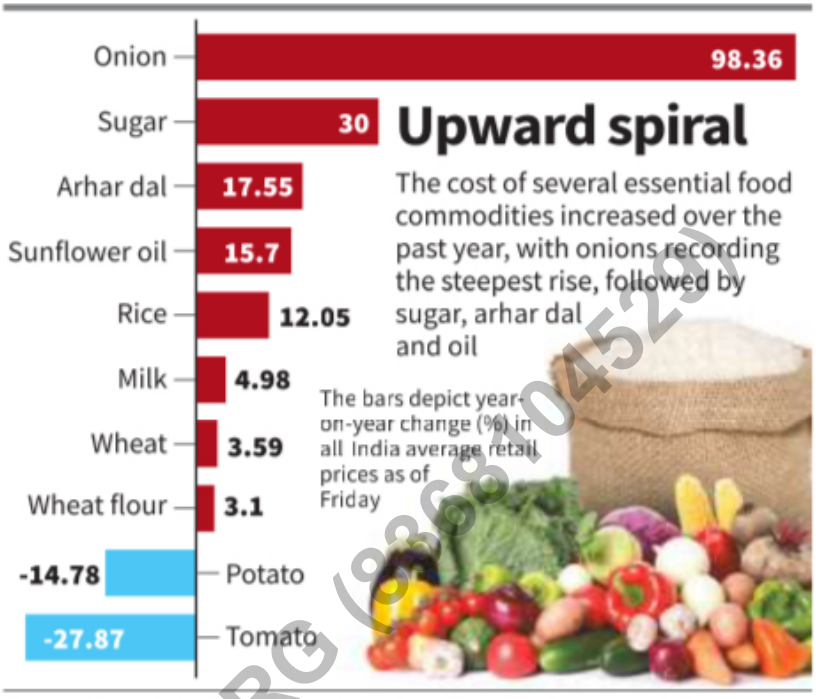
Rising inflation and stagnant wages hit household budget

A.M. Jigeesh
NEW DELHI



Source: Price Monitoring Division in the Department of Consumer Affairs

A bitter winter of discontent has set in for the Indian household. Despite strategic government interventions ahead of the festive season, essential commodity prices have scaled unprecedented heights, turning daily sustenance into a punishing financial struggle for the common man.

The prices of kitchen staples have witnessed astronomical year-on-year leaps, government data show. Onion prices have effectively doubled while sugar has sweetened the profits of hoarders at a 30% premium. Popular edible oils have surged by more than 14%, and daily nutritional sources like rice (up 12%), milk (up 5%), and eggs have consistently climbed, leaving families with shrinking portions and compounding anxieties.



The crisis, however, is not confined to the dinner table. It represents a deeper, structural "crisis of social reproduction" that is quietly dismantling the household budgets of the poor and middle classes. As wages stagnate even while inflation surges, money is effectively flowing from the pockets of poor workers to the bank accounts of the wealthy, economists say.

In August, the Union Department of Consumer Affairs had promised calibrated market interventions to ensure the availability and affordability of essential commodities.

With Opposition parties, trade unions, and economists demanding stronger government interventions, the Centre informed Parliament in the Monsoon Session that it had allocated ₹4,100 crore to the Price Stabilisation Fund for the financial year 2026-27.

Hoarding, profiteering

However, Union Consumer Affairs Secretary Nidhi Khare said that the prices of onions, sugar, and edible oils continued to rise due to black marketing, hoarding, and profiteering. According to data provided by the Price Monitoring Division, the all-India average retail price of rice stood at ₹48.35 per kg on Friday, 12% higher than a year ago. Consumers in Karnataka paid the highest prices at ₹69.38 per kg, followed by Tamil Nadu at ₹68.80.

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» PAGE 7

SHAURYA SSB TRG (9368104520)

Surging prices, stagnant wages hit households

Wheat and wheat flour (*atta*) prices are 3.6% and 3.1% higher, respectively, than a year ago. Kerala recorded the highest retail wheat price at ₹49.43 per kg while Andaman and Nicobar Islands recorded the highest price of atta at ₹71.50 per kg.

The all-India average retail price of arhar (tur) dal, one of the most commonly consumed pulses in India, stood at ₹136.64 per kg, 17.6% higher than a year earlier. The average retail price of sunflower oil was ₹191.10 per one kg packet, 15.7% higher than on the corresponding date last year.

The average retail price of onions on November 27 was ₹53.32 per kg, compared with ₹26.88 a year ago. The national average retail price of sugar was ₹60.80 per kg, up from ₹46.61 a year earlier.

Milk prices rose by almost 5% over the year, rising from ₹59.27 per litre a year ago to ₹62.22 now. The average retail price of eggs increased by ₹4.46, reaching ₹86.10 per kg on November 27.

Potatoes and tomatoes were the only commodities that are cheaper than last year. Potato prices fell by 14.8%, while tomato prices declined by almost 28% compared with November 2025.

Big three: healthcare, education, rent

The National Health Accounts (NHA) Estimates for India 2023-24, released by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on November 15, showed that government health expenditure increased from approximately ₹1.3 lakh crore in 2013-14 to ₹4.14 lakh crore in 2023-24. During the same period, household out-of-pocket expenditure on health as a share of total health expenditure declined from 64.2% to 42.7%.

According to the Comprehensive Modular Survey conducted between April and June 2025 as part of the 80th round of the National Sample Survey (NSS), the average expenditure on school course fees in urban areas was estimated at ₹15,143, compared with ₹3,979 in rural areas.

A major reason for recent workers protests in Noida was the hike in rental expenses. According to the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2023-24, rent accounted for 7% of urban households' non-food expenditure.

SHAURYA SSB TRG (8368104529)

Effective income transfer

Economist Satyaki Roy, an Associate Professor at the Institute for Studies in Industrial Development, said that food inflation disproportionately hurts poor and working-class households as the share of food and other basic commodities is much larger in the consumption basket of poorer households.

Because more than 90% of India's workforce lacks institutional mechanisms for collective bargaining, workers find it difficult to demand higher wages when prices rise. "Real wages have remained largely stagnant and, in some periods, have even declined because of rising prices. Even when nominal incomes increase, inflation erodes those gains. In effect, this constitutes a transfer of income from workers to the wealthier sections of the population," he said.

Mr. Roy blamed recent social unrest on the fact that families are investing more in education due to growing aspirations in rural communities, while reaping minimal returns. "This is a crisis of social reproduction. It is one of the factors contributing to the current protests. This generation is not receiving adequate access to quality public education and is simultaneously struggling to find employment," he said, calling for higher public spending in this sector.

