immigration, as well as disparity between the tribal hills and the largely non-tribal Imphal Valley that is the State's power centre.

Four Tangkhul Naga organisations, under the banner of the United Naga Council, Manipur's apex Naga body, organised the simultaneous rallies in the two Naga-majority districts.

The organisations said Manipur's conflict started between the Kukis and Meiteis in May 2023 and escalated into a Kuki-Naga clash after a Naga civilian was assaulted in Ukhrul district in February this year. They alleged that Kuki extremists subsequently opened a new front in the violence with a series of killings, abductions and arson attacks on Naga civilians.

"Till date, more than 32 Naga civilians have been killed. The most gruesome of all being the recovery of the mutilated bodies of six abducted Liangmai Nagas on 10th June, 2026... The latest being the brutal murder of Ajinbou Ringkangmai on 10th October, 2026. He was beheaded," the memorandum read.

Lamenting the government's failure to catch the main culprits, the Tangkhul organisations said conflict was not new to Manipur due to "historical demographic distortions caused by skewed Kuki refugee/immigration policy and the influx of illegal Kuki immigrants from Burma".

The Naga groups urged the Centre to stop the "militarisation" of Naga areas and withdraw the paramilitary Assam Rifles from the region.

SHARYA SSB TRG (8368105529)

Umar, Sharjeel move SC seeking bail in 2020 Delhi riots case

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam have approached the Supreme Court challenging the Delhi High Court's September 30 order refusing them bail in the 'larger conspiracy' case linked to the February 2020 Delhi riots.

In their petitions, the two have contended that their continued incarceration for over six years, with the trial yet to commence, violates the Constitutional guarantee of personal liberty under Article 21. They have also pointed out that the one-year restriction imposed by the Supreme Court on filing fresh bail applications is nearing its expiry.

On January 5, the Bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and N.V. Anjaria denied bail to Mr. Khalid and Mr. Imam, describing them as "ideological drivers" of the alleged larger conspiracy. The Bench held that the two stood "qualitatively on a different footing" from the other accused. The court, however, granted bail to five co-accused – Gulfisha Fatima, Meeran Haider, Shifa ur Rehman, Mohd. Saleem Khan and Shadab Ahmed – subject to stringent conditions.

While denying bail, the Supreme Court permitted Mr. Khalid and Mr. Imam to renew their bail pleas upon the completion of the examination of protected witnesses or the expiry of one year from its order, whichever was earlier.

In his petition, Mr.



Umar Khalid has contended that the prosecution is yet to examine the protected witnesses. FILE PHOTO

Imam has pointed out that although the chargesheet was filed on September 25, 2020, and the prosecution has cited more than 900 witnesses, including 47 protected witnesses, not a single witness has been examined. Mr. Khalid has similarly contended that the prosecution has yet to examine the protected witnesses, although the one-year period is approaching its expiry.

High Court order

On September 30, a Division Bench of Justices Prathiba M. Singh and Dinesh Bhatt of the Delhi High Court dismissed their fresh bail pleas, holding that judicial discipline prevented it from modifying the conditions imposed by the Supreme Court in its January 5 order. The Bench observed that the liberty granted to the two accused to seek bail afresh was expressly conditional upon either the examination of protected witnesses or the expiry of one year, whichever occurred earlier.

SHAURYA SSB TRG (8368104529)

Hardeep Singh Puri elected unopposed to Rajya Sabha from Madhya Pradesh

Anand Mohan J
Bhopal, November 5

UNION PETROLEUM and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri was formally declared elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha from MP on Thursday.

Puri, the BJP candidate for the by-election to the vacant Rajya Sabha seat, was declared elected after the nomination papers of two other candidates were rejected during scrutiny, leaving him as the sole candidate in the contest.



Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri

Returning Officer Umesh Kumar Sharma issued the certificate. With Puri not being physically present on the occasion, BJP state president Hemant Khandelwal received the certificate from the Returning Officer. The by-election was necessitated by the resignation of Union Minister of State L Murugan on October 14. Murugan's term was scheduled to end in April 2030.

Puri filed his nomination papers on October 31 in the presence of CM Mohan Yadav, Deputy CMs Rajendra Shukla and Jagdish Devda, Khandelwal and other BJP leaders.

The Returning Officer rejected the nominations of independent candidates Rajkumar Lohani and Kante Sayanna during scrutiny on November 3.

SHAURYA SSB TRG (9368104539)

DRDO carries out successful flight-test of Pralay missile

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Thursday successfully flight-tested the indigenously developed quasi-ballistic missile Pralay from Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Island off the Odisha coast. The successful trial paved the way for its imminent induction into the armed forces.

According to Ministry of Defence, the missile was test-fired at around 11.10 a.m. as part of user evaluation trials. All test objectives were fully met, as confirmed by data captured through various range instruments deployed by the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, the Defence Ministry said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated DRDO, the armed forces and industry partners on the successful test.

SHARYA SSR THG (6568045129)

Agniveer scheme revamped, but doesn't mark return to regular troop recruitment

Amrita Nayak Dutta
New Delhi, November 5

IN A major overhaul of the Agnipath scheme, the Centre on Wednesday greenlit a path for all Agniveers undergoing training in the three services — the Indian Army, the Indian Navy, and the Indian Air Force (IAF) — to join the armed forces as regular soldiers.

This comes just around the time the first batches of Agniveers were to complete their four-year tenure starting this month.

What is the overhauled scheme?

Agniveers refer to individuals selected under the Agnipath scheme, wherein candidates between the age of 17 years 6 months and 21 years meeting certain eligibility criteria can apply to seek recruitment in the Indian armed forces for a four-year period.

In the first step of the scheme that the Union Cabinet cleared on Wednesday, 25% of Agniveers will be selected on merit for absorption into the services after completing their four-year tenure. This was also part of the original scheme that was launched in 2022.

The remaining 75%, who would otherwise exit the services with a contributory scheme package (called Seva Nidhi), will now be offered an additional two-year engagement, after which they can join the armed forces as regular soldiers, provided they are willing and meet the military's objective selection criteria. This means 100% of the Agniveers joining the armed forces will get an opportunity to get absorbed into the services as permanent soldiers.

Those serving the extended two-year period will get enhanced pay and an enhanced contributory Seva Nidhi package if they choose not to join the armed forces after two years. They will, however, no longer have opportunities to join paramilitary forces, public sector undertakings, or other state government jobs on reservation.



CDS General N S Raja Subramani. PTI

How many will it immediately affect?

Over three lakh Agniveers are undergoing training at various stages in the three services. This includes around 2.8 lakh Agniveers in the Army, of whom around 19,000 will complete their initial tenure in four years. Around 2,500 Agniveers will complete their four-year tenure in the Navy this month, and another 2,900 will complete their training as part of the first IAF batch next month.

Is this a return to regular recruitment?

No. Chief of Defence Staff General N S Raja Subramani, while briefing the media, emphasised that the Agnipath scheme will continue, albeit with the new changes introduced.So, even if 100% Agniveers are eventually absorbed into the services as regular soldiers, only 25% will first be selected to join the forces as regular soldiers after the initial four-year tenure on a merit basis, as part of the original Agnipath scheme.

Thereafter, the rest will be given the opportunity to join the forces as regular soldiers after serving a total tenure of six years under the revamped Agnipath scheme. In terms of seniority, those who join after serving the two-year extension will be placed immediately after their own batchmates who joined the regular cadre after four years.

How does it differ from regular recruitment?

Under the regular recruitment scheme, which remained in place until the Covid-19 pandemic, personnel joined the armed forces as permanent soldiers from their first day of service, making them eligible for the associated benefits and pension.