Trade union leader Amarjeet Kaur said rising fuel prices have created a cascading effect on the prices of almost all essential commodities. "Wages are insufficient to meet rising living costs. Inflation is placing enormous pressure on workers and their families, affecting nutrition, children's education, and healthcare expenses," she said.

Ms. Kaur argued that the Public Distribution System (PDS) should be universalised and expanded to include cereals, cooking oils, and other essential commodities through ration shops. "The government should also provide a statutory minimum support price (MSP) to farmers," she said.

(This is Part 1 of *The Hindu's* exclusive series of articles on price rise)

SHAURYA SCB TRG (8368104529)

HIGH-FREQUENCY INDICATORS POINT TO GROWTH MOMENTUM CONTINUING IN Q3

El Niño, wedding season could push inflation higher: Finmin

Aanchal Magazine
New Delhi, November 28

HIGH-FREQUENCY indicators are pointing towards continued expansion and domestic economic activity sustaining its momentum into October-December, but there might be upside risks to inflation from the continuing West Asia conflict, *El Niño* weather conditions and higher demand on account of the festive and wedding season, the Ministry of Finance said in its Monthly Economic Review for November on Saturday.

Risks to the Strait of Hormuz may keep oil import bills and maritime freight rates subject to sustained volatility and these supply-side shocks threaten to feed into broader wholesale and retail price indices in the coming months, the ministry said.

It, however, pointed out that the recent moderation in global crude oil prices, with benchmarks falling below $100 per barrel in early November and strengthening of the rupee following robust capital inflows, may provide some relief from imported inflationary pressures, depending upon the persistence of this trend.

"Business activity is likely to remain firm, with new orders gaining pace and input cost pressures easing. Domestic demand should stay supportive, with sequential momentum in vehicle sales and continued strength in rural consumption. Comfortable fertiliser availability bodes well for the rabi season, although sowing is at an early stage and reservoir storage is below last year's level," the ministry said.

The effect of an unfavourable or less favourable base effect on the retail inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), may extend slightly into November, the ministry said. It flagged the risks from an "exceptionally strong *El Niño* event" as warned by the World Meteorological Organisation, towards the end of 2026.

"The Indian Ocean Dipole Index, which currently stands in the 'positive zone' at 0.8° Celsius, may have an offsetting impact on *El Niño* conditions, given that it persists for a considerable period," the review said, adding that the upcoming inflation prints may also see upside risks from increased demand across food and non-food items with festive season persisting into November and the onset of the wedding/nuptial season, it said.

The ministry underlined the gains seen on the external sector front, stating that a robust merchandise export growth, supported by broad-based growth across key sectors, along with a sustained services trade surplus have helped cushion the overall trade deficit.

"The economy enters the coming months with firm domestic momentum, with sustained consumption demand, a gradual broadening of private investment and continued policy support for manufacturing expected to underpin growth. Continued conflict in the Middle East, risks to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and global trade policy uncertainty remain the key factor to the outlook, but strong macroeconomic fundamentals and adequate buffers leave the economy well placed to navigate them," it said.

India's headline retail inflation rate crossed 6% for the first time in two years in October, data released earlier this month showed. As a result, economists are pencilling in further interest rate hikes in the coming months, with a second successive 25-basis-point rate increase on December 4 as good as guaranteed.

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

• INFLATION OUTLOOK

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SHUKLA SSB RG (8368104529)

LS expansion is 'murder' of democracy, says Rahul

Delimitation a 'blank canvas' to redraw electoral map, says the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha; he addresses Gen Z and urges parties, including NDA constituents, to join fight against the move

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Saturday accused the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party of pushing India towards "dictatorship", alleging that the proposed expansion of the Lok Sabha to 850 seats would "murder" democracy and that the delimitation exercise would give Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar a "blank canvas" to redraw the country's electoral map.

Addressing a press conference at the Congress headquarters here, Mr. Gandhi appealed to parties within the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and others outside the Opposition's Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) to join what he said was a fight to protect democracy.

His appeal came on a day the INDIA bloc announced its opposition to the 132nd Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and the Delimitation (Second) Bill, 2026, which, if passed, will also lead to the implementation of the women's reservation law. The Opposition parties alleged that the legislative package was an attempt by the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) to "permanently remain in power".

"This is a fight for the heart of democracy. It is going to be clear who is protecting democracy and who is not. We want all our partners and everybody else, even people like Chandrababu [Naidu] *ji* and Jagan Reddy *ji*, to think about India, to protect democracy and to fight these criminals," Mr. Gandhi said.

The Congress leader also raised concerns over social justice and suggested that delimitation should be based on the 2027 Census, incorporating caste census data to ensure fair representation while keeping the strength of the Lok Sabha frozen at 543.

Citing Assam and Jammu and Kashmir as examples, Mr. Gandhi said electoral boundaries would be redrawn to favour the BJP by weakening the representation of communities opposed to it and targeting Opposition leaders.

Calling the delimitation exercise a "dangerous move", Mr. Gandhi directly addressed Gen Z, describing the BJP's move as an "escape plan" after its alleged vote *chori* (theft) was exposed.

"Gen Z, please remember, this number 850 represents the murder of Indian democracy. The idea is to give Modi, Shah, Gyanesh Kumar a blank canvas to redraw India's electoral map," he said, questioning the proposed composition of the Delimitation Commission.



Direct attack: Rahul Gandhi addresses the media at the Congress headquarters in New Delhi on Saturday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Modi reposts April speech on quota for women

NEW DELHI
Prime Minister Narendra Modi has shared a video of a speech he made after the previous Bill on delimitation was defeated in April, where he said his government would "eliminate every obstacle" in the way of women's reservation. » PAGE 8

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'NOT ABOUT QUOTA'
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DMK decides to support Bill, says 'no loss' to Tamil Nadu

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), whose numbers in the Lok Sabha are crucial for the passage of the new Constitutional Amendment Bill linked to delimitation, will support it as it provides for a 50% increase in Lok Sabha seats and, according to the party, entails no loss for Tamil Nadu.

Explaining the resolution adopted at a meeting of party MPs chaired by DMK president M.K. Stalin, MP A. Raja said the party had maintained a consistent position, whether in the Opposition or in government, and there had been no deviation from its stand. He said the DMK had consulted party lawyers and legal experts and concluded that there would be no loss either to the State or to the country.

Asked why the DMK, which had consistently opposed the BJP, had decided to support the Bill, Mr. Raja said there was nothing wrong with supporting a measure if its provisions were consistent with the party's position.

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SHAURYA SSB TRG (8368104529)

DMK to support Bill, says 'no loss' to T.N.

The party added that the State's existing share of 7.18% in the allocation of parliamentary constituencies will not be reduced, and that the Bill proposes an extension of the existing freeze on the inter-State distribution of Lok Sabha seats for another 25 years.

"Our stand is that the 7.18% share should not be altered. It is being maintained. What is your problem? We have held the same position even when the Congress was with us. Can you say that the DMK and Mr. Stalin have departed from their position?" he asked.

Pointing out that Tamil Nadu had lost two seats during the 1971 delimitation, Mr. Raja said such a loss would not occur this time. "Tamil Nadu's share will be 7.21% instead of 7.18%. There is no loss. We have been told that there are some problems and shortcomings in the Bill, and we have discussed them with our leader. We will hold discussions with political parties and suggest amendments wherever necessary," he said.

He said that if the BJP government resorted to gerrymandering through the Bill, as alleged by Congress leader P. Chidambaram, to sideline Christians, Muslims, and linguistic minorities and deny them their due representation, the DMK, as a friend of minorities, would take steps to prevent it and fight for their rights.

SHANKAR IAS ACADEMY (9368104529)

'Delimitation is about gerrymandering, not about women's quota'



Arundhati Roy

Booker Prize-winning author and activist

There is so much else that I wanted to speak about other than what I am going to say today. That is how the world works these days, every crisis is replaced by another more urgent one.

This meeting was planned before we learned of the government's latest ambush. I wanted to speak about artificial intelligence and its impact on the world of literature and publishing. But now, suddenly we are informed that a parliament session has been called. Reports suggest that the Modi government may have managed to bully and buy itself enough MPs to pass its 'Delimitation Bill' under the pretence of creating more constituencies to implement women's reservation in parliament.

This is a government that loves to ambush its citizens. In 2016, PM Modi appeared on TV and announced demonetisation. With no warning, more than 80% of Indian currency became non-legal tender. In 2019, his government locked down all of Kashmir and cut the internet in the valley for months together. In 2020, the Prime Minister ambushed us with the COVID lockdown, shutting down a country of more than a billion people with less than four hours' notice, leaving tens of million with no option but to walk thousands of miles home to their villages.

And now this, the latest ambush. If it passes in Parliament, delimitation will do to democracy what demonetisation did to the economy.

Demonetisation broke the back of India's poor and made millions dependent on government charity. Together with electoral bonds it made the BJP the richest political party in the world. The BJP has used its money and influence to undermine the Constitution and capture every single institution that is meant to oversee checks and balances in a functional democracy. This includes, as we now know, the Election Commission. The special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls has struck 130 million voters off the electoral lists. That is almost one-tenth of the population, a scale of disenfranchisement that is unprecedented in history. The people who have been struck off are now no longer eligible for the meagre government benefits that have helped them survive.

> Delimitation will do to democracy what demonetisation did to the economy

The SIR curates electoral rolls to benefit the ruling party. An exercise in which a government elects its people instead of the other way around. Delimitation seeks to curate political constituencies towards the same end. If the Bill passes, it will break the back of India's democracy. Do not let them fool you into believing that it is just about increasing the number of constituencies and the number of parliamentarians. Do not believe that the Women's Bill had anything to do with women's rights. It's about gerrymandering, plain and simple. This Bill is about maps, not numbers. It has to do with redrawing the map of constituencies to geographically consolidate the divisions of caste, religion, and community– to institutionalise divisiveness in a way that benefits a rotten ideology and attempts to entrench it in our society forever. If you have any doubts about their intentions, please study the way redrawn constituencies have served the BJP in Assam and Kashmir.

The Nazis – Germany's fascists – called themselves National Socialists. By doing this they tried to murder the very meaning of socialism.

What shall we call what is going on in India today – Democratic Fascism? In which the very meaning of democracy is being gutted? And the machinery of democracy is being re-purposed towards that end. It took many of our writers, artists, intellectuals and commentators a very long time – decades in fact – to understand what has been happening in our country and call it by its name. Fascism. Perhaps this is because it's easy for a society that practises caste and considers some humans 'purer' and more 'godly' than others to shuffle sideways into fascism. Despite the mass slaughter, daylight lynching and routine killing of Muslims, despite church burnings and attacks on Christian missionaries in the wake of the 2014 general election, many respected and self-styled 'liberal' intellectuals and artists, actually welcomed and applauded Modi when he was sworn in as Prime Minister. They mocked those of us who had raised the alarm years ago because we could see what was coming. Even today, many artists who think of themselves as liberal and secular continue to normalise fascism by participating in government-sponsored festivals and shows at home and abroad. It is shameful. It will not be forgotten. Or forgiven.

Today we live in one of the most unequal societies in the world. A society in which the Rule of Law is implemented according to caste, class, religion, and ethnicity. A society in which dissent is crushed in a million ways. Our country, once a friend of Palestine now unforgivably calls Israel a friend even though it continues to commit genocide in Gaza on a daily basis. Our government buys weapons and illegal surveillance software like Pegasus and Cellebrite from Israel –that is being used on protesters and activists here at home.

The Delimitation Bill is a way of consolidating all of this. It's a long-term plan for Forever Democratic Fascism. As someone who grew up in South India, I am heart-broken to see a party like the DMK, rooted in anti-Hindutva, and anti-caste political ideology, even consider supporting this Bill. I really want to believe they will step back from the brink. Its decision will affect all of India. It shoulders a huge responsibility.

Every Member of Parliament that votes for the Delimitation Bill is betraying the promise of India's democracy. I'm just a writer. An ordinary citizen. I represent no one but myself. I have no claims to power or sainthood. But here's this ordinary citizen's curse upon every MP that conveniently goes missing and every hand that goes up in Parliament next week to support that Delimitation Bill.

(This is the full text of her speech at the National Conclave of Writers & Artists at Jawahar Bhawan in New Delhi on Saturday)

THE HINDU ARCHIVES 60104

Include in lecture on ROBOTICS

AIIMS performs India's first robot-guided brain surgery for Parkinson's

Tabshir Shams
New Delhi, November 28

NEUROSURGEONS AT the All India Institute of Medical Sciences performed India's first robot-guided deep brain stimulation, a procedure for Parkinson's patients whose symptoms are no longer controlled by medication.

The operation, on November 25, was led by Dr P Sarat Chandra, head of neurosurgery at the institute, together with Dr Ido Strauss of Tel Aviv University in Israel. At present, this technology is being used in selected centres across the world. Other faculty involved in the surgery included Prof Ramesh Dadamani, Prof Satish Verma and Prof Dattaraj.