A soldier could leave the forces only through voluntary retirement or after being court-martialled for an offence.

Under the Agnipath scheme, Agniveers can choose to leave the forces and pursue a new career, or continue serving if they aspire to a permanent career in the armed forces. Those who accept the two-year extension will have another opportunity to choose whether to leave or continue serving when that period ends.

The Agniveers will thus have the option to choose their career path at two different levels, while always having the option to join the forces as regular soldiers, provided they meet the selection criteria.

How does 100% absorption of Agniveers benefit the military?

If 100% of Agniveers opt to join the services as regular soldiers, it may not save the government any money on pensions. It might, however, reduce the shortage of personnel in the forces on a much faster timeline, which resulted from no recruitment and regular retirements during the Covid-19 years. This is particularly crucial in post-Galwan and post-Operation Sindoor security situations. Military officials maintained that the scheme will foster a competitive spirit among Agniveers and reduce complacency as they strive to be among the top 25% selected. They said the multiple layers of selection will also bring quality people into the forces. Gen Subramani said the scheme will give the military a pool of experienced soldiers while maintaining a youthful profile in the armed forces.

Centre defends Agnipath changes, clarifies scheme is not rolled back

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI



After an initial term, 75% of the Agniveers who are not absorbed into the regular cadre will get two-year engagement. FILE PHOTO

A day after announcing a two-year extension of the Agniveer engagement period, the government on Thursday clarified that the Agnipath scheme has not been rolled back and that the revised arrangement creates a pathway for all Agniveers to eventually join the regular cadre of the armed forces.

According to Ministry of Defence sources, the scheme remains unchanged in its basic structure, with an additional engagement period of two years introduced for the 75% of Agniveers who are not absorbed into the regular cadre after their initial four-year tenure. At the end of the second engagement period, all those willing and meeting the prescribed eligibility will be absorbed as regular soldiers, officials said.

Addressing concerns over the seniority of the 75% Agniveers who will serve for six years before joining the regular cadre, a Defence Ministry official said their seniority would be protected. On absorption, they will be placed immediately after their respective batchmates who entered the regular cadre after completing the initial four-year engagement period. They will not be placed below personnel belonging to subsequent batches, the official clarified.

The official also confirmed that there would be no numerical cap on the absorption of the remaining 75% after the second engagement period. While the first 25% will continue to be absorbed after four years, the remaining Agniveers will be inducted into the regular cadre after six years, provided they are willing, physically fit and maintain the required standards of discipline.

The Cabinet decision has drawn mixed reactions from military veterans, with questions being raised over its implications for the original structure of the Agnipath scheme and the long-term personnel management of the armed forces.

Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh described the revised arrangement as a "win-win solution", saying the scheme had envisaged a reassessment after the initial four-year period.

SHARMA SSB TIPS 9368104529



INS Sahyadri reaches Japan for MALABAR naval exercise

The Indian Navy's indigenous stealth frigate *INS Sahyadri* arrived at Yokosuka Naval Base in Japan on Wednesday to participate in the multilateral naval exercise MALABAR 2026, which brings together the navies of India, Japan, the United States, and Australia. According to the Indian Navy, the warship, part of the Eastern Fleet, was accorded a warm welcome by the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF). The exercise will provide an opportunity to the participating navies to enhance operational coordination, strengthen interoperability and exchange professional expertise through a series of engagements during the harbour and sea phases.

SHAUKAT SAB TRG 9538104529

Foreign Secretary sets stage for Nepal PM's upcoming visit

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on Thursday met Nepal Prime Minister Balendra Shah in Kathmandu, with discussions focused on "possible outcomes and initiatives" from the upcoming visit of the Himalayan nation's leader to New Delhi.

Concluding his official engagements in Nepal that spanned Wednesday and Thursday, Mr. Misri also met Nepal Finance Minister Swarnim Wagle and Foreign Minister Sisir Khanal.