In deep brain stimulation, surgeons implant thin electrodes deep in the brain. The electrodes deliver small, steady electrical pulses that calm the abnormal activity behind tremor, stiffness and slowness of movement. They are connected to a device under the skin, usually near the chest, that works like a pacemaker for the brain. "It does not cure Parkinson's and does not stop it from advancing," said Dr Elavarasi, associate professor of neurology at the institute. "In the right patient, it eases symptoms and improves quality of life."

Dr Chandra said the robotic approach was significant because it was not only cosmetically better but also more accurate. "The accuracy is better as the placement of electrodes is guided by a certain kind of electrical activity called beta oscillations," he said.



The operation was carried out on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Robotic DBS

Beta oscillations are a rhythm of electrical activity in the brain's movement circuits. In a healthy brain, Dr Chandra said, they appear when the body is at rest and fade once movement begins. In Parkinson's, they keep surging even during movement. "It's like a handbrake of the car, which is still on despite the car moving," he said. "This is what leads to symptoms of bradycardia and rigidity in Parkinson's."

In the robotic procedure, an artificial intelligence algorithm analyzes the brain's signals and builds a heat map of where beta activity is strongest. "The surgeon then uses that map to decide the final electrode position," Dr Chandra said.

Dr Elavarasi said the robotic method was also less invasive. Surgeons need to shave only a coin-sized patch of the scalp rather than the entire head, and the electrode passes through a 2.5-millimeter hole instead of a larger incision, she said.

"The fixation caps used in conventional surgery are not needed. The cosmetic result is better," she said.

Dr Elavarasi, however, emphasised that there was no direct evidence that robotic surgery was superior to conventional methods. "The technology is being used in selected centers across the world," she said. Whether patients fare better years later remains unanswered and will require comparative studies, she said.

The robot works alongside a technique called microelectrode recording, in which doctors listen to the electrical activity of individual neurons deep in the brain during surgery. Each region has its own signature, which tells surgeons when they have reached the target.

At the workshop held alongside the surgery, Dr Genela Morris of Tel Aviv University demonstrated an A.I.-based method of interpreting those signals as an operation proceeds.

"Advanced imaging and M.E.R. have made targeting more precise," Dr Elavarasi said. "A.I. helps identify the entry and exit zones better. That reduces errors, shortens the time taken to find the target and brings uniformity. It does not replace human judgment."

The cost

Not every Parkinson's patient qualifies for DBS. At AIIMS, a multidisciplinary team assesses patients with significant motor fluctuations and a good response to levodopa, and with no clinical red flags, before surgery is considered, Dr Elavarasi said. The bill can be high. "The cost of the DBS implant starts at around Rs 10 lakh at AIIMS, while the surgery itself is technically free. Private hospital costs can exceed Rs 35 lakh," Dr Elavarasi said.

SHAURYA SSB TRG (368104529)

Include in lect on CYBERSECURITY

Cybercrime, deepfake abuse against women on the rise

Lavpreet Kaur
NEW DELHI

Revenge, anger and personal vendetta are increasingly driving cyberstalking and technology-facilitated sexual offences, with Delhi Police investigators reporting at least a doubling of such cases over the past year. From former partners threatening to circulate intimate photographs to anonymous accounts using morphed images and artificial intelligence-generated deepfakes to target women, investigators are witnessing a shift towards more persistent and complex forms of online abuse.

The scale of the problem is also reflected in data from the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP), which recorded a 118.4% increase in online crimes against women, from 22,188 cases in 2020 to 48,475 in 2024 over four broad categories of offences – online child sexual abuse and exploitation, gang rape and sexual abuse-related online content, sexually explicit acts and sexually obscene material. Delhi police officials said cases of cyber stalking, technology-driven revenge crimes has at least doubled over the past year.

In a case involving a 17-year-old girl in Delhi, her digitally manipulated sexual images were found on several adult websites and intermediary file-hosting services. The girl's aunt, a medical professional, approached the helpline after finding sexually explicit content bearing her niece's facial features online.

Available timestamps suggested the material had been online for some time before it was discovered, making it difficult to establish when it was first uploaded and identify those responsible. Following take-down requests through multiple channels, including the NCRP, 28 links were removed from hosting platforms within two weeks. The content was also digitally fingerprinted to reduce the possibility of it being uploaded again, though search thumbnails and indexed traces continued to surface.

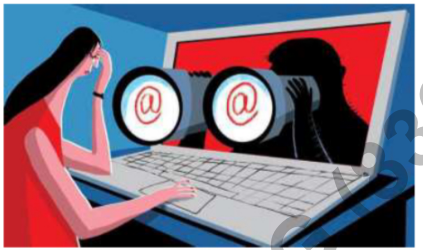

ILLUSTRATION: SOUMYADIP SINHA

Meri Trustline, a helpline run by the Mumbai-based RATI Foundation for people facing online abuse and cyberbullying, has documented a growing volume of harmful content requiring intervention. According to data shared with *The Hindu*, between August 2024 and July 2025, it received 626 calls, of which 130 cases required active intervention. Across these cases, it recorded 253 categorised instances of online harm and reported 1,137 harmful links and accounts to social media platforms and other intermediaries, a 112% increase from 537 in the previous reporting period. Of these, 981 were taken down.

Women accounted for 68% of the 130 victim-survivors, while men made up 26%; the remaining 6% did not disclose their gender. Delhi accounted for 12 cases (9.2%), making it the third-largest location in the helpline's caseload after Maharashtra (24.6%) and West Bengal (12.3%). Uttar Pradesh accounted for seven cases, Haryana four, Rajasthan three, Punjab two, Chandigarh two and Himachal Pradesh one.

The report found that 91 of the 130 perpetrators (70%) were unknown to the victim-survivors, while 39 (30%) were known to them. Of the known perpetrators, 36 were reported to be men. These cases often involved people who had prior access to private images or communications, with abuse linked to relationship breakdowns, betrayal of trust and attempts to retain control after separation.

In contrast, cases involving unknown perpetrators were more commonly associated with sextortion, blackmail, impersonation and online threats. Such perpetrators often operated through anonymous or rapidly created accounts, sometimes using multiple profiles to resume contact after being blocked.

Denigration attempts

Denigration and attempts to damage a person's reputation accounted for the largest category among the 253 instances of harm, with 42 instances (16.6%).

Other forms included erotic posing (23, 9.1%), harassment through sexually explicit content (13, 5.1%), penetrative sexual content (12, 4.7%), solo sexual activity imagery and manipulated imagery, including deepfakes (10 each, 4%), non-penetrative sexual content (eight, 3.2%) and partial nudity (five, 2%). Threat-based abuse was also prominent, with 21 instances involving threats of online consequences or violence (8.3%), 17 of sextortion or blackmail (6.7%) and 10 involving threats of on-ground violence (4%). Impersonation accounted for 15 instances (5.9%) and doxxing or outing for 14 (5.5%). "Technology and the methods of abuse may change, but defamation or damaging a person's reputation remains the primary motive in cases of online abuse," said Siddharth Pillai, co-founder of RATI Foundation.