"The Foreign Secretary of India highlighted the wide-ranging engagement and overall progress in diverse areas of bilateral cooperation, and discussed possible outcomes and initiatives in the context of the upcoming visit of the Prime Minister of Nepal to India," stated a joint press release issued by the Ministry of External Affairs and Kathmandu's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Misri held detailed talks with his host, Nepali Foreign Secretary Amrit Bahadur Rai, on the "mutually beneficial partnership" between India and Nepal. Mr. Shah had earlier this year highlighted the border dispute with India in the Lipulekh-Kalapai-Limpiyadhura area that is part of India's Uttarakhand but claimed by Nepal as a sticking point in ties.

Mr. Shah had sought to involve other countries, such as the United Kingdom and China, in talks on the issue. India, though, wants the matter to be resolved bilaterally.

The Nepali leaders expressed "gratitude for India's swift and substantial humanitarian and technical assistance in the aftermath of the Bhotekoshi floods", the joint press release stated.



Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri during a meet with Nepal Prime Minister Balendra Shah. PTI

TRG 8536810451
SHAURYA SSB

Eisenkot closer to forming govt. in Israel with backing of Arab lists

Joint List bagged 11 seats and Ra'am won 8 seats in election; in October 27 polls, neither Netanyahu nor Eisenkot secured enough votes for majority; once President gives mandate to a lawmaker, the person will have 28 days to form government

Agence France-Presse
JERUSALEM

Israel's largest Arab list on Thursday said it would back Gadi Eisenkot to form the next government, bolstering his chances of being picked over Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who lost the support of an allied religious party.

President Isaac Herzog was holding a second day of consultations with political parties after the October 27 election, in which neither Mr. Netanyahu – a polarising right-winger who has led Israel through three years of war – nor Mr. Eisenkot – a former military chief promising to restore national unity – secured enough votes for a majority.



Differing voices: Protesters in Jerusalem call for the formation of a Netanyahu-Eisenkot unity government, on Thursday. AP

Mr. Herzog will choose by himself whom to ask to form a new government, but traditionally the mandate is given to the person recommended by more parties, which would be Mr. Eisenkot.

Arab-majority lists won an unprecedented 19 seats in the election, making them potential kingmakers if Mr. Eisenkot's Opposition chooses to work with them – something which remains unclear.

Both Arab lists on Thursday said they were backing Mr. Eisenkot.

The Joint List, which bagged 11 seats, said in a statement that "it will inform the President of the State, Isaac Herzog, this evening of its decision to recommend that Gadi Eisenkot be tasked with forming the government".

Ra'am, which won eight seats, also endorsed Mr. Eisenkot.

Meanwhile, United Torah Judaism, which backed Mr. Netanyahu after the previous five elections, in its meeting with Mr. Herzog declined to recommend Mr. Netanyahu again as Prime Minister, although it also did not side with Mr. Eisenkot.

Observers say United Torah Judaism's tactic is likely aimed mostly at punishing Mr. Netanyahu and showing that their votes cannot be taken for granted.

Once Mr. Herzog gives his mandate to a lawmaker, the person will have 28 days to form a government, with a potential 14-day extension.

Midterm election results place U.S.-Israel relations under further strain

NEWS ANALYSIS

Stanly Johny

The political implications were visible even before the election results. On election day, President Donald Trump announced that the U.S. would stop providing about $4 billion in annual military aid to Israel. America's closest ally in West Asia, by the end of the year. Mr. Trump cited the political cost of the issue for Republicans, specifically referring to Abdul El-Sayed, the Democratic Senate candidate from Michigan, who has made opposition to U.S. military assistance to Israel a central campaign plank. Mr. El-Sayed beat Mike Rogers of the Republican Party to become the first Muslim Senator of the U.S.

Mr. Trump's announcement showed that even the Republican President, who moved the American embassy to Jerusalem in his first term, cracked down on pro-Palestine protests at home and launched a war, along with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, against Iran, recognised the growing electoral liability of unconditional support for Israel.