It also recorded child sexual abuse and exploitation material (CSAEM) in 13 of the 130 cases (10%).

HARSH KOTHARI 9833045297

COP31 and the unmet promises of climate action

The climate summit in Türkiye has once again laid out the gap between what countries promise and what they are actually prepared to do; with the window to limit warming closing, the coming year should be spent on fixing what is broken

Indu K. Murthy
Neeraj Hanumante

Run for cover

The world will exhaust its carbon budget for 1.5 degrees celsius of warming in about four years

- Despite narrowing emission budgets, COP31 closed without a cover decision or mechanisms to implement past pledges
- While Parties advanced carbon markets and voluntary initiatives, those steps cannot substitute for Paris Agreement obligations
- Crucial adaptation finance goals collapsed alongside a loss and damage roadmap while just transition rules stalled
- Before COP32, nations must finalise transition mandates in Bonn even as India pushes for expanded grant support



Anti-climactic: Activists hold signs that say "shame" and "failure" at the COP31 talks on November 20 in Antalya, Türkiye. AP

- UNFCCC procedural reforms, if they arise, must not excuse developed nations from rapidly cutting emissions and delivering reliable support
- Closing the widening gap between promises and action requires fixing broken systems before COP32 begins

In Antalya, Türkiye, the 31st Conference of the Parties (COP31) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) closed two days behind schedule and without a cover decision after a deadlock over whether the final agreement should name 'fossil fuels'. But the greater failure was its inability to turn the commitments made at the Baku and Belém talks into working machinery.

Time is running out. At current emission levels, the world will exhaust its carbon budget for 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming in about four years, according to the Global Carbon Budget 2025. Even if countries deliver on their current Nationally Determined Contributions, the Emissions Gap Report 2026 projected 2.6 degrees Celsius of warming this century.

At COP31, Parties adopted decisions on carbon markets under Article 6, the Adaptation Fund, and the Enhanced Transparency Framework – the system through which countries report their emissions and progress on climate action. On the Global Goal on Adaptation, they agreed to set up a task force of national experts to refine the 'Belém Adaptation Indicators' adopted at COP30 and to develop guidance on their use by October 2027.

Separately, the COP31 Presidency advanced voluntary initiatives on electrification and geothermal energy. The Antalya Compact, for example, aims to cut the operational energy intensity of buildings by 25% by 2035.

While carbon markets and voluntary coalitions are useful steps, they cannot however substitute for obligations under the Paris Agreement.

On the other hand, progress on the 'Just Transition Mechanism' was limited. The Parties extended the 'Just Transition Work Programme' and agreed to phase in the mechanism. However, decisions on its functions and support were deferred to COP32, leaving developing countries with no clear pathway on the finance, technology, and capacity needed to transition away from fossil fuels while protecting livelihoods. The summit also reached an impasse over the scale of climate finance and the role of carbon capture and storage.

The adaptation finance gap is undeniable. The Adaptation Gap Report 2026 put the required amount for developing countries at around $305 billion per year by 2035. However, international public finance in 2024 was only $28-32 billion. An initial draft called for at least $120 billion per year for adaptation by 2035, but this was watered down to a vague call to triple finance flows. This in turn fell through when the Parties failed to adopt the cover decision.

Loss and damage finance fared no better: a proposed 'Antalya to Addis Ababa' roadmap to establish reliable public finance for both adaptation and loss and damage was dropped.

However, the business unfinished at COP31 cannot wait for the next summit. The 'Just Transition Mechanism' must be finalised at the mid-year negotiations in Bonn next June with a clear mandate for the flow of finance and technology.

Before COP32 in Addis Ababa, Parties have to agree on a specific adaptation finance goal, with a clear set of contributors and a focus on grants and concessional finance rather than loans.

India's role in the lead-up to COP32 will be crucial. Its argument that finance must take precedence over any new target is valid: developing countries should not be expected to raise ambitions without the funds to deliver on them.

India could work with the least developed countries and small island states to develop a common proposal on the 'Just Transition Mechanism' for Bonn and push multilateral development banks to increase their grant-based support. Finally, countries must also examine the UNFCCC process and ask whether the consensus rules, packed agendas, and presidency-driven consultations truly achieve the Convention's objective. Any reform should focus on making the UNFCCC machinery more efficient without undermining the position of developing countries.

But procedural reforms and new commitments cannot take the focus away from countries most responsible for the crisis. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) figures show developed countries have been by far the largest contributors to emissions up to 2019. This is why they have to cut their own emissions faster and provide reliable support to developing countries.

COP31 has once again laid out the gap between what countries promise and what they are actually prepared to do. With the window to keep warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius rapidly closing, the coming year should be spent on fixing what is broken rather than waiting for COP32 to try it all again.

(Indu K. Murthy heads the Climate, Environment and Sustainability sector and Neeraj Hanumante is a research scientist in the Mitigation team, both at the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), a research-based think tank.)

PIB/AIR/ESS/TRG (6/8/2026)

Why is COP31 perceived to be a failure?

Nearly 130 countries objected to the 'cover text' as it contained no prescriptive language for shifting from fossil fuels; India, which did not oppose the text, says energy transitions must be nationally determined, just, equitable, and backed by finance, technology, and capacity-building

Jacob Koshy

The story so far:

Countries at the 31st UN climate conference (COP31) in Antalya, Turkiye, failed to reach a consensus on the "cover text", called the Antalya Pact. This was after a stand-off over phasing out fossil fuels pushed the talks a record 48 hours past its scheduled end on November 20.

What led to the impasse?

The immediate trigger was a "cover text" put forward by COP31 president Murat Kurum, Turkiye's Environment Minister. This is an overarching political decision that frames the outcome of a conference and is usually finalised last. As in every outcome, it needs the agreement of all parties. No country or bloc holds a veto, but every clause must be accepted by all 190-plus delegations.

The European Union (EU) led the objections, reportedly backed by nearly 130 countries, mainly because the text carried no prescriptive language on moving away from fossil fuels.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), a research body that tracked the talks, said earlier drafts of the cover text had included a global electrification target of 35% by 2035 and a commitment to speed up the transition away from fossil fuels, but these could not be finalised. A proposal for a target on

A small win was parties agreeing to Adaptation Fund process



Climate freeze: Greenpeace activists hold banners under the arches of Hadrian's Gate during COP31 in Antalya on November 20. REUTERS

carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS), a technology that traps carbon dioxide before or after it is released, added to the dispute. The institute has called the technology "expensive" and "unproven at scale".