The midterm results could accelerate this political churn. The Democrats have secured control of both the House and the Senate. The election was fought largely on domestic issues, particularly the economy and the cost of living, but the war on Iran and its impact on the economy, particularly fuel prices, also figured in the Republican setback. Mr. Trump himself acknowledged that the war had hurt his party. Vice-President J.D. Vance, in a lengthy social media post, blamed the war for the defeat, and one of the four suggestions made to gain back the ground was to "change our relationship to Israel".



Donald Trump shakes hands with Benjamin Netanyahu after meeting at Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida. REUTERS

Opposition to Israel

The opposition to Israel, which was until recently largely confined to the margins of American politics, is entering the mainstream. Politicians such as New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani, Mr. El-Sayed and Democratic Representative Ro Khanna have been openly critical of Israel, and Washington's support for its policies. On the Republican side, sections of the MAGA movement have questioned why the U.S. should continue to commit its resources to Israel, particularly when Americans are facing economic pressures at home.

On the left, Israel's conduct in Gaza, including allegations of war crimes and genocide, has eroded support among Democratic voters. House Democrats have split almost evenly on Israel-related votes. On the right, the 'America First' wing has grown uneasy about open-ended commitments abroad. Mr. Trump campaigned on ending Gaza's war. He managed to get a ceasefire in October 2025, but Israel continues to bomb the enclave.

The war on Iran sharpened the mood. The U.S.-Israeli military campaign, launched on February 28, has kept gas prices high in the U.S. and deepened the cost of living crisis. Critics on both sides argue that Mr. Netanyahu pulled Mr. Trump into a war he could not win. Now when even the Vice-President is blaming the war for the electoral defeat, the real target is the 'special relationship' with Israel.

Eroding support

For Israel, the challenge is more immediate. Its leadership has long operated on the assumption that bipartisan support in Washington is a strategic constant. That assumption is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain as critics are gaining ground and Israel increasingly becoming a campaign issue. Mr. Netanyahu's close political alignment with the Republican Party and his personal relationship with Mr. Trump have also made the relationship vulnerable to changes in American domestic politics.

Now that Mr. Netanyahu himself lost governing majority in Israel and Mr. Trump has been rendered a lame duck by the midterm results, Israel will have to make a greater effort to rebuild its eroding support.

The U.S.-Israel relationship, rooted in intelligence, military and technological cooperation, is unlikely to fall apart. But future administrations could revisit America's presence in and policy towards West Asia, strategically deprioritising the whole region and Israel in particular.

At home, the political terms of the relationship are changing. The midterm elections have exposed the costs of treating support for Israel as an unquestioned feature of American politics.

Both parties will face growing pressure to reassess that position, while Israel will have to recognise that its actions in West Asia can no longer be insulated from the political consequences at home and abroad.

Hope of cheaper crude but Russian oil under cloud

Sukalp Sharma
New Delhi, November 5

THE DEMOCRATIC Party's sweeping victory in the US midterm polls has raised expectations of a potential diplomatic breakthrough in the Iran conflict, restoration of energy flows through the Strait of Hormuz, and a sustained decline in oil prices.

For India — the world's third-largest oil importer — lower prices would offer substantial relief by reducing the country's ballooning oil import bill and ease external inflationary pressure.

But the poll results may also carry an uncomfortable implication for New Delhi as a Congress controlled by the Democrats could make it politically harder for the Donald Trump administration to ease sanctions on Russia.

Any such development could complicate India's oil imports from Russia, its largest source of crude.

These are still early days, and despite the optimism, an end to the conflict is far from guaranteed. Trump retains considerable authority over foreign policy, and there is also a fear that the electoral setback could encourage him to adopt a more aggressive posture in the West Asia conflict.