The EU, Panama, the Marshall Islands, Vanuatu, and Belize formally rejected the final text. Speaking for the EU, Ireland's Climate Minister Darragh O'Brien said the bloc would not accept "a COP that greenwashes fossil fuel". Panama's chief negotiator, Ana Aguilar, gave three reasons: the text repeated earlier commitments without closing the gap with what science demands, leaned heavily on the CCUS, and weakened language agreed previously.

Countries disagreed over who should provide climate finance and how to ensure existing pledges are delivered. Russia and Saudi Arabia objected to renewing the mitigation work programme – a dedicated forum to discuss and share ways of cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, as of now, there is no dedicated process on mitigation. These discussions are held against the background of global temperatures having overshot the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit set by the Paris Agreement multiple times in the past two years.

"The text welcomed the Loss and Damage Fund while erasing the evidence that it received urgent requests from developing countries for $2.8 billion but could allocate only $342 million. Applauding an empty fund doesn't fill it," said Harjeet Singh, founding director of Satat Sampada Climate Foundation.

What are the positives?

However, there were some smaller wins. Parties agreed to arrangements for the Adaptation Fund to serve the Paris Agreement exclusively once the first share of proceeds under Article 6.4 (the Paris Agreement's carbon-market mechanism) turns into revenue, though this fund is practically underfunded. There was a consensus on a task force of national experts to refine the 59 indicators adopted at COP30 for tracking adaptation progress, with guidance due by October 2027.

The Just Transition Work Programme – a pathway to transition workers in the fossil fuel economy to clean energy – was extended by three years with more inclusive dialogues. On gender, parties acknowledged the first year of implementing the Belém Gender Action Plan. The second global stocktake, a periodic review of collective progress, was launched in Antalya.

What was India's position?

India was among the countries not opposed to the proposed cover text. Along with Saudi Arabia and China, it opposes prescriptive language on fossil fuel targets, particularly those on their phase-out. All three belong to the Like-minded Developing Countries (LMDC) group, which insists on continued fossil fuel use for economic growth while having deployed renewable energy significantly.

Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav said India's voice had shaped the draft, particularly on food security, livelihoods, and cultural practices in action on methane. "Climate ambition must go hand in hand with means of implementation" and energy transitions must be nationally determined, just and equitable, and backed by finance, technology and capacity-building, he said. "COP31 failed to produce meaningful results except for the launch of the second Global Stocktake (GST). The developed countries backtracked on their tripling adaptation finance commitment and raising it to $120 billion. In fact, no progress on finance for mitigation, just transition and finance for vulnerable countries was witnessed due to developed countries trying to wriggle out of their responsibilities," Ravi Shankar Prasad, Distinguished Fellow, Council for Energy Environment and Water (CEEW), said in a statement. The GST is a review, held every five years under the Paris Agreement, of how far countries collectively have come toward the Paris goals and how far they still have to go.

What is the road ahead to Addis Ababa?

Attention now turns to the June talks in Bonn, where, the IISD said, countries must rebuild trust and lay the groundwork for COP32 in Addis Ababa in 2027. Several matters are pending such as decisions on the Just Transition Mechanism's functions and operations. Countries could also renew the mitigation work programme there. Discussions on national adaptation plans, which advanced only incrementally, resume in June. Developing countries are still seeking a clear baseline and a way to track the pledge to triple adaptation finance by 2035.

Will new tariff speed up India-U.S. trade deal?

The USTR has proposed tariffs of up to 25% on India, with 17% on offer under a trade deal. While this might seem attractive, the final rate is still pending and the offer gives little edge over competitors, so a deal could be some time away

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan

The story so far:

The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) on November 18 released a report that proposed new tariffs on 14 economies around the world, including India. The report contains several allegations that these economies all contribute to the creation of structural excess manufacturing capacity that has economically harmful effects on the U.S. The terms proposed for India also contain a concession in case India and the U.S. finally do sign a trade deal. However, the main question is whether this will speed up deal negotiations that have dragged on for nearly two years.

Why is the U.S. investigating this?

The U.S. Supreme Court in February 2026 ruled that the entire legal framework for President Donald Trump's reciprocal tariff programme was invalid and so struck them down. Mr. Trump immediately announced a 10% temporary 150-day tariff on imports from all countries. However, he needed a more permanent tariff plan, particularly because "Making America Great Again" and bringing manufacturing back to the U.S. were his main political plank.

In March 2026, the USTR launched two separate investigations under Section 301 of the Trade Act into the U.S.'s trade partners. The first had to do with whether these partners were doing enough to stop the import of goods made using forced labour. Under this, the U.S. levied a tariff of 10% on India and other rates on the other economies.

The latest proposed tariffs of up to 25% on India are the result of the second investigation the USTR had launched in March, into whether other countries were strategically developing excess manufacturing capacity and were thus harming the U.S. economy.

> The USTR report alleges that India 'engages in acts, policies, and practices that relate to structural excess capacity and production'



Making a deal: India's position is any trade-related concerns should be addressed within the framework of the negotiations on a trade deal. REUTERS

What is structural excess capacity?

The literature on the matter has several different definitions of what structural excess capacity is. The USTR said that structural excess capacity and production referred to capacity or production in an economy that is "persistently in excess of the amount that would exist under market-oriented conditions", and is created, sustained or contributed to by government policies or interventions.

How is structural excess capacity measured?

The investigation analysed economy-wide aggregate indicators such as manufacturing share of GDP, consumption share of GDP, and investment share of GDP "to provide insights into whether India's allocation of resources persistently departs from outcomes consistent with market-oriented conditions". It evaluated these indicators against relevant benchmarks (including U.S., OECD and global averages), which it said then helped it identify where economy-wide distortions exist and structural excess capacity and production are occurring.

What did the report say about India?

The USTR report alleges that India "engages in acts, policies, and practices that relate to structural excess capacity and production" by maintaining what it calls a disproportionate manufacturing sector relative to GDP, increasing production in key export-oriented manufacturing sectors and failing to effectively address global structural excess capacity and production.

In other words, it said that India's manufacturing capacity far exceeds what the domestic economy can consume, that the Make in India programme was exacerbating this situation especially in sectors such as steel, solar, health and communication technology, and that India's reliance on imports from China was aiding in the creation and maintenance of structural excess capacity in China.

"India's acts, policies, and practices include national industrial plans, inadequate labour protections that constrain wage formation and cost structures, financial repression, market access barriers, and the encouragement of or failure to monitor and address imports and investment in key export sectors from non-market economies (NMEs)," the report said.