Iran war and oil prices

Market participants and experts expect the Republican Party's dismal performance to lead to pressure on Washington to negotiate an end to the conflict. There are growing fissures within the Republican camp over the Iran war. US Vice President JD Vance publicly broke with the Trump administration's stance by blaming the war for the election debacle.

"No war powers resolution has ever overcome a presidential veto, and the Democrats' margins in both chambers will not be large enough to override one. What a unified Democratic Congress can do is make escalation considerably more costly: both chambers can pass resolutions, attach conditions to war spending and hold back confirmations of key officials... the administration faces greater institutional pressure to pursue a Hormuz deal rather than a further round of strikes," Rystad Energy said.

Abu Dhabi-based energy analyst Natalia Katona cautioned that while there is growing optimism for an end to hostilities in West Asia, there is a risk in being too optimistic.

"Trump acknowledged the political cost of the war, but he still defended the decision to go ahead with it. Democrats can begin to ask tougher questions and make it harder to secure fresh military funding once they take office on January 3. But until then, Trump still has room to turn up the pressure," she said.

If oil prices & freight fall, India gains

Although Indian refiners have diversified their suppliers in recent years, with Russia becoming the biggest supplier, Gulf crude remains central to the country's energy mix. And while availability of West Asian crude has improved considerably in recent months, those barrels are still quite expensive due to war risk premiums on shipping. Until tanker movements return to normal and the threat of further disruption recedes, India will continue to face uncertainty and high landed prices of oil and gas, even if the underlying prices of the commodities fall.

In the first six months of the current financial year, India's oil import bill jumped 46.4% year-on-year to $90.6 billion, as per provisional petroleum ministry data. The country imports 1.8-2 billion barrels of oil a year, and every $1-per-barrel increase in price bumps up its oil import bill by up to $2 billion on an annualised basis. According to a March report by Nomura, every 10% increase in oil price typically widens the country's current account deficit by 0.4% on the GDP. Crude oil alone is India's biggest merchandise import.

The Russia question

The possibility of tougher US sanctions against Russia could complicate things for New Delhi. In September, India imported 1.9 million barrels per day (bpd) of Russian crude and it accounted for over 35% of the country's total oil imports, even as West Asian oil imports saw notable recovery, according to data from Kpler.

While the Trump administration had targeted India regularly over hefty purchases of Russian crude, Washington's stance on Moscow's energy exports has softened in recent months. Just weeks ago, Trump eased sanctions on Russian diesel exports, saying that the US will also be buying from Moscow. He also waived the implementation on some key clauses of the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act which stipulated up to 100% tariffs on top buyers of Russian energy, like India and China. But a Congress controlled by the Democrats could push for a tougher approach towards Moscow to limit Russian oil revenues. Experts expect the Democrats to pressure the Trump administration to impose additional restrictions on Russian energy companies, banks, and shipping networks. Harsher sanctions could make it more difficult and expensive for Indian refiners to import Russian oil.

SHARMA SUKALP (8510052)

Saudi Arabia issues alerts, warns of 'danger' in Yanbu

Reuters
RIYADH

Saudi Arabia issued alerts on Thursday warning of potential danger in Yanbu, the kingdom's Red Sea oil export hub, as Yemen's Houthis (Ansar Allah) continue attacks on the kingdom that have opened another front in the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran.

The Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthis in Yemen said it destroyed a missile launched by the group towards Islam's holy city of Medina.

"Air defence intercepted and destroyed a ballistic missile launched by the terrorist Houthi militia toward the Medina region," coalition spokesperson Turki al-Malki said in a post on X.



Fighters from the Saudi-led coalition hold a position during clashes with Houthis in Yemen's northwestern Jawf province. AFP

The Houthis rejected any suggestion they were targeting the city, saying such accusations were a "blatant and grave falsehood". "Our operations target only its oil facilities and military bases."

The kingdom's civil defence also issued emergency alerts for the southeastern area of Sharurah that borders Yemen.

Houthis said on Wednesday they had attacked Riyadh's international airport while Syria's President Ahmed al-Sharaa visited the kingdom.

Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter and a key U.S. ally, has been requesting assistance from countries for support in its renewed war against the Yemeni militia.

Iran says two tankers and tugboat caught fire in Hormuz Strait

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Fars news agency says IRGC Navy 'took control' of two LUCAS drones, a U.S.-developed model

Two oil tankers and a tugboat caught fire in the Strait of Hormuz, Iran's Revolutionary Guards said, according to local media on Thursday.

"Last night, in two separate incidents, a large oil tanker attempting to pass through the illegal passageway south of the Strait of Hormuz suffered a fire after striking a mine and was brought to a halt," the Guards told the *Fars* news agency.

"Another supertanker was halted by a massive fire while exiting the eastern Strait of Hormuz. A tugboat that had approached the supertanker to extinguish the fire also caught fire."

There has been no confirmation of either incident from maritime officials.

British monitor UKMTO reported a tanker being struck by "two unidentified projectiles" around 50 nautical miles off the north coast of Qatar.

Fars also reported that the IRGC Navy's electronic warfare unit had taken control of two LUCAS drones, a U.S.-developed model.

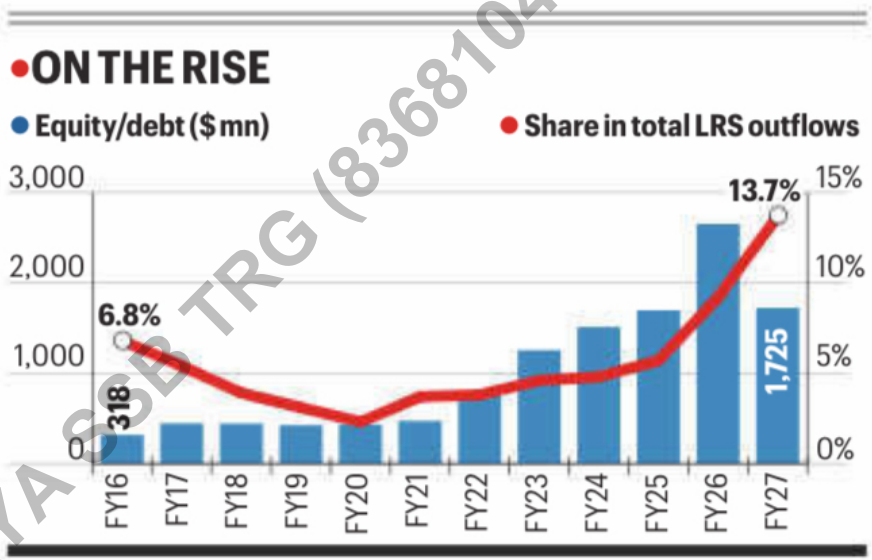
SHAHIK SSB TRG (8368 0 22)

VIA LIBERALISED REMITTANCE SCHEME ROUTE

Indians set to invest record $4 bn in foreign stocks, debt in FY27

7% surge over last week, Nifty still down 6% in 2026

Akash Mandal & Siddharth Upasani
Mumbai, New Delhi, November 5



NOTE: DATA FOR FY27 IS FOR APRIL-AUGUST. **SOURCE:** RBI

LAST WEEK, artificial intelligence giant Anthropic filed documents with the US capital markets regulator, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), for its Initial Public Offering (IPO). Interest is sky-high, with Anthropic aiming for a valuation of up to $2 trillion. And while Indians may find it difficult to directly invest in the IPO, some will surely look to snap up some shares once the company is listed, possibly as soon as in two weeks' time. Why? Because it might 'pop'.

Starved of returns in the domestic stock market — Nifty is still down 6% in 2026 despite a 7% surge over the last week — Indians are increasingly investing abroad to the tune of

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