Further, the report noted that India has in recent years engaged in "more targeted, aggressive acts, policies, and practices in key export-oriented sectors", which it said enable, encourage or facilitate structural excess capacity and production in economies like China as well as in Indian downstream industries.

To address this, the USTR has recommended a net tariff rate of up to 25% on India, which means the total rate would be up to 25% rather than being in addition to existing tariffs. There are also Section 232 tariffs.

How has the Indian government responded?

In a statement, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said it has informed the USTR that "India does not have structural excess capacity in any sector". It added that the government of India has "taken note" of the proposal by the USTR and that India engaged constructively throughout the investigation.

Further, while acknowledging that India and the U.S. are engaged in negotiations for a Bilateral Trade Agreement, the government added that it has been India's position that any trade-related concerns should be addressed within the framework of these negotiations.

Will this speed up a trade deal?

The Indian government has been adamant that, as was agreed by the two countries in February 2026, a trade deal would have to give India an edge over its competitors. The post-deal rate of 17% proposed for India is higher than the rates proposed for Japan, South Korea, Switzerland, Taiwan, and the European Union (15% each). It is only marginally lower than the rates for Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand (18% each), and Bangladesh, Cambodia, China and Singapore (20% each). Further, even Vietnam could see its tariff reduced to 20% if it signs a deal with the U.S. These are all India's competitors. According to trade experts, India should negotiate for a more substantial advantage over these countries.

Further, the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act that became law earlier this year empowers the U.S. to levy tariffs of up to 100% on countries like India that import large quantities of Russian oil. Although kept in temporary abeyance at the moment, those tariffs remain a perpetual threat to Indian exports, especially since they are based on a law rather than an executive order by the President. A trade deal would have to account for these tariffs. Finally, it is important to note that these proposals are not final. The USTR has opened a window for written responses to the proposal until January 5, 2027. Those who want to appear at the hearings can also submit requests by January 5, 2027. The public hearings will begin on January 25, following which the final decision will be taken. There is precedent for the final rate being lower for India than has been proposed. So, it is highly unlikely that the lure of the 17% tariff will encourage the Indian government to speed up negotiations on the trade deal. It will first wait for the final tariff to be revealed before it acts.

ISHAURYA SSB TRG (8368104529)

Hasina eyes return to Bangladesh via land border crossing

Shubhajit Roy
New Delhi, November 28

OUSTED BANGLADESH Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who has announced that she will return to her home country on December 16, is looking at the option of crossing over through a land border checkpoint, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

Sources said Hasina's Bangladesh Awami League leaders and supporters have carried out a reconnaissance of some border entry points along West Bengal and Tripura.

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

e EXPLAINED

Diplomatic test

Sheikh Hasina's presence in India is a sore point with Bangladesh, which has made her extradition a central issue. Even as the two sides have been working on repairing ties, Hasina's plan to return poses a challenge for both Dhaka and Delhi. There was talk of a possible visit to India by Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman between November-end and late December. Now that is unlikely.

SHAURYA SSB TRG (8368104139)

Hasina

One of the options being considered is the Petrapole-Benapole border crossing. Petrapole, in North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, is South Asia's largest land port and a major hub for bilateral trade and cross-border movement of people. Benapole is Bangladesh's largest land port.

Sources said that since it won't be possible for Hasina to board a flight without a valid passport, the road option is being considered.

Hasina's diplomatic passport was revoked on August 22, 2024, as was her national identity card on February 16, 2025. On November 9, Hasina's lawyers at London-based Matrix Chambers had written to the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi asking for a new passport and national identity card to be issued.

Earlier, Hasina had asked the Bangladesh government led by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman to send an aircraft to Delhi for her return to Dhaka. Hasina faces a death sentence in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh had responded by saying that she "can only be brought back in handcuffs or under strict surveillance."

The Bangladesh government has made Hasina's extradition a central issue in its bilateral relations with India. Facing a diplomatic challenge, India has said that extradition is a legal matter and will be dealt with accordingly. Hasina, on her part, has said that she is willing to return voluntarily and there is no need for an extradition.

Hasina has been living in India since her ouster on August 5, 2024, following protests in Bangladesh. On August 5 this year, on the second anniversary of the collapse of her government, she declared her intention to return home.

YA SSB TRG (83681

Bangladesh deploys border guards amid unrest over Hasina's return

As many as 120 Border Guard Bangladesh platoons deployed across seven districts, according to a media report; it follows clashes, crude bomb blasts and arson attacks linked to tensions over ex-PM Sheikh Hasina's planned return on December 16

Press Trust of India
DHAKA

Bangladesh has deployed border guard personnel across seven districts amid heightened political tensions over ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's planned return to the country, according to a local media report.

As many as 56 platoons have been deployed in Gopalganj, Ms. Hasina's home district, according to a report on the state-run *BSS* news agency.

The deployment comes amid unrest involving clashes, crude bomb blasts and arson attacks reported in recent weeks as Ms. Hasina's planned return on December 16 has become a source of political tension.



Border Guard Bangladesh personnel stand guard during a torchlight procession by the Awami League in Gopalganj on Saturday. AFP

The attacks were blamed on supporters of her activities-banned Awami League, while the government accused party leaders abroad of inciting violence.

Ms. Hasina, who has been living in India since leaving Bangladesh in August 2024, has said she plans to return on December 16, the day Bangladesh celebrates its victory over Pakistan in the 1971 Liberation War.

The *BSS* report, quoting a Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) press release, said 120 platoons had been deployed across Dhaka, Gazipur, Narayanganj, Mymensingh, Gopalganj, Chattogram and Cox's Bazar.

According to the breakdown, 17 platoons have been deployed in Savar and Ashulia in Dhaka district, 19 in Gazipur, seven in Narayanganj, two in Bhaluka in Mymensingh, 56 in Gopalganj, eight in Chattogram and seven in Cox's Bazar, among other areas across the country.

The BGB personnel are operating in coordination with the respective district administrations and other law enforcement agencies, following directives from Bangladesh's Ministry of Home Affairs, the report said.

They are tasked with strengthening security and surveillance at key installations, industrial zones and other important locations, as well as preventing unrest and violence.

The BGB headquarters is also monitoring live footage from drones, body-worn cameras and other surveillance equipment to coordinate operations on the ground, it added.

SHAURYA (8368104529)

'Denmark, Europe must build stronger relations with India'

External Affairs Minister and his Danish counterpart adopt five-year joint action plan to boost ties; both sides review Green Strategic Partnership, reaffirm need for dialogue to resolve global conflicts

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Denmark and Europe "must reach out" to build stronger ties with India, Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen, who is on a visit to India, said.

Mr. Rasmussen co-chaired the 5th India-Denmark Joint Commission meeting on Saturday with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, where global issues, including the Russia-Ukraine conflict, were discussed. Both sides called for dialogue to resolve global conflicts, and announced plans for multilateral collaboration.

"In a world where the international rules of the game are under pressure, Denmark and Europe must reach out and build a stronger partnership with India. We have achieved significant progress in our bilateral cooperation since the establishment of the Green Strategic Partnership (GSP) in 2020," Mr. Rasmussen said.

The discussions in the joint commission meeting included "strategic areas of cooperation and global geopolitical developments, including Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine, China and Middle East [West Asia]", a press statement from the Embassy of Denmark in New Delhi said.



Bilateral link: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen in New Delhi on Saturday. ANI

Joint meeting

In his remarks after the meeting, Mr. Jaishankar highlighted the issues discussed.

"Reviewed India-Denmark Green Strategic Partnership in water, shipping and renewable energy. Also assessed our cooperation in food processing, health, education and skilling, people to people (relation), culture, trade, S&T (science and technology), polar, space, industrial and security domains," Mr. Jaishankar said.

The two Ministers discussed the war in Ukraine and West Asia, and "reaffirmed the importance of continued dialogue on international challenges". "They reiterated the two countries' commitment to international law, the principles of the United Nations Charter, rules-based trade and a rules-based international order," the Danish side said.

Both Ministers led the talks as the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on skills development and closer cooperation on vocational education and training was renewed.

The two sides noted high-level visits, including visits at the "royal, Prime Ministerial and Ministerial levels", have provided direction to the relationship, a press note from the Ministry of External Affairs said. Both sides adopted the 'Joint Action Plan for 2027-2031' and stated that an "elevated Comprehensive Green Strategic Partnership at the Prime Ministerial level" would be announced "at a later stage".

Mr. Rasmussen met National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal to discuss "global geopolitical developments" and the EU-India Free Trade Agreement, respectively. The discussion with Mr. Goyal included talks about opportunities for Danish companies in India. Mr. Rasmussen landed in New Delhi on Saturday morning after concluding his visit to Bengaluru on November 27.

SHAURYA SSB Tel (9368104529)

OVER 1,200 DRONES SHOT DOWN, SAYS RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY

Zelenskyy urges US to press Putin to end war as 10 killed in Ukraine

Ukraine President criticises Trump's reference to Putin as a 'friend'

Associated Press
Kyiv, November 28



Rescuers and police officers search for people under the debris of a partially collapsed building struck by a Russian drone in Nizhyn town in Chernihiv region, Ukraine, on Saturday. REUTERS

UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT Volodymyr Zelenskyy expressed frustration with the US stance towards Russian President Vladimir Putin, saying Washington should put more pressure on Moscow to end the war, as at least ten civilians were reported killed in attacks across Ukraine on Saturday.

Zelenskyy, in an interview with the *BBC* broadcast Friday, criticised US President Donald Trump for referring to Putin as "my friend" during a recent summit in China, calling the remark "strange" because the Russian leader was "an aggressor and a killer".

"He can't be a friend," Zelenskyy told the British broadcaster in Kyiv, likening Trump's statement to someone calling Adolf Hitler a friend during WWII.

The Ukrainian president said he wanted the US to increase pressure on Putin to stop his invasion of Ukraine, which began nearly five years ago and continues despite Trump's efforts to broker a peace deal.

The White House did not respond to a request for comment on Zelenskyy's remarks. Trump, however, defended his reference to Putin on Thursday, saying the US wanted to reach an agreement and stop the fighting.

"I could walk in and say, 'I don't like you!' and then we have the same problem that we have with Zelenskyy and Putin," Trump said, adding that, "The biggest problem with that settlement is the fact that you have two leaders that really hate each other."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov accused Zelenskyy of "insulting his counterpart", saying the Ukrainian leader was "not willing to follow the path of (a) peace settlement".

Zelenskyy's remarks came a day after Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and a US envoy involved in efforts to mediate an end to the war, praised Putin as a "grandmaster" of politics. Kushner's partner in the peace efforts, Steve Witkoff, had described the Russian leader as a "humanitarian" weeks earlier.

Meanwhile, fighting continued across Ukraine, with at least ten reported killed on Saturday as Russia claimed to have shot down 1,246 Ukrainian drones during the night, one of the highest numbers it has reported since the start of the war.

Seven people were killed and seven others wounded in a Russian attack on an enterprise in Nizhyn, in Ukraine's northern Chernihiv region, the State Emergency Service said. Rescue operations at the site were completed on Saturday, following the attack a day earlier.

In Russian-occupied Ukraine, two people were killed and two others wounded when a Ukrainian drone struck a hospital vehicle in the southern Zaporizhzhia region, Kremlin-installed authorities said.

Russia's Defence Ministry said on Saturday that its forces had shot down 1,246 Ukrainian drones during the night. It did not say how many drones had been launched or how many had reached their targets.

SHAURYA SSS (9968104520)

Clashes break out in Albania as protesters demand PM's ouster

Reuters
Tirana, November 28

VIOLENCE BROKE out in Albania on Saturday during a student-led protest calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Edi Rama after months of anti-government demonstrations.

Demonstrators had gathered in the capital Tirana on Independence Day and threw stones and petrol bombs at riot police, who responded with water cannon, tear gas and rubber bullets.

Fuelled by anger over perceived government corruption, lack of jobs and poor education standards, demonstrations have rocked Tirana since mid-October and spread to other cities. They have often turned violent, with protesters setting fire to government buildings and banks, smashing shop windows and pulling up paving stones to throw at police.

On Saturday, protesters, some wearing masks, peppered a government building with stones and attempted to reach Rama's office but were pushed away by police, according to a Reuters journalist.

"Enough is enough; the corruption, the poverty, the immigration," said Eralda Baze, 45, an engineer who joined Saturday's rally.

Others demanded a better life and healthcare.

'Albania not for sale'

Rama's government denies corruption and has called for dialogue on the protesters' demands. The government has also introduced new measures such as cheaper fuel and more money for poor families in an attempt to quell the protests.

The unrest, which followed months of largely peaceful summer protests against a luxury coastal development backed by US President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, poses the biggest challenge yet to Rama, who has governed since 2013 and won a fourth term in office last year.

One banner at Saturday's protest read: "Albania is not for sale."

Rama has said the development is legal and that habitats would be protected.

Corruption scandals have tarnished Albania's image over the years and analysts say the country is a hub for gangs seeking to launder money from drugs and weapons trafficking.

However, Rama has said his government is tackling corruption as never before.

SHAURYA SSB TRG (03681024529)